

Minutes of Meeting of Environment, Recreation & Amenity Strategic Policy Committee held on 19th September, 2018 in the Council Chamber, Galway City Council.

Presiding: Cllr Terry O'Flaherty - Chairperson

Present: Cllr. Billy Cameron,
Cllr. Donal Lyons,
Cllr. Colette Connolly,
Cllr. Pdraig Conneely,
Cllr. Mike Crowe,
Cllr. Peter Keane,
Mr. Brendan Smyth,
Ms. Eleanor Hough,
Ms. Caroline Stanley,
Mr. Simon Heaslip,
Mr. Gary McMahon, A/Director of Services
Mr. Stephen Walsh, Senior Executive Parks Superintendent,
Mr. Sean Langan, A/Senior Executive Engineer,
Ms. Helen McDonagh, Administrative Officer,
Ms. Anne Ruane, Administrative Officer,
Ms. Catherine Jennings, Assistant Staff Officer
Ms. Fiona Griffin, Assistant Staff Officer

Apologies: Mr. Tom Connell, Director of Services,
Cllr. Cathal O 'Conchúir,
Mr. Uinsinn Finn, Senior Engineer,

Cllr Terry O'Flaherty opened the meeting and sought agreement from the members to hear the presentations on the Agenda first before addressing the other items.

1. Woodquay Park Presentation

Mr. Feargal Timon & Ms. Sheila Gallagher of the Woodquay Residents Association gave a presentation on the proposed development of Woodquay Park. A model was placed on display in the Council Chamber.

A summary of the presentation was as follows:

- The history behind Woodquay Residents Association
- The research and learning that went into the proposal for the Park
- Design process steps
- A park open to the water which would be a place of calm and serenity for the City
- Community Consultation to date and the positive feedback received
- Projected costs €100,000, funding raised to date €40,000.
- Seek SPC approval and support

Mr. Brendan Smyth commended the Woodquay Residents Association on the approach taken in the planning of the project.

Cllr. Peter Keane commended the Residents Association on their hard work and referred to the Circle of Life model and enquired if Part 8 would be required in this instance. He referred to the costs and asked where the shortfall of the budget would come from and invited comments from the executive.

Cllr. Donal Lyons said that he is in favour of the project and complimented both Fergal and Sheila and referred to the Park currently being un-utilised. He outlined the importance of lighting to deter anti-social behaviour and enquired about the costs of maintaining the Park.

Cllr. Michael Crowe offered his support to the project which he said is driven by the local community and that the Park has been neglected for years and said that funding should be ring-fenced for 2019 for the project.

Mr. Simon Heaslip advised that he was in favour of the project.

Ms. Eleanor Hough thanked the Committee for their hard work and referred to the model on display which she said increased awareness of facilitating wildlife and that funding is very important.

Ms. Caroline Stanley was in agreement with the project and should help combat anti-social behaviour.

Cllr. Terry O'Flaherty read aloud two pieces of correspondence from Cllr. Cathal O 'Conchuir and Cllr. Billy Cameron who both said they were fully supportive of the project.

Mr. Stephen Walsh advised that Part 8 will be necessary for this project and that the members must consider the work programme. He referred to the Kingston Project which has been ongoing for two years and has still not reached Part 8 stage. He advised that it will have to go to public consultation and that there are a number of projects that are ahead of this project therefore may take a few years.

Mr. Gary McMahon commended the residents on the high quality presentation, however there are a range of steps to be taken. It is not just a matter of funding. Staff resources, planning, and future maintenance of the park all need to be considered.

A proposal was made by Cllr. Donal Lyons, seconded by Cllr. Peter Keane to include the Woodquay Park project on the Work Programme and also to go to full council for presentation.

2. Draft (Segregation, Storage & Presentation of Household & Commercial Waste) Bye-Laws 2018

Mr. Kevin Swift Regional Waste Coordinator for the Connacht Ulster Region gave a presentation on the Draft Bye-Laws. A copy was circulated to all members.

It is Government Policy that a regionalised approach to both waste management planning and regulatory enforcement is adopted. Accordingly, the three Regional Waste Management Offices were established in 2013, with the formation of the Waste Enforcement Lead Authorities (WERLAs) following in 2015.

In accordance with each of the three Regional Waste Management Plans 2015-2021, one of the priority tasks was to have a more unified approach to the content and making of waste presentation bye-laws.

A national Waste Presentation Bye Law template was agreed in late 2017.

A summary of the members' comments included:

- Are there plans to label bins advising people what can be placed in the bins?
- If people claim to binshare, can we ask them to provide evidence of this?
- More hazardous waste facilities are needed in the City
- Bins in public parks
- Should this not be a National Act rather than down to each Local Authority

- Do we have the resources required in order to enforce the Bye-Laws if introduced
- Monitoring of waste collectors
- Disposal of plastics

Mr. Kevin Swift responded as follows:

- The holder of waste is responsible for its correct disposal
- Hazardous waste is an issue with 90% of this type of waste consisting of paint.
- Looking at possible initiatives similar to WEEE in which customers can return their empty cans to the supplier.
- The strength of the Bye-Laws comes down to the capacity and resources of each Local Authority
- Waste Collectors are governed by the Waste Collection Permit Regulation made under the Waste Management Act. The Waste collection Permits are administrated nationally by National Waste Collection Permit Office (NWCPO), and enforcement lies with the relevant Local Authority.

Mr. Gary McMahon added the following:

- There is a network of litter bins throughout the City including public parks.
- Solar power bins are currently on trial in the City and an assessment will be carried out.
- Solutions in relation to hazardous waste are being looked at.
- Policy decision to take waste home
- He clarified that household waste cannot be presented to the Civic Amenity Site.

Mr. Brendan Smyth asked that it be noted there are no bins in Merlin and Terryland Parks. He also asked can a refund scheme be put in place for plastic, glass etc. similar to “cash for cans”. Mr. Kevin Swift stated it would all depend on the quality of the plastic and the Government has to commit to looking at an alternative approach when it comes to the disposal of plastic.

Mr. Gary McMahon advised that the draft Bye-Laws are currently on display with a final submission date as 19th October, 2018.

3. Minutes of meeting held on the 30th May, 2018

On the proposal of Cllr. Peter Keane, seconded by Mr. Simon Heaslip the minutes of the meeting held on the 30th May, 2018, were agreed and adopted by the members.

4. Matters Arising

No Matters Arising

5. River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021 – Presentation by Ms. Catherine Seale, Local Authority Waters and Communities Office

Ms. Catherine Seale gave a presentation on the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2018-2021 and circulated a copy of same to all members.

A summary of the presentation was as follows:

- The background of The Water Framework Directive which aims to achieve good ecological status in all waters
- The new governance structure and the greater responsibility on Local Authorities
- The Local Authorities Waters Programme
- Development of the River Basin Management Plan

- Priority areas for action – 190 were identified
- Expected outcomes over the life of the River Basin Management Plan
- Key aims for 2018-2021 which include:
 - o Building the foundations and momentum for long term improvements
 - o Regional work programmes to be developed and implemented by Local Authorities and Agencies working together
 - o Support for community led initiatives
 - o Better approach to water quality management both locally and nationally

A summary of the members' comments included the following:

- Who is responsible for the Community Water Development Fund
- Are the Community Water Officers full time positions
- How to proceed in relation to complaints with Terryland River
- There has been a problem with Japanese Knotweed for a number of years and it needs attention
- Why has Ballyloughane Beach a red flag when it has similar results to Grattan Beach in which there is no red flag present

Ms. Catherine Seale responded:

Her contract is valid until 2019, after that it will depend on Government funding. She stated that Terryland River is improving but there are some major issues there that will take time to resolve, she will discuss this with the technical group.

Mr. Sean Langan stated that there is a risk of spread with the Japanese Knotweed which is the reason for the slow approach. He also advised that they are working closely with the OPW looking at the pollution issues and the possible sources of same.

Mr. Brendan Smyth referred to the Steering Committee and asked if the €20,000 set aside was drawn down. Mr. Sean Langan advised that there has some partial draw down.

Mr. Gary McMahon advised that the EPA issued a four year warning notice on Ballyloughane and this area has had a longer history of bad results. There would not be a red flag in place if the need was not there.

Ms. Seale was thanked for the presentation and commended on the approach to the Plan

6. Galway City Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2024

Ms. Eleanor Hough stated that this plan has been sitting on the shelf since its formation. It is very important that at budget time funding be allocated for the recruitment of a Biodiversity Officer. She said Galway should be setting examples. The National Tidy Towns have a number of awards for Biodiversity and Galway City has never won. Ms. Hough referred to the Loving Galway Festival and the positive feedback received. An Officer is needed to drive the plan forward.

Mr. Gary McMahon said he agrees we should aspire to having a Biodiversity Officer. He stated that Mr. Stephen Walsh has been making the case for a number of years. Mr. McMahon advised that there has been difficulty over a number of years in relation to the recruitment and retention of staff but parts of the plan are being covered by other resources across all departments of Galway City Council such as the Loving Galway Festival and the booklet that was prepared by the European Green Leaf Officer.

Mr. Brendan Smyth referred to a letter dated 26th June, 2018 submitted from the GCCN in which a recommendation for a Biodiversity Officer was made. Mr. Gary McMahon advised he was aware of the correspondence.

7. Draft Parks, Open Spaces and Beach Bye Laws

Mr. Stephen Walsh went through the document commencing at Section 12 (Powers of an Authorised Person). He outlined that the text in red is proposed wording. The following was noted:

- 12A- Powers of Authorised Person such as a Voluntary Ranger
- 13B - A discussion took place in relation to the use of wording 'No Animals' and it was agreed that the wording would be 'No Wild Animals'
- 14 - A discussion took place in relation to the appropriate fees and if €75 is appropriate and it was agreed that an upper limit may be used
- 15 - A discussion took place in relation to penalties of €1900. Reference was made to repeat offenders and anonymous complaints received which are not sufficient.
- Signage was discussed in particular graphics. Members referred to signage in Kilkenny & Ballina and Stephen Walsh advised that he will look at same.

Mr. Stephen Walsh advised that he will revise the document in accordance with the comments suggested and agreed at the meetings. Once completed the draft will be referred to the Council's solicitor for their review and comments.

Cllr. Terry O'Flaherty asked that the document come back before the SPC before going before the full Council.

The members thanked Stephen Walsh for his work.

8. A.O.B

Ms. Caroline Stanley referred to the Busking Bye-Laws and asked when they would be implemented and also when can they be reviewed.

Mr. Brendan Smyth asked if the litter statistic reports can be made available for the next meeting. Has littering increased/decreased?

Mr. Simon Heaslip referred to the derelict building in Dominick Street. He said it has been removed from the Derelict Sites Register as the appropriate works were carried out, however it is still unsightly, is there anything else that can be done?

Mr. Gary McMahon advised that the Busking Bye-Laws cannot be revisited for 6 months, he said he will seek clarification both on the enactment & effective date.

Ms. Helen McDonagh stated that when a building is on the Derelict Sites Register it is not liable for rates, now that this building has been removed it may be liable for rates once again. She agreed this was something she would follow up with the rates department.

In relation to the litter statistic reports, the members were advised to submit an email requesting same and the response would be issued.

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