

Report of Environment, Recreation & Amenity Strategic Policy Committee

Date: February 12th 2015. Ait :Halla na Cathrach, Gaillimh

Report by Brendan Smith.

Attendees:

On behalf of Galway City Community Network:

Eleanor Hough

Brendan Smith

Also Present:

Councillors Terry O'Flaherty (chair), Billy Cameron, Cathal Ó Conchur, Donal Lyons, Catherine Connolly, Pdraig Conneely, Mike Crowe and Peter Keane.

Mr. Simon Heaslip (Business sector),

Mr. Tom Connell, Director of Services, Mr Joe Tansey, Senior Engineer,

Mr. Stephen Walsh, Senior Executive Parks Superintendent.

Ms. Helen McDonagh, Administrative Officer.

Administration to committee

Ms. Cliona Clancy, A/Assistant Staff Officer.

1. Presentation from Galway Hockey Club

A presentation was given on behalf of the Galway Hockey Club by Gus McCarthy.

Gus gave an outline on how the club has grown over the last decade in spite of the fact that it did not have a pitch of its own. The club was interested in a land swap of Galway City owned lands at Kingston for Galway Hockey Club owned lands at Circular Road or a licence/lease arrangement for same. The lands would be used to develop playing fields and to build a club house.

Members were sympathetic to an agreement coming to fruition on the proviso that the lands would be made available to the wider community and to schools.

D. Lyons pointed out that another group would be interested in addressing the committee on the same piece of land.

It has now being confirmed that St. John the Apostle national school will make a presentation to the next meeting of the SPC.

The following motion was proposed by Cllr Keane and passed unanimously:

'that the Environmental, Recreation and Amenity SPC examine the possibility that Galway City Council enters into a lease or licence with Galway Hockey Club for the purpose of developing an astro-turf floodlit sporting facility and to include in any such agreement an over arching protection for community usage needs in any such agreement, and in addition, in consideration for which, the Galway Hockey club would transfer its interest in lands at Circular Road to Galway City Council'.

The Director will make a report to the next meeting on the motion.

2. Matters Arising: Paint Disposal & Waste Management. Busking

Brendan Smith queried why a report in respect to waste management issues including incineration, paint disposal and an audit trail to ascertain where waste including recyclables that is collected in the city ends up had not occurred. Director of Services Tom Connell advised that a final Waste Management Plan will

be brought back before SPC later this year. He stated that paint disposal was a matter for the Department of the Environment. Members supported Brendan's concerns over the lack of any regular facility for the disposal of paints which he said was leading to a huge amount of dumping of this hazardous material in bogs, hedgerows and other sensitive green areas across city and country causing untold damage to the environment. It was agreed that an application for funding should be made to the Department for the disposal of paints and specific days be organised for collection of such. The Director agreed that he would write to the Department in this regard and revert at the next meeting.

In respect to the public consultation on busking he advised the submission date could be extended to the end of March.

3. Busking

Eleanor Hough pointed out that the period for public consultation period over busking as agreed too at the last SPC meeting was not adhered too. Hence it was agreed to extend the period of public consultation by a further month.

Brendan and Eleanor stated that they would be meeting with representatives of the busking community before the next SPC meeting

4. Future Work Practices – Grass Cutting

Stephen Walsh went through the report circulated outlining a proposal to outsource Galway City Grassland Management. Cllr. Catherine Connolly expressed concern at outsourcing which was supported by the Community reps. Government cutbacks were leading to increased levels of outsourcing of key jobs previously done by council staff. This will impact negatively on the capabilities of the council in the months and years ahead.

5. Pitch Licences Report

Stephen Walsh discussed his report which was an update on a policy under review. Members considered the 11 month licence a good idea and there was general consensus that the council should not lose control of its land and facilities. However, concern was expressed at the possibility of fee increases. The Director confirmed that only licences will be entered into in future and not leases. Catherine Connolly requested a report on outstanding leases and when they are to revert back to the council. Terry O'Flaherty sought consensus to endorse the report for the full council. Both Eleanor and Brendan stated they could not do so as reports had not been circulated with enough time to discuss with the community groups they represent. It was agreed to leave on the agenda and to discuss further at the next SPC meeting.

6. Woodlands Management Plan

Item deferred to next meeting of the SPC

7. Draft Biodiversity Plan

The draft bio-diversity plan was broadly welcomed by members although there was concern expressed at the delay in finalising the document. Brendan pointed out that it contained some excellent recommendations including the establishment of a full time biodiversity officer and the setting up of a broad-based Biodiversity Forum. Eleanor and Brendan requested time to review the

documents and consult with the membership of the Community Network. Catherine Connolly asked if tree preservation orders related to public lands only. Stephen Walsh advised they could relate to either public or private with currently one Tree Preservation Order in place.

The item was deferred for full discussion at the next SPC meeting before going to the city council..

8. Derelict Sites

The members welcomed the report circulated but queried the length of time a site can remain on the Derelict Sites Register and what options were open to the Council. The Director advised that the preferred option was to work with the property owners to remove dereliction however a levy of 3% per year, based on the market value of the property, could be imposed. There was also an option to CPO the lands though funding was not available. Members made reference to a number of properties around the city that could be considered derelict and were advised by the Director that a proactive inspection system was in place. He referred to the report and the significant number of inspections conducted in the last quarter of 2014. Members were advised that individual sites of concern should be emailed to the Environment Department for follow up.

It was agreed to defer this report until the next meeting for further consideration.

9. Any Other Business

The next meeting of the Environment, Recreation and Amenity SPC was scheduled for Thursday 14th May at 2:30pm.

The Chairperson requested that all documents pertaining to the meeting be circulated by 7th May 2015. Eleanor advised that the Community Network had a policy to request documents two weeks in advance of meeting.