

**Minutes of Meeting of Environment, Recreation & Amenity Strategic Policy Committee held on 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2017 in the Council Chamber, Galway City Council.**

**Presiding:** Cllr Terry O'Flaherty

**Present:** Cllr Padraig Conneely  
Cllr Colette Connolly  
Cllr Donal Lyons  
Cllr Billy Cameron  
Cllr. Cathal O'Conchuir  
Cllr. Mike Crowe  
Mr. Brendan Smyth  
Mr Simon Heaslip  
Ms Eleanor Hough

Ms. Eileen Ruane, A/Director of Services  
Mr. Tom Connell, Director of Services  
Mr. Joe Tansey, Senior Engineer  
Mr. Uinsinn Finn, Senior Engineer  
Mr. Stephen Walsh, Senior Executive Parks Superintendent  
Ms. Helen McDonagh, Administrative Officer  
Ms. Fiona Griffin, A/Assistant Staff Officer

**Apologies:** Cllr. Peter Keane  
Mr. Edwin Brennan

On behalf of the SPC Committee Cllr. Terry O'Flaherty wished Mr. Joe Tansey well on his retirement and welcomed Ms. Eileen Ruane, Acting Director for the Environment & Climate Change Department.

**1. Consideration of Minutes of meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2017**

On the proposal of Cllr. Colette Connolly, seconded by Cllr. Donal Lyons the minutes of the meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2017 were agreed and adopted by the members.

**2. Matters Arising**

- Cllr. Colette Connolly expressed her strong objection to not receiving the report on Kirwan Roundabout when same was requested.
- Cllr. Donal Lyons requested an update on Cemeteries. Mr. Tom Connell advised that in excess of thirty landowners had been written to and this has now been reduced to 6 possible sites that consultants are currently examining. He also advised that they are currently working on the layout and design of the proposed extension to Ragoon Cemetery.
- Cllr. Donal Lyons complimented the work recently carried out in Toft Park Playground and asked for update in relation to cages and flood lighting for Cappagh Park. Mr. Stephen Walsh confirmed funding for Cappagh Park had been applied for.
- Cllr. Padraig Conneely requested an update on derelict sites. Mr. Joe Tansey confirmed there are currently 13 sites on the register and 90 inspections were carried out in 2016. Mr. Tansey also advised letters and notices are being issued to property owners on an ongoing basis and Galway City Council are working alongside property owners in order to render the sites non-derelict.
- It was agreed that Helen McDonagh would issue a further updated report on Derelict Sites

- Ms. Helen McDonagh clarified that the location of the Derelict sites are available on the Galway City Council website

### **3. Consideration of minutes of meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> April, 2017**

On the proposal of Cllr. Donal Lyons and seconded by Cllr. Billy Cameron the minutes of the meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> April, 2017 were agreed and adopted by the members.

### **4. Matters Arising**

- **Matters of accuracy** – Cllr. Colette Connolly stated she was not in favour of permits for under 16's, she said under 16's should be accompanied by an appropriate adult and would like this noted in the minutes.

### **5. Presentation from Mr. Diarmuid Keaney, M.sc. in Applied Acoustics**

Cllr. Terry O'Flaherty informed the members that Mr. Keaney was unexpectedly unable to attend the meeting and sent his apologies. Mr. Keaney did forward his presentation but due to restrictions because of the current threat of computer malware virus the presentation could not be shown. Cllr. O'Flaherty asked Cllr. Cathal O'Conchuir to give a summary of what was contained within the presentation.

Cllr. Cathal O'Conchuir explained Mr. Keaney had found the ambient noise in the protected streetscape is 60 decibels at all times. He measured one performer with an amplifier at 74 decibels but also measured an opera style performer with no amp at 82 decibels. He stated other Cities including Melbourne, Australia had previously banned amplification only to bring it back the following year as it changed the unique nature of the street. Cllr. O'Conchuir concurred with the recommendation from Mr. Diarmuid Keaney which is to restrict the size of the amplifier a performer can use to small battery powered amps measuring 415mm, noise from these will only travel a distance of 35m.

### **6. Draft Street Performance and Busking Bye-laws 2017**

- Cllr. Colette Connolly expressed her difficulty with the bye-laws. She stated she had spoken with numerous businesses' all of whom are against amplification for health & safety reasons. Perhaps a compromise would be to allow the use of the battery powered amplifier (415mm) in Eyre Square and Spanish Arch only. Cllr. Connolly stated her opposition to items 5,6,7,8 & 9 and said she would not be comfortable recommending the bye-laws to full Council the way they are currently drafted.
- Cllr. Donal Lyons stated that the members had discussed the draft bye-laws in great detail at the previous meeting and there was a genuine concern for under 16's and he was against the banning of amplification. Cllr. Lyons also stated that if the bye-laws are adopted they can always be reviewed at a later stage but the matter needs a resolution now.
- Cllr. Cathal O' Conchuir referenced the drinking by-laws, there has been an improvement as the Guards now have legislation they can enforce. Cllr. O'Conchuir also mentioned the need for permits for under 16's.
- Mr. Simon Heaslip stated there is a need for by-laws and implementation of same is very important.
- Cllr. Billy Cameron stated a full comprehensive debate had taken place at the previous meeting in relation to the draft bye-laws and proposed they be put before Council for an open debate, this was seconded by Cllr. Padraig Conneely.
- Cllr. Terry O'Flaherty referenced a letter dated 11/05/2011 when she first took up Chair on the Environment SPC. It was on the agenda then, this issue has been a feature for a long time. Cllr. O'Flaherty stated she would be in favour of banning amplification altogether, however she is willing to go along with the proposed bye-laws to full Council but said they should be reviewed in 9 months time instead of 12.

- The proposal to bring the draft bye-laws to full Council was put to a vote amongst the members 6 members were in favour, 3 against namely – Cllr. Colette Connolly, Mr. Brendan Smyth & Ms. Eleanor Hough.

## 7. Disposal of Waste

Mr. Joe Tansey referenced a report on illegal dumping which had been circulated to members. He gave a summary of the report.

Cllr. Colette Connolly stated she was grateful for the report which she had requested for a long time. Cllr. Connolly expressed her astonishment at the money spent on Litter Management and said the public would be shocked at the annual budget. She said the public need to be better citizens, although there is positive news in the fact Western Distributor Road came top of the list for recycling and Siobhan McKenna Road came in second.

Cllr. Connolly raised a number of queries which included:

- In relation to the 93% of households availing of waste collection she queried what happens to the other 7%
- Why no action had been taken in Fana Glas
- Update on the proposal for the privatisation of public bin collection
- The lack of hazardous waste collection in the city is a major issue
- If rubbish bags could be marked with an official Galway City Council logo
- People should be issued with a reference number when they log a complaint with the Council.
- Where were we in meeting the target of a 1% reduction in overall waste
- Number of litter fines issued

Cllr. Cathal O’Conchuir said the steps taken to date in Waste Management are fantastic. Galway City Council was the first Local Authority to introduce the green, black and brown bin system. Cllr. O’Conchuir stressed the importance of school education programmes especially with secondary schools in helping to combat illegal dumping.

Cllr. Pdraig Conneely said there was no reference in the report to the possible privatisation of Evening and Weekend collection; he asked if this is happening, what the cost will be and will it provide the same service as a Galway City Council worker. Cllr. Conneely also asked about posters on poles around the City that are left there for months. Is there any action taken about getting these removed.

Cllr. Donal Lyons complimented the work of the Street Cleaning Team. He said the budget for Litter Management shows the commitment of Galway City Council. Cllr. Lyons raised the following queries:

- The possibility of compactor bins
- Can we identify the 7% of households not availing of waste collection services and ask where the waste is going
- The lack of services available for hazardous waste
- The importance of education in schools re recycling and waste
- Dog fouling
- Onus on takeaways at night

Mr. Brendan Smyth thanked the staff. He asked if the figures on contamination of waste mentioned in the report included data from the EPA. Mr. Smyth queried if there are any plans to bring back “Glan Suas Galway” which was previously run by Sharon Carroll, he feels this is especially important in the year of the Green Leaf Award. Other issues raised included:

- Lack of bins in parks
- The need to introduce volunteer rangers
- Any plans to get waste collectors into Parks and Wetlands

Mr. Smyth also stated he agreed with Cllr. Colette Connolly in relation to a reference number being issued when a complaint is lodged.

Cllr. Billy Cameron complimented the staff. He said the photos in the report are alarming but not surprising. He mentioned the positive feedback Irish people get when abroad at events in relation to clearing up after themselves; this is something we need to replicate in our own Cities. Cllr. Cameron stated he seen a roll of rubbish bags attached to a pole in Eyre Square, he asked if this was a new initiative and if it could be rolled out in Spanish Arch and other areas around the City. He also proposed for a review of the provision of bins in public parks, depending on the size they should have a minimum of 1-2 bins. He suggested that on the day of a hazardous waste collection, members of the public should produce a utility bill to show they live in the City area.

Mr. Simon Heaslip also acknowledged the hard work of the Street Cleaning Team. He said people need to be educated that they are responsible for their own waste. Mr Heaslip stated he felt that when the canals were drained recently it was a missed opportunity to clear Claddagh Basin of rubbish.

Cllr. Terry O’Flaherty complimented the great work of the team. She said she agrees with the need for provision of bins in public areas and Fana Glas really needs attention. Detection and prosecution of people littering is very important and she thinks people should be named and shamed.

Mr. Joe Tansey said the key message to get across is we need to be better citizens. Mr. Tansey clarified issues for the members including:

- In relation to the 7% of households not availing of waste collection – some of these are derelict, vacant or have private disposal and we cannot attribute the 7% to illegal dumping
- The privatisation of the bin collection is for the 20 large bins from the Spanish Arch out to Salthill only
- The Hazardous waste service was previously abused. It was promoted for household waste in the City, however people with commercial waste and people living outside of the City were using it. People need to behave in a certain manner.
- The importance of education in relation to dumping and recycling and stated Galway City Council would continue to support Green Schools etc.
- Dog fouling is down to public behaviour. Galway City Council have little resources to enforce the law on this issue. Pooper scoopers are supplied by Galway City Council along Salthill beach.
- There is an active campaign every year to remove the advertising posters which requires a lot of resources
- In relation to clearing the Claddagh Basin, Galway City Council did not have control of the site at the time of this work, the contractor did. This is something that will be looked at again.
- No figures for the contamination of waste – the figures do not include EPA data.

Mr. Tansey stated that public behaviour is the most important issue. Providing more bins requires more resources that we do not have. The onus is on the person to bring their waste with them. He pointed out that the last 3 towns to win “Tidy Towns” had actually reduced their number of street litter bins & Galway City Council should follow this example. New initiatives are being developed and rolled out across the City e.g. bag system in Spanish Arch

## **Recreation and Amenity**

### **8. Grass Cutting Regime 2017**

Mr. Stephen Walsh referenced a summary report which was circulated to members. He stated there are currently three teams providing services to 175 taken in charge housing estates and

associated secondary distributor roads with a fourth team providing overlapping services including strimming. Four full time seasonal staff have also been recruited. Mr. Walsh also advised that the collection of grass cuttings is becoming an issue in that the numbers for collection have risen significantly and in some cases it has been found that the contents do not contain open space vegetation but instead contains household waste.

Cllr. Colette Connolly suggested that clear transparent bags be used for collection in order to help combat this issue.

Cllr. Donal Lyons acknowledged the grass cutting regime has improved this year but said that from an aesthetic point of view more care needs to be taken as grass is left all over the road and there are patches of grass left behind not cut.

Mr. Tom Connell stated that this was a quality issue and it will be monitored.

Mr Stephen Walsh spoke about a national pollination policy which promotes additional planting and encourages the public to get involved. Ms. Eleanor Hough asked when this would be commencing as she would be interested in getting involved.

Cllr. Billy Cameron asked if there was a follow up after grass cutting for kerbside weeds. Mr. Stephen Walsh stated this would come under Road Maintenance rather than Parks department.

Cllr. Terry O’Flaherty acknowledged the improvement of grass cutting services this year and asked about the situation in relation to roundabouts. Mr. Walsh stated that the tender was currently live with the closing date next week.

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

It was agreed that this item would be discussed at the next SPC meeting scheduled for 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2017 as a one item agenda.

#### **10. Correspondence**

Cllr. Terry O’ Flaherty made all members aware of the correspondence circulated from Ms. Catherine Seale, Waters & Communities.

#### **11. AOB**

The following motions were submitted at the end of the meeting.

Proposed by Cllr. Billy Cameron, seconded by Cllr. Terry O’Flaherty  
***“Develop a policy for the provision of bins in public places”***

Proposed by Cllr. Colette Connolly, seconded by Mr. Brendan Smyth  
***“This SPC will examine the process regarding the logging of complaints”***

Proposed by Mr. Brendan Smyth, seconded by Cllr. Colette Connolly  
***“This SPC supports the establishment of a volunteer Park Rangers unit to assist Council staff including keeping Council parks clean”***

Proposed by Cllr. Colette Connolly, seconded by Mr. Brendan Smyth  
***This SPC calls on Galway City Council to introduce a quarterly hazardous waste collection service & co-ordinate with the County to hold same day collections”***

Proposed by Cllr. Colette Connolly, seconded by Mr. Brendan Smyth

***“This SPC calls on Galway City Council to be more pro-active in promoting the Bulky Goods Service through public notices, in City libraries, schools, places of employment & in all correspondence from Galway City Council to Council tenants”***

This concluded the business of the meeting. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2017.