

**Minutes of meeting Climate Action, Environment, Recreation & Amenity
Strategic Policy Committee held on Tuesday the 29th September 2021 via
Microsoft Teams**

Presiding: Cllr. M. O'Connor

Present: Cllr. D McDonnell, Cllr. D. Lyons, Cllr. T O'Flaherty, Cllr. C Connolly, Cllr. O. Hanley, Cllr. N. Murphy, Cllr. J Connolly, Mr. B Smyth, Ms. E. Hough, Ms. C Stanley

Ms. C. Kilcoyne, Senior Engineer, Ms. H. McDonagh, Administrative Officer, Mr. D. Redington, Acting Senior Executive Engineer, Mr. P. Batty, Executive Engineer, Ms. Lisa Smyth, Assistant Parks and Landscape Officer, Ms. S. Carroll, Executive Scientist, Mr. D Healy, Staff Officer, Ms. C. Jennings, Assistant Staff Officer

Absent/Apologies: Mr. D. Mahon, A/Director of Services, Mr. C Ryan

Item 1. Minutes of Meeting held on the 26th May, 2021

The Minutes of the SPC meeting held on the 26th May, 2021 were proposed by Cllr. T O'Flaherty and seconded by Cllr. O. Hanley and adopted by members.

Item 2. Matters Arising

The following matters were raised:

- Updates were sought on the following: the recent campaign in relation to dog fouling, a dog park for Galway, the new cemetery, planting in the alleyways, the Recreation & Amenity Needs Study, the management of the shared spaces in Barna Woods, the installation of bins at woodlands, Kingston and South Park Masterplans, the recruitment of Tree Officer and Biodiversity Officer, a date for the disposal of hazardous waste, the cutting of grass in no mow areas and the need to remove the long grass, Renmore Playground and if maps circulated recently were correct.
- The absence of forums to discuss matters and the lack of opportunity for under 18's engagement on matters.
- A discussion was sought in relation to Barna Woods and damage to the trees.
- The need for discussion in relation to Kissing Gates and the forthcoming audit.
- A request was made for the Pollinator Plan to be on the Agenda and a query raised on how to have matters listed on the Agenda.
- Mr. B. Smyth put forward a motion to discuss a Park Warden at the next meeting.
- Cllr. T'O Flaherty stated as former Chairperson of the Committee once playgrounds are installed at Renmore, Galway City Council will progress with a masterplan for the

area. She reassured members that there was no plan for a skateboard Park at Renmore.

The queries were responded to as follows:

- Playground Plans will be progressed for Renmore area for the age groups 0-6 and 6-12 years to be completed by the end of 2022. There will be consultation with groups through the Part 8 Planning Process. The previous drawing that was done up was agreed with the Renmore Residents association and Mr Stephen Walsh as a concept drawing. Essentially there is a blank canvas except that the site location for the playgrounds is the part of the site across the road from and near the Community Centre. The recent circulation of the concept drawing was not carried out by Galway City Council Staff.
- The grass in the No Mow areas will be cut and collected.
- There is no update in relation to a Dog Park.
- The extension to Ragoon cemetery is nearing completion.
- An Anti-Dumping Initiative which including the “greening of the laneways” was completed two weeks ago.
- Galway City Council will engage a Consultant to carry out an audit on the Kissing Gates and a report with options will be brought to the SPC for discussion in 2022.
- The Green Spaces Strategy has not progressed due to staff shortages but will aim to get the tender out by the end of the year.
- The management of the shared spaces at Barna Woods markings has not progressed.
- The recruitment of a Biodiversity Officer is at shortlisting stage. The Tree Officer has not been progressed due to staff shortages in R&A and in HR.
- It was clarified that the SPC committee deal with policy issues not operational issues.
- There has been no progress with the Kingston and South Park Masterplans due to staff shortages.
- A provisional date of 13th November has been set for the Hazardous Waste Disposal Event to be held at the Galway Racecourse. The event will be promoted through social media platforms and the Galway Advertiser. Users will be required to register online using their Eircode and pay a small fee.
- An update in relation to the Dog Fouling campaign was included on the recent Chief Executive Report. Ms. C. Kilcoyne read out the update to the members. The incidents of dog fouling has dropped by 60%.
- The members will be updated separately on the damage at Barna Woods.
- Requests for items to be included on the SPC Agenda to be sent to the Chairperson for consideration with Officials of Galway City Council. Only a number of items on each SPC Agenda.
- Ms. C. Kilcoyne confirmed that GCC had committed had committed to the installation of a bin at Merlin Woods but am trying to resolve a resource issue in regard to servicing the bin. Ms. C Stanley stated that the bins were to go into the 3 woodlands at all entrances and not just Merlin. CK advised will check and revert.

Item 3. All Ireland Pollinator Plan Update

Following the circulation of an update on the All Ireland Pollinator Plan, Ms. Lisa Smyth gave a short presentation to members.

The following queries were raised by members:

- If the alternative weed killer is being used by Recreation and Amenity Department only or across all Departments except for use on Japanese Knotweed.
- The number of trees lost each year.
- A request was made to issue a summary of the success of the 'Healthy Green Spaces Initiative' to other groups and if Shangort Park and Kingston Road could be considered.
- That Native Irish Species must be highlighted and Parks should look at Ecological corridors.
- A request was made for details on the hard landscaping at Millennium Park.
- Clarification was requested on how was the "greening of the laneways" initiative advertised.
- How are Galway City Council involved with Rinvile Park? Large areas are being mowed.
- If areas like Nolan Park were going to be left uncut.

The queries were responded to as follows:

- The use of glyphosate is being reviewed across all Departments, hand weeding is part of the roundabout contract but has proved challenging. The "green" weed killers have been trialled but are largely unsuccessful. Galway City Council are partially funding research being undertaken by Kildare County Council.
- A record of trees removed and replaced will be kept going forward.
- Tree planting is the most productive biodiversity and will focus on ecological corridors.
- The request for the report in relation to Healthy Green Spaces will be followed up on and Shangort Park is included in the initiative. No additional areas are being taken on until 2023.
- Three groups were engaged with in relation to "greening of the laneways" which was a pilot scheme this year. Coogan Park was the only area that engaged. Castlepark and Bohermore were also contacted but did not engage. The Environmental Awareness Officer Mr. T. McClusker was involved in the initiative and continues to liaise with the groups. There was also engagement with Residents Associations, Tenant Liaison Officers and Community groups. The aim is to roll out this initiative in other areas next year subject to funding.
- The hard landscaping at Millennium Park is supplementary to the green flag, for the sensory garden and is only a small area where we are looking at seating, paving and fencing so that the area can be enclosed into a Garden.
- Invasive Species is not just Japanese Knotweed.

- Galway City Council contribute toward the maintenance costs of Rinvile Park with Galway County Council. Will issue a request to Galway County Council or details of their management of the open spaces.
- Grass in all of the pollinator areas will be cut. The Recreation & Amenity Department is currently purchasing grass cutting machines to deal with the long grass.

Item 4. Climate Action Monitoring Group

Mr. Paul Batty gave an overview of the report which was previously issued to the members.

The following queries were raised by members:

- Any feedback from CARO on the Climate Adaptation Plan
- Issues were raised around the proposed pilot decarbonising zones in Westside, Government gave an announcement and Local Authorities unable to deliver.
- The implementation of CFRAMS, lack of funding and deadlines.
- The need to reach out to experts was highlighted and for all to work together.
- The lack of staff resources

The queries were responded to as follows:

- A scorecard & progress report was issued In relation to the Climate Adaptation Implementation Plan. Feedback was not received last year but may get feedback this year.
- A tender for consultant to assist to develop Implementation plans for Decarbonising Zones have gone to the market. The Brief will include an energy masterplan for the City.
- For the Decarbonising zone, a Circular was received earlier in the year and a recommended location had to be submitted by the 30th April. While we sought guidance from the Department on the implementation schedule, we did not receive a response. GCC noted that the implementation plans will not be delivered by any LA by the December 21 deadline due to lack of clarification on the zone selected or guidance documents provided by the department. Cllr. M. O'Connor gave a commitment to follow up with the Department.
- Galway City Council are promoting Sustainable Energy Communities, Galway city currently have 10 but require residents, business and community groups to engage with same to assist in reaching climate action targets. Full details along with frequently asked questions are available on Galway City Council's website. Link to be circulated to the members.
- CFRAMS will take a number of years and an extensive consultation process will form part of the development of the scheme which has already commenced with anon-statutory virtual consultation day in May. The scheme is extremely complex and all environmental aspects have to be considered including the Special Area of Conservation, the impacts of Climate Change and planning consent will be sought from An Bord Pleanála.

Item 5. Waste Enforcement Unit Overview

Ms. Sharon Carroll gave a presentation to the members on Galway City Council's Waste Enforcement Unit.

The following queries were raised:

- If there is an audit trail on where waste including hospital waste ends up when it goes abroad.
- The lack of enforcement staff and if those caught illegal dumping can be named.
- The collection times of private operators in early hours of the morning.
- Costs of illegal dumping.
- Clarity was sought on the banning of single use plastics from the July.
- If a scheme could be implemented whereby a customer gets a cup in one outlet and can return to another and if publicans are playing their part in the use of plastic glasses.
- Ms. Mary O'Leary was complimented on all her hard work.

The issues raised were responded to as follows:

- Galway City Council follow up on operators in Galway City but do not follow its trail when it leaves the country. Most operators will not provide details of where their waste is going for competitive reasons.
- Hospitals have an enforcement officer and a policy in relation to waste.
- There are issues with using CCTV under Data Protection Regulations however the new Circular Economy Bill is going through the Dail at present which will strengthen enforcement.
- Galway City Council are working with the Gardai on enforcement, Unable to name perpetrators due to Data Protection Regulations
- The collection time restrictions were lifted during Covid for private operators.
- It is hard to isolate the costs of illegal dumping alone. Litter Management Unit Staff are collecting waste throughout the City and the Recreation and Amenity staff carrying out work in the woodlands.
- Single use plastics have been banned since the 3rd of July 2021 and it will be enforced by the EPA, this is a European directive and guidance will be coming out shortly. A copy of the Regulations will be circulated to the members.
- An Awareness Campaign will be undertaken for re-usable coffee cups, which will address the need to educate people.
- Ms. S. Carroll will circulate updates to the members on the following: Where waste ends up, a note in relation to C&D/Hazardous Waste, cost analysis, banning of single use plastics and the legislation.

Item 6. Temporary Signage Policy

Mr. D. Healy gave a presentation to the members. (copy of presentation previously circulated).

Following a discussion Cllr. J. Connolly proposed that the policy go before full council which was seconded by Cllr. T. O Flaherty and agreed by the members. The Pilot Temporary Signage Policy will continue until approval is received from the Full Council.

Item 7. AOB

The following queries were raised:

- A report was requested by the 1st December in relation to the removal of seaweed from the beaches.
- The outdoor staff were complimented on the great job they have been doing in relation to street cleaning.
- Concerns were raised about damage done in Eyre Square as a result of socialising in the area.
- An update was sought in relation to painting of the Blackrock Diving Tower.
- A request was made for Professor John Sweeney to make a presentation to the full SPC.

Ms. C. Kilcoyne responded as follows:

- It will not be possible to prepare a report on the seaweed by the 1st of December but will do a report next year.
- The issues raised in relation to Eyre Square need to be brought before the Joint Policing Committee and extra funds have been requested in the budget for 2022 to carry out repairs to the area as a result of the socialising.
- The Tower at Blackrock could not be painted due to Health & Safety issues, the contractor is continuing to paint railings and other areas where there are no safety concerns. The original Part 8 Planning process did not proceed because of the amount of negative feedback received through the submission process. Essential repairs are required to the Tower. Tobins Consulting Engineers have been engaged to work on a new plan.
- Have no issue with requesting Professor John Sweeney to attend if he is available before the Climate Action Group. Ms. E. Hough clarified that she wants the speaker before the SPC and not the Climate Action Group. This was agreed.
- Mr. D. Skene, Senior Executive Engineer is leaving Galway City Council and had advanced a lot of projects. The members wished him well in his new role.

The Meeting concluded.