



Minutes of Environment, Biodiversity & Climate Action SPC Meeting
held on 9th May 2023 – Online Meeting

Present: **SPC Members:** Cllr. Pat Fitzgerald, (*Chair*), Cllr. Jim Griffin, Cllr. Ger Barron, Cllr. John Hearne, Cllr. Joanne Bailey, Cllr. Cristiona Kiely, Cllr. Damien Geoghegan, Cllr. Joe Kelly, Mr. Tom Hogan, Ms. Ithel McKenna, Ms. Laura Forbes O'Brien, Ms. Mary Greene.

Officials: Mr. Fergus Galvin, Director of Services, Mr. Niall Kane, A/Senior Executive Officer, Mr. Anthony Russell, Administrative Officer, Mr. Seán Gormley, A/Senior Executive Engineer, Ms. Susan Lee, Community Climate Action Officer, Ms. Ella Ryan, Environmental Awareness Officer, Ms. Siobhán McCarthy, Staff Officer, Mr. Graham Keeffe, Climate Action Graduate.

Also Present: Ms. Philippa King, Southern Region Waste Management Planning Office.

It was agreed that Cllr. J. Bailey would chair the meeting pending the arrival of Cllr. P. Fitzgerald. Cllr. J. Bailey welcomed the members and officials and thanked them for attending.

1. Minutes of Meeting held on 14th February 2023

The Minutes of meeting held on 14th February 2023 were proposed by Cllr. D. Geoghegan and seconded by T. Hogan and approved.

2. Matters Arising

T. Hogan enquired as to the current status of his motion regarding the re-municipalisation of waste services. Research by Dublin City Council indicates it may require primary legislation and an amendment to the Waste Management Act 1996. F. Galvin, DOS said a number of members of the SPC were to come together to agree the wording of the motion and he will check the minutes of previous meetings and revert.

3. Draft National Waste Management Plan for a Circular Economy - Statutory Consultation

F. Galvin, DOS introduced Philippa King. The draft national plan was launched last week and it is now open to public consultation. Philippa works for the Southern Region Waste Management Planning Office in Limerick.

P. King commenced her presentation and outlined that 13.6 million tonnes of waste are collected each year in Ireland. 58% is construction and demolition waste, 33% is municipal waste, and 4% is food waste and other. 2.7 tonnes of waste is generated per person per year in Ireland. The figure for Waterford is 2.4 tonnes of waste generated per person per year. She advised we do not have the capacity to treat all of our waste in Ireland. The circular economy is not a new concept. It is about looking at prevention, reusing, repairing and buying second hand.

The major changes are that it is the first single national plan and a national oversight group has been established. There are 5 volumes contained in the plan.

€285m is being spent on waste activities annually with income generated of only €64m which leaves a deficit of €221m. The ambition is that there will be 0% growth in waste generated per person per year. It is an ambitious target as the population can increase but the figure of 0% growth in waste generated cannot increase.

Targets:

- 1% reduction per person per year for residual municipal waste.
- 2% reduction per year for construction waste. It is a big ask and improved construction practices will be required such as less mixed skips.
- 90% of materials being in compliance is the target. It is important that the correct materials are placed in the correct bins.
- Target of 10kg per person per year for reuse of materials e.g. clothes, textiles, furniture.
- 10 civic amenity sites nationally that will have a reuse area. The target is 10 nationally at a minimum.

13 core policies were outlined and the focus areas are operations, material streams and infrastructure.

Each focus area has an individual fact sheet. They set out the purpose, targeted policies and priority actions.

83 priority actions are to be implemented. National co-ordination group for waste and the circular economy is to be set up.

Plan in numbers: 1 plan ambition, 6 national targets, 13 core policies, 16 focus areas, 73 targeted policies, 83 priority actions and 51 key deliverables.

The plan opened to public consultation on 3rd May and submissions can be made until 5th July.

Cllr. J. Kelly made reference to the various percentages of waste collected at the start of the presentation and asked what happens to 39% of waste exported and asked why is it exported? Is this waste burned or put into landfill and are we moving the problem to another part of the world? He said the income collected from waste collection charges is not equal to the cost of waste disposal. The average waste collection charges per household in Waterford is €300. If the plan is to close the gap between income collected and the cost of disposal, this cannot be levied on domestic householders, especially those who are unemployed. He asked what is the plan to close the gap and how do you encourage behaviour changes without putting additional costs onto householders?

Cllr. J. Griffin said the local authority rolls out bulky goods collections during the year. It amazes him the amount of reusable items being disposed of. Could the local authority do the bulky goods collection on a more regular basis?

P. King spoke in relation to the exporting of recycled and mixed waste. She said residual municipal waste goes to waste energy plants. We do not have the facilities in Ireland for processing dry recycling. We are beginning to improve. It is not feasible to process paper and cardboard in Ireland due to insufficient volumes. To improve infrastructure is a long and difficult process around waste.

The price monitoring group will be reconstituted to examine pricing structure. The National Waste Collection Permit Office will undertake a review of incentivised charging. In relation to Cllr. Griffin's query regarding bulky goods P. King said people can already bring bulky goods to civic amenity sites and there is very little charge to members of the public on bulky goods collection days.

N. Kane, A/SEO said this year under the Anti-Dumping Initiative the Council is looking to tackle chemical waste. There is no allocation for bulky waste this year.

I. McKenna made a request for the collection of agricultural chemical waste to take place for chemicals sitting on shelves with labels fallen off. She said there is a great need for a collection of hazardous chemicals for the agricultural sector to be organised.

Cllr. C. Kiely said it is great to see measures moving along. It will be great to see the impact they will have. Work on education and behavioural change will be hugely beneficial and it will mean a cost saving for people. In relation to the target of a minimum of 10 civic amenity sites which will have a re-use area she asked if Waterford can be one of the 10 sites.

Cllr. J. Hearne asked is there a percentage of customers in Waterford who have not signed up for a bin collection service and what can we do to bring them on board? He asked if the Council should invest in segregated bins.

P. King said in relation to agriculture a new E.U. Directive will come into force and that by next January there must be a separate collection for agricultural chemicals. In relation to civic amenity sites she said they are looking at background details of all sites at present. They will classify sites and decide which sites will be included in the first 10. WEEE belongs to compliance schemes. Waterford has 88% of people on a private waste collection system which is a very high figure.

N. Kane, A/SEO said the civic amenity site in Kilbarry has started taking back paint in conjunction with Renew Enterprises. Ella Ryan is trying to see if we can do something with furniture with a community group.

M. Greene said she does use a private waste collection company but was sorry when Waterford County Council exited the collection of household waste. She said the civic amenity site in Clonmel is very good and very reasonable. The

percentage of collection by private operators may not show the full picture to include people who are bringing their waste and recycling to recycling centres.

N. Kane, A/SEO said the figures would not differentiate between people who share bins. The very high collection rate of 88% is a credit to the people of Waterford.

P. King said the Deposit Return Scheme is being introduced on 1st February next year for plastic bottles and aluminium cans. She said we should wait for this to be implemented before the introduction of new segregated bins.

Cllr. P. Fitzgerald took over as Chair of the meeting from Cllr. J. Bailey.

4. Report on Research in Respect of the Re-municipalisation of Waste Services in Dublin City Council

N. Kane, A/SEO outlined that Dublin City Council passed a motion in 2019 calling for the re-municipalisation of waste collection and a working group was established. The IPA reported earlier this year and compared the situation in Dublin with other European cities. There are 11 waste collection companies operating in Dublin. 4 companies represent 75% of the market. Dublin is the only city surveyed with a fully privatised collection service.

The report presented 3 options: 1. Dublin City Council re-commencing collection, 2. Dublin City Council managing the exclusive tendering of the waste collection service to one operator, 3. Maintain the status quo with enhanced regulation.

1. Dublin City Council re-commencing collection. Subject to a previous judicial review. There is a potential conflict between regulatory role and provision of service. It would require an amendment to the Waste Management Act and there is a high risk of legal challenge to the legislation. It appears to be a non-runner. It could fall foul of E.U. state rules and may require approval from E.U. Commission.
2. The exclusive tendering of waste collection services to one operator is common in other European cities. It is similar to the option that T. Hogan is proposing. It would require an amendment to the Waste Management Act.
3. The third option is to maintain the current arrangements with enhanced regulation and an enhanced supervisory role for the NWCPO and expand the role of the price monitoring group to ensure fair and transparent pricing.

T. Hogan said the proposal he put forward would be considered an interim step and that he can foresee obstacles. It would not be easy to go back. He said there could be different collection companies operating in each part of the city and he asked where will his proposal now move to? He asked what are the next steps now for Dublin City Council in relation to the report?

Cllr. P. Fitzgerald asked what are the next steps to progress the motion? T. Hogan asked if Dublin City Council have decided on the next step as a result of the publication of the report yet? He stated his proposal would be the first step to full re-municipalisation of the waste collection service. Cllr. P. Fitzgerald asked if Waterford City & County Council will examine a pathway back to running our own waste collection service.

F. Galvin, DOS checked the minutes of the November meeting and advised it was agreed that a number of members of the SPC were to work on the wording of the motion. The proposer of the motion must be an elected councillor in order for it to be sent to CPG to progress. He also stated the motion would be asking the Minister to consider taking a particular action.

Cllr. P. Fitzgerald asked if any councillor wishes to take the matter forward?

Cllr. J. Kelly said if the motion is approved by Council it will be sent to the Minister's desk for consideration. He believes it will be difficult to have the government change policy.

Cllr. P. Fitzgerald said he is willing to sit down and contribute to the formulation of the wording of the motion also. He believes it is important to reduce the number of refuse trucks collecting in estates across the city.

Cllr. D. Geoghegan said when the Council operated the waste collection service it was dependable and offered good terms and conditions to workers. When the service opened up to private operators a lot of customers left the Council operated waste collection service.

5. Climate Action Plan Pre-consultation

Graham Keefe, Climate Action Graduate gave a brief overview of the Climate Action Plan pre-consultation. The purpose of the plan is to translate the national plan into local actions. The requirement to commence the drafting of the

plan was received as per Ministerial Order on 24th February 2023. The drafting of the completed plan must be concluded by 24th February 2024. The plan must include targets for mitigation and adaptation.

The pre-consultation survey went live on 8th May 2023. It is to allow the people of Waterford to help shape the future of local climate actions. Local authorities have a key role to play and are uniquely placed to influence climate action across many sectors of society. The pre-consultation is open until 5.00pm on 16th June. G. Keefe will share the link to the survey with members of the committee. In person consultation in libraries will be conducted through the PPN.

Cllr. J. Kelly said the pre-consultation phase should receive a lot of engagement. He hopes this is a process of real engagement and that what emerges can be supported by the vast majority of the community.

6. Community Climate Action Fund Update

Susan Lee, Community Climate Action Officer provided an update on the Community Climate Action Fund. She gave a quick recap of Programme Strands 1 and 1A.

Waterford City & County Council will have at least one application under Strand 1A. A number of publicity events were held to promote the Fund. Introduction events were held and project development workshops were then held. Project development workshops were one to one meetings with community groups. 100 people attended the introduction events.

S. Lee outlined that there is now a revised timeline which has pushed it out by two months. Community groups have been informed of the delays. It is expected to open the application window this month. Community groups have 8 weeks to prepare and submit an application. The delay comes with a silver lining. The extra time will give projects a chance to be stronger with kick-off to commence in early 2024. S. Lee will advise at the next meeting the projects that have been selected.

7. Date of Next Meeting

N. Kane, A/SEO advised the SPC that the next meeting will take place on Tuesday, 12th September 2023. M. Greene asked if meetings would continue to be held on Zoom or if one meeting per year will be held in person? Cllr. P. Fitzgerald said that since Covid-19 there has been no face to face meeting of the committee. M. Greene proposed the holding of an in person meeting.

F. Galvin, DOS said it can be arranged to hold 1 to 2 meetings per year in person. This would allow committee members to have a physical introduction to staff members. If it is decided the next meeting to be held will be an in person meeting arrangements can be made to facilitate this. M. Greene proposed that the next meeting of the committee on 12th September is an in person meeting which was seconded by Cllr. J. Kelly. F. Galvin, DOS said staff in Environment will find a venue for the next meeting and will advise members accordingly.

8. Correspondence

No correspondence was received.

9. Any Other Business

- T. Hogan said the numbers of cars on the roads is growing exponentially. He would like to see a presentation on cycling and walking. He said cycling infrastructure is far from great but it will be a massive job to get people out of their cars without adequate cycling infrastructure. He said as a Climate SPC we should have a presentation on cycling infrastructure in Waterford and associated timelines. Cllr. P. Fitzgerald asked F. Galvin, DOS if the Active Travel team will arrange a presentation for the next meeting. F. Galvin, DOS said he was happy to do this and that a number of projects are being progressed. Cllr. C. Kiely said there are many cycling projects in the pipeline.
- T. Hogan asked if the SPC can be briefed and brought up to date with sustainable transport projects and is put on the agenda as an item for the next meeting.

Cllr. Fitzgerald thanked the Councillors, Community Representatives and Executive for attending and concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: John Kearne 12/ sept
Chair,
Environment, Climate Action & Biodiversity SPC

Date: 12 / sept 2023

