

16th November, 2017

To the Mayor and Each Member of Limerick City and County Council

**Chairperson's Report for the Environment Strategic Policy Committee Meeting of the 23rd
October, 2017**

Item 1: Minutes of Environment SPC Meeting held on 26th June, 2017

On the proposal of Cllr. Hourigan, seconded by Cllr. Gleeson, the minutes of the previous Committee Meeting of the 26th June, 2017 were unanimously agreed and adopted.

Item 2: Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor S. Browne

"I will move at the next Meeting that Limerick City and County Council, being deeply concerned with the Government's new waste management proposals, write to the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Mr. Denis Naughten, TD, asking him to stop these new changes, establish a national regulator, introduce more measures to reduce, reuse and recycle waste, and introduce supports for low income families and those with medical conditions".

In moving the motion, Cllr. Browne stated that he believed that the new waste collection regulations which will result in the elimination of flat rate bin collection charges do not take into account the needs of households on low incomes, those with disabilities and certain medical conditions. He also stated that the new regulations do not provide enough encouragement to householders to reduce, re-use and recycle waste. He further outlined his belief that there would be no regulator for the new pricing structures.

The motion was seconded by Cllr. McCreesh who offered the view that leaving the issue of waste collection to the private sector would result in a diminished level of service and cause

difficulties for low income families and households with children and older people in need of assistance.

Members raised the issues of the non-availability of services to some households, illegal dumping, air quality implications as a result of increased travelling by refuse collection trucks etc. It was suggested by some Members that the Council should review its position with a view to delivering a service itself. However, it was also argued by Members that the difficulty of sourcing significant funding for the delivery of a refuse collection service by the Council meant that such an option is un-realistic.

The Senior Executive Officer outlined the position of the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment in relation to the changes to Household Waste Collection Charges as set out in Circular WP04.17.

On the proposal of Cllr. Browne, seconded by Cllr. McCreesh, it was unanimously agreed that the following recommendation be submitted to the full Council:

“Limerick City and County Council, being deeply concerned with the Government's new waste management proposals, write to the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Mr. Denis Naughten, TD, asking him to stop these new changes, establish a national regulator, introduce more measures to reduce, reuse and recycle waste, and introduce supports for low income families and those with medical conditions”.

Item 3: Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor C. Prendiville

“I will move at the next Meeting that this Council write to the Minister for the Environment urging the Government to implement in full the recommendations of the 2011 Government Review of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in particular the concerns raised over the low level of prosecutions, the immunity of the EPA from prosecution, and the need to make it accountable to the Ombudsman”.

Cllr. Prendiville stated that the public do not have faith in the EPA . He argued that the public have reservations as to the effectiveness of the monitoring and enforcement role of the EPA.

He expressed the view that these reservations are confirmed by the low level of prosecutions undertaken by the EPA. He pointed out that a review of the Environmental Protection Agency had been undertaken in May 2011. He confirmed that the final report of this review outlined 58 recommendations under a number of different headings. He pointed out that some of these recommendations related to areas such as licencing, assessment and monitoring and also the legislative framework as it relates to the EPA's statutory immunity

and the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman. He argued that all outstanding recommendations must be implemented without delay.

Other Members also expressed a lack of confidence in the operation of the EPA.

On the proposal of Cllr. Prendiville, seconded by Cllr. Collins, it was unanimously agreed that the following motion be submitted to the full Council:

“That Limerick City & County Council write to the Minister for the Environment urging the Government to implement in full the recommendations of the 2011 Government Review of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in particular the concerns raised over the low level of prosecutions, the immunity of the EPA from prosecution, and the need to make it accountable to the Ombudsman”.

It was subsequently decided at the Corporate Policy Group meeting held on Monday 20th November that this motion and recommendation would be referred back to the next meeting of the Environment SPC for further consideration.

Item 4: Presentation on Draft National Mitigation Plan – Mr. Pat Stephens

Mr. Stephens gave a presentation on the National Mitigation Plan 2017 outlining that a successful transition to a low carbon economy requires engagement from all levels of Government.

He outlined the challenges and opportunities facing the Council in areas such as

- The need for a bottom up approach.
- The need to promote awareness and engagement in all communities across Ireland.
- The need for local authorities to assume a leadership role within their local communities to encourage appropriate behavioural change.

He advised that the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act, 2015 provides that a local authority that a local authority may adopt mitigation measures in relation to its own administrative area.

Mr. Stephens explained that it is envisaged that regional teams would be set up to develop an expertise on the predominant climate risks in their particular regions. He explained that these regional teams would become Centres of Excellence and would develop regional strategies on that basis. He advised the Members that these regional strategies would then be used to inform the Local Authority strategies.

Mr. Stephens further advised the Members that the Local Authority Adaptation Development Guideline Report developed by the EPA would support local authorities in the development of a local climate change adaptation strategy.

He explained that Regional Climate Change Adaptation Offices had been set up with the Cork County Council – Atlantic Seaboard South Office covering Clare, Limerick City & County, Clare and Cork City and Cork County.

Item 5: River Basin Management Plan – Feedback on Public Consultation and Prioritisation of Areas for Action – Ms. Anne Goggin.

Ms. Goggin explained to the Members that the basic objective of the Water Framework Directive is to ensure we have clean water in our rivers and lakes etc and that we use water sustainably. She advised that this objective will be pursued by means of River Basin Management Plans which are renewed every six years.

Ms. Goggin explained that sufficient resources and information are not available to address all of the “at risk” water bodies by 2021 and she outlined that, in Limerick, seven areas incorporating 19 water bodies, have been prioritised for action.

Ms. Goggin advised that the areas that have been prioritised for action will be focus of the new regional shared service teams who will carry out detailed investigations to understand the problems and identify solutions.

The Meeting then concluded.

Summary of Recommendations to Full Council

Recommendation 1:

“That Limerick City and County Council, being deeply concerned with the Government's new waste management proposals, write to the Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Mr. Denis Naughten, TD, asking him to stop these new changes, establish a national regulator, introduce more measures to reduce, reuse and recycle waste, and introduce supports for low income families and those with medical conditions”.

Jerome Scanlan

Chairperson of the Environment Strategic Policy Committee