

Water Services and Environment S.P.C.

Minutes of Meeting held on 14th September 2022

In attendance:

Elected Members:

Cllr. Suzanne Doyle (Chair), Cllr. A. Breen, Cllr. B. Dooley, Cllr. V. Liston,

KCC Staff:

Joe Boland (JB) Director of Services, Mark Byrne (MB), Marie Phelan (MP), Dara Wyer (DW)

Apologies:

Cllr B. Wyse, Cllr. I. Cussen, Evan Arkwright, Emer Conway, Tom O'Connor, P. O'Lunaigh

Presentation by:

Dr. Christy Boylan, Tidy Towns Adjudicator

Tidy Town Chairpersons in Attendance:

Gerry Keane – Leixlip, Teresa Troy - Monasterevin, Thomas Deegan – Ballymore Eustace, Vourneen Hennessy – Naas

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1. The minutes of the meeting of 22nd May 2022, already circulated, were adopted on the proposal of Cllr. A. Breen, seconded by Cllr. V. Liston.
 2. There were no matters arising from the minutes.
 3. A Presentation was made by Dr. Christy Boylan, Tidy Towns Adjudicator, which outlined performance in the key competition categories in the national Tidy Towns competition by local towns and villages.
 4. Dr. Boylan praised the great work done by each committee and focused attention on the consistent high scores achieved in various areas, some being higher than overall competition winners, but stressed the requirement of the committees to collaborate with each other, as well as advised on submission layouts and mappings provided to judges.

Special mention was made in relation to Maynooth cemetery, with great praise on the layout of the grounds and use of trees incorporated into the design as well as excellent maintenance management.

The presentation was very well received and commended. A panel discussion ensued, during which some of the following was discussed and questions arose.

- Green area maintenance such as shrubbery, wildflower meadows, grass cutting.
- Community goals, targets for county achievements.
- Dog fouling issues.
- Derelict Sites from a judging perspective.

Dr. Boylan provided good insight into green area maintenance, requesting that people be mindful to plant native wildflowers. Community / County achievements can be reached through greater cooperation and consistency. Derelict sites are not negatively marked during Tidy Town assessments, as its seen as too punitive. On the contrary, positive recognition is provided where attempts to enhance sites are carried out, such as painting of hoarding or decluttering where possible.

Positive mention made to Newbridge in relation to painting of electrical boxes as an anti-graffiti measure which appears to have been replicated throughout the country.

The Director of Services asked the floor for feedback on how the Council supports the Tidy Town committees and how we could enhance the supports or engage more positively. The following was raised:

- General feedback regarding overall support from the Council was very positive and acknowledged by Councilors and Tidy Towns reps.
- Insurance concerns raised. Difficulty in obtaining insurance.
- New estates boundary hedging queries
- Green Waste collection queries
- Website facility difficulties
- Gum litter issues
- Negligent cleaning of bus stops and train station car parks
- Redundant phone boxes
- Weeds are an on-going issue

He noted concerns about the difficulties in obtaining insurance and undertook to check if this could be raised at a national level. Various trials were carried out with regard to weed control and gum issues. Steam cleaning machinery has been trailed and whilst very efficient, it's also very expensive although individual requests may still be considered, should it be merited after due consideration.

Littering issues around bus stops and train stations can be addressed with existing measures under the Litter Pollution Act. In addition, Community Wardens will be able to investigate and act upon complaints received.

Dara Wyer, Environmental Awareness Officer, answered queries regarding weed control and green waste issues. Community engagement schemes to deal with green waste such as composting are being planned for future implementation. Boundary hedging for new estates would already be covered under any planning permissions. Also noted that "Sustainable Goals Week" takes place from 20th – 26th September, with advice that interested parties should attend to gain information on specific areas of concern.

Websites currently in use by the Tidy Town groups, are not operated through KCC Environment Section. However, this query will be followed up and any information to be gained will be provided where possible.

The DoS noted that no forum meetings for Tidy Town representatives have been held in some time due to Covid restrictions but expected that these would recommence in due course.

Copy of presentation to be distributed to all Tidy Town groups by Marie Phelan, T.T coordinator, via email following the meeting conclusion.

From a policy perspective, the following key aspects were highlighted:

- The desirability / aligning with broader sustainable development goals
- To bring forward initiatives relating to strengthening volunteerism
- Focus on training and skillsets (through T.T. forum)
- Collaboration with other entities at national level, Dublin Bus, Iarnród Éireann, etc.
- The need for guidance in governance / constitutional composition
- Encouraging more suitable maintenance interventions
- Greater inter-departmental support within the Council.

- General awareness raising regards the work of Tidy Towns

5. The date of the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 7th December 2022 at 2.30pm in the Council Chambers, Áras Chill Dara.
