

File Ref: Env/SPC	Date/Time: 12 th October at 2.00 pm	Council Chambers and remotely via MS Teams
Subject:	Transportation, Environment & Emergency Services Strategic Policy Committee	
Present:	Cllr. Paddy Bracken, Cllr. John Joe Fennelly, Cllr. Willie Aird	Mr. John Killeen, Construction Rep., Ms. Deirdre O'Connell Hopkins, Trade Union Rep. Mr. John Talbot, Agriculture Rep
In Attendance:	Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services, Mr. Michael O'Hora, Senior Engineer, Ms. Ann Carroll, AO, Environment, Mr. Adrian Barrett, SE, Roads.	
Apologies:	Cllr Ben Brennan	

Item	Description	Action Required
1	Opening of Meeting Cllr Bracken welcomed everyone to the meeting, which was being held via MS Teams, due to the restriction of the Covid 19 pandemic.	
2	Quorum Present Mr. Paddy Bracken confirmed that there was a quorum, as per the SPC standing orders of October 2019, present.	
3	Confirmation / Agreement of Minutes On the proposal of Cllr. Willie Aird and seconded by Cllr. Noel Tuohy, the minutes of SPC meeting held on 7 th September 2020 were approved.	
4	Progress Report from Director of Services Mr. Simon Walton advised the meeting that, subsequent to previous meetings of the SPC, the following works are ongoing; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2021 River Drainage Maintenance Environmental/Ecological Consents, • Review of Donegal County Council pilot project on hedge cutting, • Assessment of fire charges in Co. Laois, comparative to neighbouring local authorities. 	

Item	Description	Action Required
5	<p>Development of Policy for Naming of Infrastructure</p> <p>Mr. Simon Walton advised the meeting that this was raised at a Council meeting and that, as there was no policy in Co. Laois, it was agreed to refer the matter to this SPC.</p> <p>Mr. Adrian Barrett, Senior Engineer, Roads and Transportation Dept. advised that he had carried out research on the position in other local authorities. Mr. Barrett made a presentation to members on the need for a naming committee in the county, the suggested membership and how the committee would generally work.</p> <p>Following discussion among members regarding the existing Placenames Committee in the county, it was agreed that consideration be given to amalgamating the two committees.</p> <p>Mr. Barrett will circulate a draft policy for consideration to the next meeting of the SPC.</p>	AB
6	<p>EPA Water Quality Report 2018</p> <p>Ms. Ann-Marie Callan, Executive Scientist, Water Quality made a presentation to members on the EPA Report: Water Quality in Ireland 2013-2018.</p> <p>Ms. Callan informed the meeting that only 53% of surface water bodies nationally have satisfactory water quality and that since 2015 river water quality has declined by 5.5%.</p> <p>In Co. Laois 42% of rivers in the county are of unsatisfactory status, but that there has been a slight improvement in River Water Quality with a 3% increase in High Water Quality status. However, only 14% of rivers are of HIGH status (not polluted).</p> <p>Ms. Callan further outlined Laois's plans to protect water by continuing to implement its Water Quality Work Programme. Inspections will be carried out in known problem areas and resources will focus on areas where water quality has deteriorated. The Council will continue to monitor and review licenses with direct discharges from industry and monitor Waste Water Treatment Plants with regards impact on water quality. Work will also continue with the farming community through farm inspections, liaising with farming groups and assisting the work carried out by EPA/LAWPRO.</p> <p>The committee members thanked Ms. Callan for her informative presentation. It was agreed that improvements could only be made by all parties working together.</p>	

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7	<p>Correspondence</p> <p>Mr. Simon Walton, Director of Services drew members attention to correspondence received earlier that morning from An Taisce with details of the results of IBAL litter survey. It was noted that the first nationwide litter survey by business group Irish Business Against Litter (IBAL) since the Covid-19 crisis showed a dramatic fall in the number of towns and cities deemed to be 'clean', to its lowest level since 2007. Portlaoise was in fourth position out of 40 towns / cities surveyed and deemed to be Cleaner than European Norms. The survey added that this was another excellent result for Portlaoise, one of its best ever, with eight out of the ten sites surveyed getting the top litter grade and no seriously littered sites.</p> <p>The committee agreed that this was a great result for Portlaoise and Co. Laois and was a result of the great work carried out by Laois County Council, Portlaoise Tidy Towns and other local voluntary groups.</p>	
8	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>It was agreed that the next meeting of the SPC would take place on 7th December 2020 at 2pm.</p>	
	<p>This concluded the business of the meeting.</p>	