

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE UÍBH FHAILÍ
MINUTES OF INFORMATION BRIEFING MEETING
OF OFFALY COUNTY COUNCIL

HELD IN ÁRAS AN CHONTAE, TULLAMORE
ON MONDAY, 13TH JUNE 2011 AT 2 P.M.

PRESENT: Cllrs. D. Owens (Presiding), M. Buckley, J. Butterfield, J. Carroll, P. Clendennen, D. Dolan, S. Dooley, E. Fitzpatrick, C. Hanniffy, T. McKeigue, J. Leahy, P. Ormond, G. Plunkett and L. Quinn.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr. D. Hogan, S.E., Mr. J. Connolly, E.E., J. Brophy, A.E. L. Duffy, S.E.T., Ms. M. Cleary, Meetings Administrator.

APOLOGIES: Cllrs. N. Bourke, E. Dooley, J. Foley, N. Hogan, T. McLoughlin S. Moylan-Ryan and P. Rowland.

FARM INSPECTIONS:

Mr. D. Hogan, S.E. Environment, gave a comprehensive presentation on the status of County Offaly's river water quality and informed the members that two thirds of the county's rivers were classified at less than good status. He noted that the members had adopted River Basin Management Plans for Offaly in April 2010. Mr. Hogan advised that the Water Framework Directive included ambitious targets and that it was encumbent on everyone, i.e., Council staff, members and the general public to ensure that water quality is improved. Mr. Hogan gave an overview of the legislation and explained the rationale with regard to the septic tank and farm inspections that are currently taking place.

The Environment Section had prioritised the Clareen, Camcor and Gageborough rivers catchment areas for inspections.

Staff from the Environment Section, Mr. Hogan advised, are working with the communities and individual householders in an effort to address pollution issues. Where necessary notices in accordance with the legislation are issued but Mr. Hogan stressed that court action was only considered as an option of last resort.

The members thanked Mr. Hogan for his informative presentation. They accepted that farmers and householders must comply with the regulations and directives. The members suggested that the inspection work programme setting out the criteria for and scope of the inspections should have been presented to the SPC and the Council for their information.

During the ensuing discussion the members raised the following concerns:

- The requirement to keep the members apprised of the Council's plan for inspections;
- The apparant duplication of farm inspections between the County Council and Department of Agriculture;
- The need to issue notice in advance to farmers advising them of the date and extent of the inspection;
- A reasonable period should be allowed to enable farmers and householders to carry out remedial works and to comply with the legislation;
- The difficulty with regard to the leaching of peatlands into the rivers was noted;
- The requirement for the Council to carry out remedial works should the Council be responsible for any pollution.

Mr. Hogan in response drew the members attention to the information that had been provided during the adoption of the River Basin Management Plans. These plans, he advised, included 2015 and 2021 as timeframes by which the water quality must be improved. He advised that in excess of 9,000 individual septic tanks have to be inspected. He noted that the Council had invested considerable resources in the Council's own municipal waste water treatment plants and that the EPA were currently involved in certifying and licensing these plants.. Mr. Hogan stressed that he was mindful of the need not to duplicate farm inspections and that he had advised the Department of Agriculture of the catchment areas that the Council proposed to inspect. He informed the meeting that once the Council enters lands all forms of inspections, under the Council's remit, are inspected at that time.

Mr. Hogan in responding to a query advised that the Council are obliged to notify the Department of Agriculture when the sources of pollution are not being adequately addressed. The payment of the Single Farm Payment was, he advised, a matter for the Department. Mr. Hogan, acknowledged that there is a difficulty in identifying all land and property owners in a river catchment area.

Mr. Hogan acknowledged the members comments with regard to communications and agreed to provide them with the schedule of inspections.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

MINUTES CONFIRMED:

_____ **CATHAOIRLEACH**

_____ **RUNAÍ**

18th JULY 2011