

Councillor M. D'Alton proposed, seconded by Councillor F. O'Flynn, the following notice of motion:-

“To request a report detailing Cork County Council’s current policy on dog fouling. To include:

- (i) the facilities Cork County Council provides to support the responsible management of dog waste
- (ii) the practical and financial supports Cork County Council currently offers to assist communities in keeping streets free of dog waste
- (iii) the public awareness measures undertaken by Cork County Council highlighting the health risks associated with dog waste
- (i) The number of on-the-spot fines issued for dog fouling in 2014.”

Members noted report from the Chief Veterinary Officer, which outlined as follows:-

In practice, legislation governing dog fouling comprises the Control of Dogs Act 1986, fouling specific bye-laws enacted under section 17 of the act and, most directly, the Litter Pollution Act 1997. All dog wardens are empowered under all dog fouling legislation while some traffic wardens are also empowered. Nuisance due to dog fouling is the fifth most frequent dog control service request to the veterinary department.

The details above outline the existing CCC policy on dog fouling, appropriate signage and public education leaflets utilized recently by the veterinary department. Notwithstanding our public education initiatives, the provision of facilities and the existing dog foul legislation, the failure by dog owners to clean up after dog foul in public places remains at an unacceptably high level.

With specific reference to the questions raised by Councillor D'Alton;

(i) the facilities Cork County Council provides to support the responsible management of dog waste

A combination of bins, signage, disposal bags, information leaflets and Dog Warden presence in a public education role at the entrances to popular dog walkways, parks and beaches have and are being used on an ongoing basis.

(ii) the practical and financial supports Cork County Council currently offers to assist communities in keeping streets free of dog waste

At this point some 1,200 dog foul signs have been provided on request to local community groups / resident groups and tidy towns groups. It is not Council policy to provide dog specific bins and the Council has only done so for these specific education focused locations.

(iii) the public awareness measures undertaken by Cork County Council highlighting the health risks associated with dog waste

As for (i) and (ii) above and also our own public health leaflet produced by the Cork Zoonoses Committee, as a result of research carried out by the veterinary department in 1997 staff from the Veterinary Section have attended public meetings in conjunction with Dr. Mary Stack and outlined the health risks involved.

(iv) The number of on-the-spot fines issued for dog fouling in 2014

There were two ‘on-the-spot-fines’ issued during 2014 (on foot of written statements submitted by the public). Enforcement of existing legislation is extremely difficult due to two significant weaknesses in our legislation;

- (1) The ability to legally confirm dog ownership and
- (2) the legal interpretation of the requirement to “immediately remove the faeces” has allowed for “going back to the car for a bag” or “I forgot a bag, I will go and get one immediately” etc. etc. However, it appears that these two legal issues may be addressed in the near future with the planned introduction in 2015 of compulsory micro-chipping of all dogs.

Members made the following points:-

- Dog fouling is a health and safety issue and incidents are prevalent everywhere;
- People are willing to volunteer their time to help with cleaning up;
- Solitary wardens are unable to deal with this issue;
- The need for more dog waste receptacles, none on the Passage West – Rochestown walkway;
- Audible devices would see a reduction in dog waste;
- Irresponsible pet waste is a scourge on communities;
- Signs put up by the Council are not working;
- Playing pitches need to be inspected for health and safety reasons before matches can be played;
- There needs to be more education on dog fouling in schools;
- The possibility of DNA recording of all dogs should be looked at;
- Serious problem for users of wheelchairs and buggies;

The Chief Executive said that this issue is not easy to resolve and the problem is created by irresponsible community behaviour which may lead to significant health risks. There may be innovative schemes out there that the Council can learn from.

The Chief Executive said that a policy on dog fouling merits serious consideration by the SPC and that communities need to be involved. He said he would discuss the matter further with the Director of Services and Chief Veterinary Officer and would give any proposals his support.

Cllr K Murphy stated that the SPC was meeting later that day and the issue could be raised under Any Other Business.