

The 5th meeting of the 6th EPA Advisory Committee was held on Thursday 6th March 2014, at EPA Headquarters, Johnstown Castle Estate, Wexford.

Members Present: Laura Burke (Chair); Deirdre Lyons (via Video Conference); Pat Farrell; John Cuddihy; Martin Hogan; John Sheahan; David Ball.

In attendance: Dara Lynott; Gerard O'Leary; Micheál Ó Cinnéide & Jim Hurley.

Apology: Elizabeth Delahunty; Colin O'Dowd; Elaine Nevin; Sharon McGuinness; Áine Ryall.

Secretary: Tom O Reilly

1. **Introductions**

The Chairperson welcomed the Advisory Committee to Wexford for their 5th meeting and thanked everyone for travelling.

2. **Minutes of Meeting held on 5 December 2013**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 December 2013 were approved.

3. **Approval of the Agenda**

The adoption of the Agenda was approved.

4. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

5. **Emerging Issues**

The Chairperson, Laura Burke advised the Committee that the Agency's Budget for 2014 has not been finalised. The Budget for 2014 is expected to be similar to that of 2013, however the structure of this year's allocation will be different.

Laura advised the Committee that the Agency had received sanction to temporarily increase staff numbers to 323 in 2014 and 2015 and the recruitment process will commence in the coming weeks to fill these posts. The Committee were further advised that the Agency currently has 308 staff and this is down from 340 in 2008. When asked about the use of Internships, the Committee was informed that the Agency currently has 12 interns working for the Agency, with 13 positions advertised. It was noted that filling intern positions was becoming increasingly difficult.

Laura informed the Committee that the Agency recently launched the *My Local Environment* website which had received very positive coverage. Laura briefly outlined the information which could be found on the website and considered feedback from the Committee on what future releases of the site may include. The Committee expressed its desire to receive a demonstration of the *My Local Environment* website at a future meeting. Laura agreed that this could be provided at the next meeting of the Committee in June.

6. **Septic Tanks & Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems**

(i) Overview of the Septic Tank Inspection Regime – Gerard O’Leary, Director of the Office of Environmental Enforcement

Gerard O’Leary, Director of the Office of Environmental Enforcement, gave a detailed overview of the Inspection regime being implemented to inspect Domestic Waste Water Treatment Systems (Septic Tanks), including detailed information on:

- ECJ ruling in October 2009
- National Inspection Plan
- Risk Based Approach
- Planning and Review Cycle
- Implementation to date

(ii) Discussion

There was detailed discussion by the Committee regarding the Septic Tank Inspection Regime and some broader discussion on Waste Water Treatment issues. One Committee member queried the main reasons for failing an inspection, to which Gerard O’Leary informed the Committee that the top two reasons for failing inspections were that the treatment systems had not been de-sludged and/or the system had not been operated or maintained correctly. The Committee complemented the Agency on the unique risk based approach being used to target inspections.

7. **EPA RPII Merger Update**

(i) Update on progress with the EPA RPII Merger

Micheál Ó Cinnéide, Director of the Office of Communications and Corporate Services, gave a detailed update on the progress to date of the merger between the EPA and the RPII. The update included detailed information on:

- Terms of Reference
- Merger Action Plan
- EPA/RPII Merger Governance Structure
- Mission Vision and Values
- Key issues facing the Merger

(ii) Discussion

There was detailed discussion by the Committee following the presentation. One Committee Member informed the group that in their experience the issue of pensions was a worry for the staff of merging organisations. Jim Hurley informed the Committee that the issue of pensions had been addressed. The Committee queried how the staff of both Organisations would be integrated. Laura outlined the various methods being used by the Organisations to help integrate staff, including monthly presentations by Senior Management to the staff of both organisations, meetings of Senior Managers and other joint events. A Committee member queried the proposed staffing of the merged organisation. Laura responded by informing the Committee that an Office of Radiological Protection will be established in the EPA. Work Force Planning will also be key to this aspect of the Merger and that a Work Force Plan is being developed as part of the Merger.

8. **Any Other Business**

(i) ***Next Meeting***

The Chairperson thanked the Members of the Committee for their attendance at the meeting and their contributions to the discussion. The next meeting of the Committee will take place in EPA Regional Inspectorate Richview, Dublin 14 on Thursday 5 June 2014 commencing at 10.30am.

(ii) ***Topics for discussion***

The Topics to be discussed at the meeting in June 2014 are as follows;

- Resource Efficient Ireland
- Water Framework Directive
- Presentation on 'My Local Environment'

This concluded the business of the meeting.