

The 8th meeting of the 8th EPA Advisory Committee was held on Wednesday 11th January 2023, in the EPA Regional Inspectorate, McCumiskey House, Richview, Clonskeagh Square, Dublin 14.

Members present: Laura Burke (Chair), Aebhín Cawley, Thomas Cooney, Frances Lucy, Elaine Mahon, Yvonne Mullooly, Elaine Nevin, Sadhbh O’Neill, & John Wenger.

In attendance: Gerard O’Leary & Sharon Finegan;
Warren Phelan – Agenda item 6.

Apologies: Aoife Foley & Brendan Dunford.

Secretary: Elaine Kehoe.

1. **Approval of the Agenda**

Laura Burke welcomed the Advisory Committee for their 8th meeting.

The adoption of the Agenda was approved.

2. **Minutes of Meeting held on 28 October 2022**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 October 2022 were approved.

3. **Disclosure of Interests**

There were no disclosures of interests declared.

4. **Emerging Issues**

Laura Burke appraised the Committee of the budget trends for 2023. Members were advised of the EPA total income trends from 2011 to 2023. The Chairperson provided the Committee with an update on the EPA’s budget and noted that income and expenditure are in line with expectations.

The Committee were provided with an update on staffing numbers and the ongoing recruitment competitions along with other HR statistics for 2022. There was a discussion on recruitment across the Public Sector and the ongoing challenges currently being experienced across the sector. Laura informed the Committee of recent Graduate competitions which were concluded. The Committee were advised that these competitions have helped with some of the recruitment challenges and that Graduates will come in at entry level and gain skills and experience as they progress.

The Committee were informed of the total FOI and AIE requests from 2015 to 2022. Laura advised the Committee that there has been an increase in these requests over the last number of years, leading to an increase in resources spent in this area. The Committee were advised that a large amount of information on EPA activities is available on the website. Laura advised the Committee that the majority of requests received in 2022 were enforcement related requests.

Laura Burke advised the Committee of the achievements to date in greening the

EPA including:

- 50% reduction in energy since 2009
- 54% reduction in water since 2010
- 10% HQ electricity from Solar PV
- 50% space managed for pollinators

The Committee were provided with an update on blended working. Laura advised that the Blended Working Policy has been approved and will see Staff working at home up to a maximum of two and a half days per week depending on their roles.

The Chairperson informed the Committee of the upcoming Circular Economy conference on 27 September.

Action:

The Board Secretary will circulate the invite for the Circular Economy conference to all Committee members.

Discussion

A wide-ranging discussion was had including:

- EPA Gender Pay Gap Report;
- Blended working and hot desking;
- Expanding the EPA core functions;
- Recruitment challenges and the potential to outsource some functions;
- Student and Internship Programmes.

5. **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

6. **Office of Environmental Sustainability**

Presentation on the Circular Economy Programme

Warren Phelan, Programme Manager gave a presentation on the role on the Circular Economy Programme in the EPA. The presentation provided details on:

- National Circular Economy Programme;
- Regulation as part of the Circular Economy Programme, including by products and end of waste;
- Circular Economy Implementation and best practice guidelines; and
- Green Enterprise.

Discussion/Comments

A discussion was had on: the role of the EPA in the Circular Economy and the statutory functions, green public procurement, and ongoing training for procurers; effectiveness of green criteria; the waste characterisations studies carried out by the EPA; identifying ways to highlight the issues with recycling rates in Ireland.

7. **End of Term Report**

A brief discussion was had on the approach to deliver an Advisory Committee End of Term Report to the Minister for Environment, Climate and Communications. Laura advised the Committee that the EPA will provide all the necessary information required to support drafting the Report which would focus on the main issues considered by the

Committee during its term of office. To support drafting of the Report by the Committee, the Chairperson advised that the ODG would supply an update on topics outlined in the previous report from 2019 at the next meeting.

Action:

The Board Secretary will provide an update on key recommendations from 2019 report to all committee members for information.

8. **Any Other Business**

(i) Next Meeting

The next Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 8th March 2023. A Doodle poll will issue to members seeking ideas for the location for the next meeting. The meeting will be held at one of the EPA Regional Inspectorates.

(ii) Topics for Inclusion

Topics for inclusion for the next meeting are:

- Presentation on Science to Policy;
- Communications Team will provide an update on the EPA website.

This concluded the business of the meeting.