

Report to the Strategic Policy Committee, Climate Action, Environment and Energy on Restricting Election Posters within Dublin City.

Background

Following the local elections in 2019, the City Council adopted of a motion to examine ways to minimise the prevalence of election posters in the city in advance of election periods. A committee of the whole house was established by the then Lord Mayor Paul McAuliffe to examine the issue and a report was provided to the committee to outline the context of how the objective could potentially be achieved and how any such restriction could operate.

The committee considered the report and the following areas were discussed.

- Expansion of exclusion zones
- Possibility of permitting on our assets – similar to public meetings
- Electronic advertising panels
- Central locations provided by the City Council
- Suggestion of the City Council removing posters
- Limited number of locations for poster advertising
- Limit number of posters permitted

The committee did not meet again to discuss the matter further and the issue was referred for further examination to the Climate Action, Environment and Energy Strategic Policy Committee.

Current Position

There is no restriction on erection of posters on suitable lamp standards within the city. Poster should not be displayed on other street furniture including statutory signage, pedestrian barriers, Traffic light poles, bridges etc.

There is generally a high level of compliance with a voluntary agreement not to erect posters within the following streets in the city centre; O'Connell St/ Grafton St/ Henry St.

There are widespread issues with posters being erected at inappropriate locations obscuring traffic signals and signage and at heights that cause obstruction for motorists and pedestrians and create a hazard particularly to those with visual impairments.

During election periods a significant number of complaints are received regarding the presence and positioning of posters.

Legal Position

There is no penalty for the erection of posters within the timeframe allowable under the provisions of the Litter Pollution Act.

The Council may remove posters erected unsafely or on inappropriate street furniture.

The Council can restrict access to its property and precedence has been set in this regard with reference to previous motions adopted by the City Council restricting the permissions to erect posters

and the operation of the poster protocol for the management of posters advertising public meetings and events in the city.

Practical Considerations

The success of any restrictions without some element of penalty for non-compliance is entirely dependent on the voluntary cooperation of the candidates.

A financial deposit could be considered for permission to erect posters within agreed locations and parameters and be withheld in the case of non-compliance. Such a deposit would be required to be significant enough to deter wilful or deliberate non-compliance.

Posters erected in areas where permission is not granted would be required to be removed by the City Council. In the case of widespread non-compliance this could prove to be unmanageable.

Any process or set of restrictions requires that it is as simple and straightforward to adhere to and to implement and enforce.

The following suggestions were not considered to be workable from a practical management perspective:

- Restricting the number of posters per candidate.
- Provision of central advertising locations provided by the City Council
- Permitting systems

Proposals for Consideration

Expansion of exclusion zones. Designated areas agreed where posters would not be permitted. This could include for example increasing the size of the core city centre area where posters are not permitted. This might also include purely residential streets or urban village locations.

Agreed locations where posters are permitted. Designated defined areas such as within a certain radius of junctions of main thoroughfares or arterial routes could be considered.

A methodology or set of criteria for defining such locations or exclusion zones would need to be agreed. Proposals could be brought to the Area Committees or to this committee for recommendation to the City Council.

Other Considerations

The suggestion that the City Council would provide a removal service for election posters was considered. This could not be provided within the normal resourcing of day to day operations. A service provided on an overtime basis (on a cost neutral basis to candidates) was considered as to whether this is a viable option. This is not considered to be viable given the need for all candidates to partake and the inequitable nature of applying a standard charge to all candidates who would require different degrees of resource allocation based on the overall number of posters erected.

Conclusion

The foregoing is provided for the information and debate of the committee.

The attached map of the North Inner City Local Electoral Area is produced for the purposes of illustrating how the above proposals might begin to be practically applied.

The yellow areas (3 no.) indicate examples of potential exclusion zones at the city centre and urban village locations. The red location markers (49 no.) indicate potential designated poster locations within the Local Electoral Area.