

Kilkenny County Council – Joint Policing Committee

Minutes of Meeting held on Monday, 30th November, 2020 at 2.00 p.m. Via MS Teams

PRESENT: Chairperson, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, Cllr. Martin Brett, Cllr. Michael Delaney, Cllr. Pat Dunphy, Cllr. Joe Lyons, Cllr. Tomás Breathnach, Cllr. Deirdre Cullen, Cllr. Patrick O’Neill, Cllr. Fidelis Doherty, Cllr. Michael McCarthy, Cllr. Andrew McGuinness, Cllr. John Coonan, Deputy John McGuinness TD.

Chief Superintendent Padraig Dunne.
Superintendent Derek Hughes, Kilkenny Garda Station.
Superintendent Anthony Lonergan, Thomastown Garda Station.
Detective Inspector Sean O ’Meara, Kilkenny Garda Station.
Sergeant Laura Dragoi, Kilkenny Garda Station.
Samuel Morgan, PPN.
Helena Power, PPN.
Marion Acreman, Chamber of Commerce.
Anthony Morrisson, Vintners Assoc.

Ms. Colette Byrne, Chief Executive, Mr. Tim Butler, Director of Services. Ms. Mary Mulholland, Director of Services, Ms Anne Maria Walsh, Senior Executive Officer, Ms. Lindsey Butler Administrative Office, Teresa Mahon, Staff Officer, Kilkenny County Council.

Apologies: Deputy Malcolm Noonan TD

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, Chairperson, opened the meeting and welcomed all. He congratulated Superintendent Anthony Lonergan on his appointment to Thomastown and other recent Garda appointments including Superintendent Colin Furlong and Superintendent Anthony Farrell. Cllr. Michael McCarthy thanked Garda James Keogh for his years of service to the people of Freshford and welcomed his replacement Garda Jill Masterson.

Item No. 1: Minutes of Briefing of Kilkenny JPC held on 14th September 2020.

Minutes of Briefing of Kilkenny County Council Joint Policing Committee held on 14th September 2020:

Proposed by: Cllr. Andrew McGuinness
Seconded by: Cllr. Michael McCarthy
And Agreed:

“That the minutes as presented to the meeting are hereby approved as accurate.”

Cllr. John Coonan commended the Gardai in the swiftness and the manner that the anti-social behaviour around St. Canice’s Steps was addressed.

Item No. 2: Update on Crime Statistics

Detective Inspector Sean O ’Meara outlined that since the 1st January 2020, Gardai within the Kilkenny and Thomastown Districts recorded a total of 8,401 crime incidents:

- Arrests and vehicle seizures are down from 2019 but searches have increased.
- 15,975 crime patrols carried out, 5,035 checkpoints and 333 mandatory intoxication tests.
- Incidents of driving under the influence of alcohol down from 2019 but driving under the influence of drugs arrests increased by 900%.
- Arrests for possession and sale/supply of drugs down from 2019.
- Drunkenness offences down YTD from 2019 but public order offences up.
- Property crime down 25% from 2019.
- Burglary (non-aggravated) down from 2019.
- Theft from shops down by 30%.
- Theft from MPV down by over 50%.
- Theft of other property down 35%.
- Robbery down 1 from 2019 but from a very low starting base.
- Assaults causing harm reduced as night time activity curtailed because of Covid.
- Domestic abuse incidents increased by 31%.
- Traffic collisions down by 8 from 2019 with 2 less fatalities.

Under Community Engagement, the Gardai continue to perform cycle and beat patrols in Kilkenny and Thomastown, engage with businesses, deliver meals/collect prescriptions and maintain constant contact with community groups. Detective Inspector O'Meara confirmed that City Safe will be operational in Kilkenny in December, as the City opens up after level 5 lockdown.

The Members thanked Detective Inspector O'Meara and commended the Gardai for their great work. They raised the following:

- Follow up on domestic abuse calls.
- Unit strength in Thomastown Garda Station.
- Opening hours in Mooncoin Garda Station.
- Concerns over rise in driving under the influence of drugs.

Chief Superintendent Padraig Dunne, Superintendent Hughes and Inspector O'Meara responded to questions from Members. Chief Superintendent Dunne agreed to provide the Committee with an update on staff numbers in Thomastown and opening hours in Mooncoin. He shared his concerns over the increased incidents of drug driving and reassured the Committee that the Gardai will continue to address this problem. Superintendent Hughes described how all incidents reported to the Gardai each day are dealt with and followed up as necessary. In general, there is a 7-day domestic abuse incident call back procedure in place with most follow ups taking place the day after the incident occurs. Detective Inspector O'Meara appraised the Members about Operation Faoiseamh and explained that every breach of a domestic violence order is brought before the courts where the Gardai will always object to bail.

Item No. 3: Draft Kilkenny Integration Strategy 2021 -2023

Ms. Lindsey Butler, Administrative Office in Community Section of Kilkenny County Council, gave the Committee a presentation of the Draft Kilkenny Integration Strategy. She detailed the underlying principles to integration, the background to the action plan, the effect Covid had on how the consultancy process was managed, how the plan was developed and the actions that were determined in order to put the strategy in place. In all 25 actions were listed and the next step she explained is to agree lead agencies for the implementation of these actions. The strategy plan will then be presented to the LCDC to adopt as part of their work programme for the current and next LECP. The strategy will then go before Kilkenny County Council for adoption. A steering group and monitoring mechanism will then be put in place and an intercultural forum established. Ms Butler requested that the Kilkenny

Joint Policing Committee would be the lead agency on actions 13 & 14 of the plan “ Combating Racism and Xenophobia”.

The Committee agreed to be the lead agency for these actions.

Ms. Butler confirmed that once the plan has been adopted she will revert to the Committee with details on how the Committee can lead in combating racism and xenophobia in Kilkenny.

The Committee thanked Ms. Butler for her presentation.

Mr. Morgan asked about support for young people from minority backgrounds in finding work experience. It was agreed that this issue could be looked at through a multiagency approach.

Item No. 4: Anti- Social Behaviour Strategy 2020-2025

Ms. Mary Mulholland, Director of Service, reminded the Committee that they had raised the issue of anti-social behaviour in Council Estates at a JPC meeting a number of months ago. Since then the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy 2020-2025 has been drafted and agreed at SPC level and is due to go before the full Council in December. She gave details on the legislative basis of the strategy, its aims and objectives, the allocation of tenancies, the interdepartmental collaboration and the complaints procedure. She also spoke about the inter-agency collaboration, the partnership with Estate Management Committees, preparation of an Annual Report, health & safety of staff and customer complaints . The five-year action plan which details the actions required, the partners delivering the actions and the timeframe for delivery, will be reported back to SPC3 on a quarterly basis and annually to the full Council.

The strategy should provide the basis for information exchange with An Gardai Síochána and a multi stakeholder approach for dealing with the problems of anti-social behaviour. It will be the framework for all agencies to work together to measure & ensure enforcement action taken against anti-social behaviour in Council Estates.

The Committee thanked and congratulated Ms. Mulholland, Ms. Lianne Kelly and the Housing Section on developing this strategy. They raised the following queries:

- The role of the JPC in the strategy.
- Anti-social behaviour dealt with by the Courts.
- ASBO's and the Gardai.

Ms. Mulholland and Chief Superintendent Dunne responded to the Committee. Ms. Mulholland sees the role of the JPC in the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy as one of information sharing, identifying trends and understanding the part played by all the agencies. Chief Superintendent Dunne explained how anti-social behaviour is dealt with in Court and the role of the Gardai and the Courts in ASBO's (Anti-Social Behaviour Orders).

Item No. 5: Set Date of Next Meeting

Next meeting set for the 8th March 2021 @2.00pm (venue to be reviewed later)

Item No. 6: Any Other Business

The Committee raised the following:

- Update on Incident of anti-social behaviour in Urlingford
- Amber Woman's Refuge and I million stars campaign.
- Legislation from Minister McEntee and the sharing of images online.
- Staff Changes in Castlecomer Gardai Station
- Update on the drug-awareness sub-committee.

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He wished everyone a safe Christmas and asked that all adhere to the HSE guidelines and accept personal responsibility. Chief Superintendent Dunne asked all to maintain proper social distancing. Chief Executive Colette Byrne reiterated what both Cllr. Fitzpatrick and Chief Superintendent Dunne said and urged all to keep safe. She thanked the Gardai and the Community Groups for their work on the Community Call.

Meeting then concluded.