

Kilkenny County Council – Joint Policing Committee

Minutes of Meeting held on Monday, 8th March, 2021 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. Denis Hynes, Deputy John McGuinness TD.

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

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

Apologies: Deputy Malcolm Noonan TD, Deputy John Paul Phelan TD, Deputy Kathleen Funchion TD and Deputy Murnane O’Connor.

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, Chairperson, opened the meeting and welcomed all. He acknowledged the social, economic, cultural & political achievements that Women have made to our society on this, International Woman’s Day .

Item No. 1: Minutes of Briefing of Kilkenny JPC held on 30th November 2020.

Minutes of Briefing of Kilkenny County Council Joint Policing Committee held on 30th November 2020:

Proposed by: Cllr. Michael McCarthy
Seconded by: Cllr. Martin Brett
And Agreed:

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

Item No. 2: Annual Report 2020

Ms. Anne Maria Walsh explained that the Annual Report previously circulated was drafted in accordance with the guideline for Joint Policing Committees. Despite the pandemic, the Committee managed to achieve four meetings, deal with all issues in the 2020 works programme and also

established the Drug Task Awareness Group. Chief Superintendent Dunne confirmed that the Gardai were happy with the report and thanked all involved in delivering results.

Proposed by: Cllr. Deirdre Cullen
Seconded by: Cllr. Martin Brett
And Agreed:

“That the Annual Report 2020 be approved.”

Item No. 3: Draft Work Programme 2021

Ms. Anne Maria Walsh explained that the draft work programme had been circulated by email to An Garda Síochána and to all members of the Committee. New areas in the 2021 programme include Road Safety Strategy, Control of drugs and Animal Welfare Bye-Laws. An Garda Síochána requested that the following be included in the programme:

Traffic & Road Safety: Focus on Learner Drivers
Community Engagement: Project Connect & Mental Health.

Proposed by: Cllr. Deirdre Cullen
Seconded by: Cllr. Martin Brett
And Agreed:

“That the Draft Work Programme with the additions from An Garda Síochána for 2021 be adopted.”

Item No. 4: COVID Update - Kilkenny County Council

Mr. Tim Butler, gave the Committee an update on Covid19 from a Council prospective, including current restrictions, staff resources details and critical services that continue to be maintained. He also detailed the infrastructural improvements the Council has made both in the County and the City to help with social distancing and making people feel safer. These include one-way systems, additional space for pedestrians, outdoor seating areas and footpath improvements. The Council received funding from Active Travel for some of the measures introduced and more funding is expected in 2021.

Ms. Colette Byrne, gave the Committee an overview of services/initiatives that Kilkenny County Council is supporting and funding to help people during the pandemic. The Keep Well Campaign is promoting programmes for keeping active, keeping connected, eating well and minding your mood. Radio Shows such as the “the Tonic” and “My Home Place” along with initiatives like “dial a story” “creative writing workshops and “phone a poem” are currently in place. She advised that the “phone a poem” campaign has been taken up internationally. The Council secured funding for Acorn tables and in collaboration with the Age Friendly Alliance these devices continue to be rolled out to Nursing Homes, Community Homes, Hospitals and people who are isolated.

The Library Services is providing a door to door delivery service to the over 65’s and promoting initiatives include the “Grow it Forward” campaign, gardening classes on line and the Eating Well programme.

Under Tourism, the Council continues to promote outdoor attractions in Kilkenny to ensure that once restrictions are lifted people will consider Kilkenny as a safe place to visit.

The Community Call Helpline/ Community Forum continues to operate. The number of calls has reduced over the year because of the success of the relationships developed with Civil Defence, Volunteer Groups and the GAA by the people who need assistance.

The Committee thanked Mr. Butler and Ms. Byrne for the presentation and raised queries in relation to illegal dumping on private land, provision and use of CCTV cameras, licenced refuse collectors, mask littering and dogs not on leads around the City. Mr. Butler and Ms. Walsh responded to members. Mr. Butler agreed to contact the Environment Section in relation to illegal dumping.

5. Update from An Garda Síochána on Crime Statistics – 1st January – 28th February 2021

Detective Inspector Sean O’Meara outlined that since the 1st January 2021, Gardai within the Kilkenny and Thomastown Districts recorded a total of 1,687 crime incidents:

- Arrests and vehicle seizures are down from 2020 but searches have increased.
- 2,946 crime patrols carried out, 971 checkpoints and 87 mandatory intoxication tests.
- Incidents of driving under the influence of alcohol down from 2020 but driving under the influence of drugs arrests increased.
- Arrests for possession and sale/supply of drugs are at the same level as 2020.
- Public order offences are down 62% from the same period last year but this was before lockdown.
- Burglary (non-aggravated) down from 2020. These figures continue to fall year on year.
- Theft from shops down by 8% from 2020 from a low starting base.
- Theft from MPV down by over 60%.
- Theft of other property down 28%.
- No Robberies have been reported in January and February this year.
- Assaults causing harm reduced from 2020 as night time activity curtailed because of COVID.
- Domestic abuse incidents reported increased by 25% from 2020.
- Incidents of Fraud/Economic crime has increased since 2020 by 37%.
- Traffic collisions and fatalities down from 2020.

Under Community Engagement, the Gardai continue to perform cycle and beat patrols in Kilkenny and Thomastown areas, engage with businesses, deliver meals/collect prescriptions and maintain constant contact with community groups.

Chief Superintendent Pdraig Dunne paid tribute to Detective Inspector O’Meara, Superintendent Lonergan and Superintendent Hughes. He acknowledge the great work in reducing levels of crime but there is concern over the rise in domestic violence incidents. He advised that the Gardai are opened 24/7 for victims and will support anyone who reports such a crime. He confirmed that the community engagement will continue and the Gardai will be supporting the HSE at the Vaccination Centres in Kilkenny and Carlow. He complemented the vast amount of the public for adhering to public health advice:

The Members thanked and commended the Gardai for their great work. They raised the following:

- Fraud and publishing the increase in fraud and making people aware of it.
- Drug driving testing.
- Crime complaints in North Kilkenny.
- Gardai staffing levels in Thomastown and around the County.

Chief Superintendent Pdraig Dunne, Superintendent Hughes, Superintendent Lonergan and Detective Inspector O’Meara responded to Members. Detective inspector O’Meara confirmed that

fraud awareness week is running from 8th to the 14th March and confirmed that they are promoting the message through social media and through the local and national press. All the suggestions from the Members including parish newsletters, text alert schemes and the Chambers of Commerce information letter will be taken onboard. Superintendent Hughes confirmed that he had informed the Age Friendly Alliance of fraud week at a recent zoom meeting and all agreed to use their services to get the message out. He also confirmed that the crime complaints in North Kilkenny were being addressed. Superintendent Lonergan advised that the Gardai are taking a proactive approach in relation to drug testing and better equipment is aiding the Gardai in detecting offenders. Chief Superintendent Dunne advised that under new policing structure, Waterford, Kilkenny and Carlow have joined together as one division. There is no loss of personnel from this unification but staff may be moved into areas of need as required.

Item No. 6: National Youth Awards 2021

Inspector Claire Kenealy, Thomastown Garda Station, Chairperson for the Organising Committee gave the members a presentation on the Kilkenny Carlow Garda Youth Awards.

The awards in association with Kilkenny County Council, Carlow County Council and Netwatch were launched in February 2021 and for the first time the whole process is entirely on-line. She explained that the awards are to acknowledge the contributions and achievements of young people between the ages of 13 and 21 in the Carlow, Kilkenny and Thomastown Garda Districts. There are four award categories - Individual award, Group award, Special achievement award and Community safety award. This year another dimension has been added to the awards with the introduction of the Kilkenny/Carlow "Garda Youth Awards 2021" logo design competition.

Inspector Kenealy asked the Committee to promote the awards and if anyone is aware of any young person or group of young people who make a difference in their community or who have overcome difficult circumstances to please nominate them.

The closing date for nominations has been extended to the 31st March 2021

The Committee compliment Inspector Kenealy for her presentation.

Item No. 7: Set Dates for Next Meetings

The following dates were put forward:

14th June 2021

13th September 2021

13th December 2021

Proposed by: Cllr. Michael Delaney
Seconded by: Cllr. Michael McCarthy
And Agreed:

"That the dates for the meetings be approved"

Item No. 6: Any Other Business

Chief Superintendent Dunne confirmed that the incident rate of COVID in Kilkenny is falling but he asked all to continue to adhere to health advice especially in the 18 – 24 age group. Vigilance by all over the next 8 – 10 weeks is very important.

The Committee raised the following:

- Issues of speeding cars on Lord Edward Street.
- Antisocial behaviour at St. Canices Steps.
- Provision of extra CCTV around the City and bus crime.
- Speeding in the Rosbercon area.

Chief Superintendent Padraig Dunne, Superintendent Hughes, and Superintendent Lonergan responded to the Committee. Chief Superintendent Dunne agreed that a presentation from the Traffic Core will be arranged for the next meeting. He will invite the Assistant Commissioner to attend. Superintendent Lonergan confirmed that the Gardai have new mobility devices and equipment and will investigate speeding in the Rosbercon area. Superintendent Hughes provided an update on CCTV and bus crime and agreed to reinstate patrols around St. Canices Steps. The speeding on Lord Edward street will also be investigated. Mr. Butler asked for an update from Inspector Peter McConnell on the progress with the CCTV programme before the next meeting.

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Meeting then concluded.