

Kilkenny County Council – Joint Policing Committee

Minutes of Meeting held on Friday, 4th October, 2019 at 2.00 p.m. Council Chamber, County Hall, Kilkenny

PRESENT: Cllr. Martin Brett, Cllr. Deirdre Cullen, Cllr Michael Delaney, Cllr. Pat Dunphy, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, Cllr Denis Hynes, Cllr Joe Lyons, Cllr Andrew McGuinness, Cllr Patrick O’Neill, Deputy Bobby Aylward TD, Deputy John McGuinness TD.

Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes, Kilkenny Garda Station
Superintendent Carmel Banville, Thomastown Garda Station
Inspector Barry Smith, Kilkenny Garda Station
Helena Power, PPN.

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 John Paul Phelan, Cllr. Tomás Breathnach, Cllr. Michael McCarthy.

Ms. Anne Maria Walsh, Meetings Administrator, opened the meeting and welcomed all in attendance. She advised that this Committee will be in place until 2024 and welcomed Helena Power and Samuel Morgan from the PPN.

Item No. 1: Election of Chairperson:

It was Proposed by: Cllr. Andrew McGuinness
Seconded by: Cllr. Pat Dunphy
And Agreed:

“That Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick be the new Chairperson of the Committee.”

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick took the Chair and thanked his proposer, seconder and all present. He said he was delighted to be Chair and paid tribute to his predecessors. He then spoke of his hopes for the Committee.

Item No. 2: Election of Vice-Chairperson:

It was Proposed by: Cllr. Pat Dunphy
Seconded by: Cllr. Andrew McGuinness
And Agreed:

“That Cllr. Martin Brett be the new Vice -Chairperson of the Committee.”

Item No. 3: Minutes of Meeting of Kilkenny JPC held on 27th March 2019.

Minutes of Meeting of Kilkenny County Council Joint Policing Committee held on 27th March 2019 were accepted for approval.

Item No. 4: Work plan for 2019/2020

Ms. Anne Maria Walsh explained that the guidelines circulated to Members detailed how the JPC should be conducted. She asked that the Committee consider the document and feed back into the next JPC meeting. A work plan will be devised in line with Appendix 2 of the document. The key issues forming the work plan should be around how the JPC can enhance efforts to address issues affecting community life e.g. crime prevention, antisocial behaviour. street crime, misuse of drugs , support for crime victims and road safety.

Item No. 5: Crime Statistics Update

Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes provided an update on crime statistics for the Carlow/Kilkenny area.

- Burglary (Not Aggravated) down 74% since 2013 (Less than 1 per week for some periods). (contributing factors include people heeding the crime prevention messages, text alerts and increased checkpoints on motorways) .

- Theft from shop – reduction of incidents from 579 1st half of 2015 to 347 1st half of 2019.

- Theft from Vehicle – up 30% on last year but an improvement since 2014. (predominately this is where tools are taken from work vehicles but when items are recovered Gardai find it very hard to establish owner. Trying to encourage people to put security mark on equipment, tools etc. text alert groups could help in this area).

- Drug offences – search, arrest and detection rates up . Incidents of arrest for sale and supply are at highest rate since 2016.

The following queries were raised by member of the committee

- Incidents of unreported crime
- Drug problems in Housing Estates and the role of the Tenant Liaison Officers.
- Protocol for protecting peoples identity who report crime.
- Resources/manpower to tackle drug problem and drug related crime.
- Problems with the Handball Alleys in the City
- Increased incidents of Juvenile crime and the role of the JLO.

Chief Superintendent Hayes , Ms. Colette Byrne and Mr. Butler responded to the members. It was agreed that protocol around dealing with criminal activity in local authority housing estates be developed through SPC 3 Housing and considered by JPC before being adopted.

Item No. 6: Local Policing Partnership

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick advised that the Local Policing Partnership (LPP) between the Gardaí and Kilkenny County Council was launched in Castlecomer earlier this year. Members of An Garda Síochána, local interest groups, elected representatives as well as members from the relevant text alert areas attend the meetings where issues are discussed and actions taken.

Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes explained that Inspector Barry Smith is in charge of community policing in Kilkenny and the LPP is now a central part of community policing. There are 7 pillars attached to the partnership including, accessibility, visibility, problem solving and communication. It is hoped that the next partnership will be launched in the Piltown area before the end of 2019.

The chair of the Municipal District is the chair of the LPP. They will be invited to report to the JPC at least twice a year. The partnership is about meeting people locally and listening to them.

A question was raised in relation to Garda resources. The Chief Superintendent and Superintendent Banville explained that vacancies have arisen through redeployment to new initiatives and promotions but replacements have not yet been appointed.

It was Proposed by: Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick
Seconded by: Deputy Bobby Aylward
And Agreed by all:

“ That Kilkenny JPC will write to the Minister of Justice and the Police Commissioner concerning the under resourcing and non-filling of Gardai posts in the Carlow/Kilkenny district. “

Item No. 7: New Divisional Policing Model

Cllr. Fitzpatrick expressed his concerns about the possibility of losing the divisional HQ in Kilkenny and the detrimental effect that the changes will have on the proven successful community policing in the Carlow/Kilkenny area. He asked Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes to provide details on the proposed new Divisional Policing Model. Chief Superintendent Hayes explained that the current district model of policing is being replaced by a divisional model where responsibilities will be allocated on a functional basis rather than geographical basis.

He stated that he did not have the full details of the plan but he understood the main changes to be as follows: At present Carlow/ Kilkenny has 3 divisions with a Superintendent over each division. Under the new structure Carlow/ Kilkenny will be joining with Waterford and the HQ of the division will be located in Waterford. There will be 4 Superintendents for the Carlow/Kilkenny/Waterford division, one which will be responsible for crime investigation, one in charge of governance and 2 responsible for engaging with the public. Instead of having 6 Superintendents, as is the current situation, (3 in Waterford, 3 in Carlow/Kilkenny) responsible for community engagement there will only be 2 under the new structure. Community policing as a model has been acknowledged as a huge success and the changing of this model is a very worrying prospect.

Members expressed their concerns and grave disappointment in relation to this new divisional model. Comparisons with the other agencies that were restructured were made along with questions over the amount of research and studies carried out to arrive at such a model. Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes did not have a time scale for the introduction of the proposed plan but understood that it is currently being piloted in Cork & Mayo and he expects to see it rolled out to the rest of the Country in 2-3 years.

The Members agreed on the following actions:

The JPC will write to the Assistant Commissioner inviting him to attend a JPC meeting to outline the proposed new structure for Kilkenny. A special JPC meeting may be called to facilitate his diary and attendance. The Deputies were required to arrange a hearing of the Joint Committee on Justice and Equality for the Committee. Deputies agreed to raise a question in relation to the proposals in parliamentary question time and bring it before the Public Audit Committee in relation to the cost of its implementation.

Item No. 8 & Item 9: Set Date for next meeting and agree date and venue of Public meeting.

Date of next meeting agreed for 2nd December at 6.30 pm in Piltown Community Hall followed by Public meeting at 7.30pm.

Item No. 6: Any Other Business

The following matters were raised under any other business;

- Speeding traffic and volume from Callan Road to the Butts through Lord Edward Street and onto the Tullaroan Road.
- Extension of 30km zones
- Speed limits of 80km on roads in Mooncoin, Fiddown and other parts of the county.
- Issues on the Ballymack Road.

Mr Tim Butler and Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes responded to members. Mr Butler explained that speed limits in the County are reviewed every 5 years. The process will commence in 2020 in consultation with the Gardai and TII and will be adopted by Members in 2021. He confirmed that most of the City has 30km limits. Speed vans and pedestrian crossing contribute to the slowing down of traffic. On local roads the 80km is the maximum limit and should not be seen as a target. Road education is a very important factor. Mr. Butler outlined that there could be a proposal to remove the 80km limits on local roads and introduce a system of appropriate speed for each road. The Municipal Districts are reviewing this. He confirmed that HGV's are prohibited on the Ballymac Road and it is a matter for Garda enforcement. Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes explained that the Gardai have a robust programme in relation to speeding with both an enforcement and educational approach. He agreed that speeding could be an item on the agenda for the next meeting and Inspector Anthony Farrell will provide a report in relation to same.

A minute silence was held for Cllr. Fidelis Doherty's mother in law who recently passed away.

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick offered his congratulations to Superintendent Banville and all the woman of the Gardai who were recently honoured for 60 years of service. He finished by thanking the media for attending.

Meeting then concluded.