

Kilkenny County Council – Joint Policing Committee

Minutes of Meeting held on Monday, 24th February, 2020 at 3.00 p.m. Council Chambers County Hall, John Street, Kilkenny

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

Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes, Kilkenny Garda Station.

Superintendent Derek Hughes, Kilkenny Garda Station.

Inspector Anthony Farrell, Kilkenny Garda Station.

Inspector Sean O’Moore, Thomastown Garda Station.

Sergeant Laura Dragoi, Kilkenny Garda Station.

Sergeant Peter McConnon, Crime Prevention Officer.

Helena Power, PPN

Samual Morgan, 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: Cllr Fidelis Doherty

Cllr, Pat Fitzpatrick, Chairperson, opened the meeting and welcomed all.

Item No. 1: Minutes of Meeting of Kilkenny JPC held on 2nd December 2019.

Minutes of Meeting of Kilkenny County Council Joint Policing Committee held on 2nd December 2020:

Proposed by: Cllr. Michael McCarthy

Seconded by: Cllr. Martin Brett

And Agreed:

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

Item No. 2: Annual Report 2019

Ms. Anne Maria Walsh explained that the Annual Report previously circulated was drafted in accordance with the guideline for Joint Policing Committees. The report comprises of an Introduction, details of Kilkenny’s JPC work programme for 2019 and the progress achieved during the year. The report must be sent to the Policing Authority by the 31st March 2020.

Proposed by: Cllr. Michael Delaney

Seconded by: Cllr. Martin Brett

And Agreed:

“That the Annual Report 2019 be approved.”

Item No. 3: Draft Work Programme 2020

Ms. Anne Maria Walsh explained that the draft work programme had been drawn up in conjunction with the Gardai Síochana and Kilkenny County Council to include issues that need to be addressed in 2020, the actions required and the organisation responsible for delivering results.

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

“That the Draft Work Programme for 2020 be adopted.”

Item No. 4: Crime Statistics and Gardai Stewardship update 2019

Superintendent Derek Hughes gave a power point presentation under the following headings:

Confronting Crime - prolific offender manager programme which includes high visibility policing, monitoring offenders (curfew checks) more arrests, charge and objections to bail

- Property Crime down from 1650 incidents in 2014 to 853 in 2019.
- Burglary (not aggravated) incidents down from 527 in 2014 to 191 in 2019

Operation Citysafe - launched in April 2018 to support Kilkenny Chambers Purple Flag accreditation status for Kilkenny City, increased visibility of beat patrols/static posts to detect public order offences and reduce assault offences relating to night-time economy in the City.

- Assaults causing harm and minor incidents have fallen from 73 in 2017 to 48 in 2019.

Operation Homesafe was launched as a new initiative to strengthen the close working relationship between An Garda Síochana and communities in the City. The operation involves gardai calling door to door and advising residents on how to keep their property safe.

- Residential burglary incidents in Kilkenny Station fell from 105 in Jan – Dec 2014, to 12 in Jan- Dec 2019.

Operation Thor: Storm days of Action, - initiative carried out several times in the year to disrupt and intercept criminal activity.

- Latest operation saw 130 gardai including visiting Norwegian police officers deployed around the county successfully detecting drugs, seizing illegal vehicles and rescuing mistreated horses.

Operation Phonesafe - launched September 2019 to educate schools and young people around intimate photo sharing, organised fights and assessing inappropriate (illegal) material.

Operation Sweeper - launched May 2019 as a countermeasure to street crime. The operation involves undercover gardai on bicycles observing criminal activity.

- Arrests made for selling drugs, sulkie racing and robberies.

The Members thanked Superintendent Derek Hughes and complimented the gardai on their achievements. They raised the following:

- Sulkie racing and conditions of horses.
- Operations homesafe and phonesafe - sharing the message on the door step.
- Information programme for people from different Countries.
- Problem of drugs in some housing estates.
- Night time revellers causing disturbance in housing estates on their way home .

Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes and Superintendent Derek Hughes responded to the issues raised. The combining of operations homesafe and phonesafe will be considered and the community engagement programme will include all diverse groups.

Item No. 6: Garda Commissioner Drew Harris

Cllr Pat Fitzpatrick introduced Garda Commissioner Drew Harris and Assistant Commissioner Michael Finn. He explained that Commissioner Harris would give a presentation on the new policing structure and answers question after.

Commissioner Harris began by saying what a privilege it was to attend Joint Policing Committee meetings and see what concerns people have. The current policing structure is over 100 years old and needs modernisation. Communities, crime and the workforce have changed and the police force must adapt to these changes and provide an effective and efficient service.

The new model will include creating larger garda divisions with a wider range of specialists' skills, making these new divisions more autonomous and self-sufficient. The internal structure of the Divisions will move away from a geographic-based District model towards the functional-based Local Policing Model. The aim is to have more garda officers on the streets and to significantly reduce the number in administrative roles so that officers are not tied up with office duties.

Additional Inspectors and Sergeants will be allocated to each Division to provide enhanced supervision and management with the focus on local community policing. Each Division will have enhanced policing skills and capabilities and garda divisions will be reduced from 28 to 19. Kilkenny/Carlow division will join with Waterford and the Divisional Headquarters will be located in Waterford. Each garda division will have two superintendents with responsibility for Community Engagement and a Detective Superintendent will be in charge of serious crime. 1,500 new gardai are expected to be recruited by the end of 2021 which will result in an increase in frontline gardai across the country.

Implementation of the new Garda Operating Model is taking place on a phased basis over a 2-year period. The start date for the Carlow/Kilkenny/Waterford division has not been agreed yet.

The members of the Committee thanked Commissioner Harris for his presentation and raised the following queries and concerns:

- What consultation process took place with Joint Policing Committees?
- Removal of Divisional headquarters from Kilkenny – could this be reconsidered in light of Carlow/Kilkenny's population and Waterford's coastline.
- Reduced opening hours for Mooncoin Garda Station.
- Loss of Superintendent in Thomastown.
- Role of the New Chief Superintendent.
- Importance of Community Policing.
- Effect of the new structure on rural policing.
- Future of Garda HQ in Dominic Street.
- Only an increase of 5 gardai in Kilkenny since 2010

Commissioner Harris and Chief Superintendent Hayes responded to the Members. The Commissioner assured the Members that the new model is built on community policing and is about providing an effective service which is responsive to the needs of the Community. Gardai Stations do not need to be manned 24/7 as there will be garda cars on call to respond when required. Stations will be manned from 9am to 5pm by non-garda administrative staff, freeing gardai to frontline duties. New gardai are being recruited but after a 10-year slump it will take a period of time before optimum levels are reached. Commissioner Harris assured all that the new model will deliver a wider range of policing services. It is a local policing model which focus on proactive community engagement, improved

performance, provide more capabilities at local level and most importantly see more gardai on the frontline.

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick thanked Commissioner Harris and Assistant Commissioner Finn and asked if the CCTV system for Urlingford could be prioritised. Commissioner Harris agreed to follow up on this.

Item No. 5: Drug Issues, education, enforcement, resilience and support

Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes stressed the importance of this issue and shared the concerns of all present. He confirmed that the drug detection capabilities had been doubled in the Carlow/ Kilkenny region. A National Strategy code-named " Operation Tara" is to be launched Country wide in April but has commenced since 1st January in this division. It involves a range of initiatives as follows:

- A dedicated drug unit for the divisions, headed by a Detective and 8 officers.
- Involvement of regular garda units and community gardai in combatting drug dealing in communities.
- Resources to address drug-related intimidation of users and their families by gangs lead by an Inspector.
- Awareness campaign on drugs and the drug trade especially in relation to young people both in primary (6th Class) and Secondary (TY) schools.

Chief Superintendent Hayes proposed that a Drug Action Task Force be set up to coordinate a multiagency approach to get the anti-drug message across. It was proposed that Cllr Pat Fitzpatrick will head the Task Force with assistance from Cllr Deirdre Cullen.

Item No. 7: Local Policing Partnership update

It was agreed to defer this item to the next Joint Policing meeting

Item No. 8: Set Date of Next Meeting

Next meeting set for the 25th May 2020 @2.30pm in County Hall

Item No. 9: Any Other Business

The following matters were raised under any other business;

- Cllr. Fitzpatrick asked approval for a representative from the Vintners Association and Chamber of Commerce to join the Joint Policing Committee.

Proposed by: Cllr. Pat Dunphy
Secoded by: Cllr. Tomas Breathnach
And Agreed:

"That a representative from the Vintners Association and Chamber of Commerce be nominated onto the Joint Policing Committee."

- Sergeant Peter McConnell, Crime Prevention Office, requested approval of the following CCTV proposals.

- 1) Endorsement to install 20 additional cameras to the Kilkenny AGS CCTV Town Centre system over 2 phases within the Kilkenny City area and the peripheral areas around Kilkenny City under Section 38(3)(a)
 - the camera's will be monitored from Kilkenny garda station by suitable trained garda , the data will be stored in Kilkenny Garda Station and Superintendent District Office Kilkenny will be the Data Controller
 - the cameras will benefit the Gardai, the public and the Business Community.

Proposed by: Cllr. Tomas Breathnach

Seconded by: Cllr Deirdre Cullen

And Agreed:

“ that Kilkenny Joint Policing Committee endorse request for the installation of 20 additional cameras in Kilkenny City under the control of An Garda Síochana.

- 2) An Garda Síochana are requesting that 4 Local Authority Cameras at Hebron Road endorsed by the Commissioner under Section 38(3)(c) be changed to Section 38 (3) (a)
 - the cameras will be monitored from Kilkenny public office by suitable trained garda , the data will be stored in Kilkenny Garda Station and Superintendent District Office Kilkenny will be the Data Controller
 - the cameras will benefit the Gardai, the public and the Business Community.

Proposed by: Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick

Seconded by: Cllr Denis Hynes

And Agreed:

“ that Kilkenny Joint Policing Committee approve the transfer of the cameras on the Hebron Road, Kilkenny from the control of Kilkenny County Council to the control of An Garda Síochana”

Meeting then concluded.