

Kilkenny County Council – Joint Policing Committee

Minutes of Public Meeting held on Monday, 24th September, 2018 at 7.30 p.m. in Urlingford Community Hall, Mill Road, Urlingford Co. Kilkenny

PRESENT: Cllr. Fidelis Doherty, Chairperson, Cllr. David Fitzgerald, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, Cllr. Michael McCarthy, Cllr. Joe Malone, Deputy John McGuinness T.D.

Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes, Kilkenny Garda Station
Superintendent Derek Hughes, Kilkenny Garda Station
Superintendent Ger Egan, Kilkenny Garda Station
Inspector Anthony Farrell, Thomastown Garda Station
Detective Inspector Lonergan
Sergeant Peter McConnon, Crime Prevention Officer, Kilkenny Garda Station
Sergeant Tom Jones, Urlingford Garda Station

Colette Byrne, Chief Executive, Kilkenny County Council
Tim Butler, Director of Services, Kilkenny County Council
Teresa Mahon, Staff Officer, Kilkenny County Council

Apologies: Cllr. Tomás Breathnach, Cllr. Michael Doyle, Cllr. Pat Dunphy, Cllr. Patrick McKee, Cllr. Patrick O'Neill, Mary Mescal, John Hayes and Anne Maria Walsh.

Cllr. Fidelis Doherty, Chairman - opened the meeting and welcomed all in attendance including the media. Cllr. Michael McCarty complimented Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes on bringing the JPC to rural areas. Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes affirmed that it was important for the Gardai and Kilkenny County Council to have this forum to listen to concerns from the public and to demonstrate how these concerns are been addressed. He welcomed Detective Inspector Lonergan to Kilkenny.

Queries were raised by Councillors and members of the public in relation to the following issues:

- CCTV cameras for the roads off the motorway in Urlingford
- Speeding in Housing Estates and Areas around Urlingford including Assumption place, Togher Rd, Chapelfield Estate, Gortnahoe Rd
- Road Safety
- Garda Visibility
- Garda Resources
- Motorway crime
- Drug Problems

The queries were addressed by the Gardai, Colette Byrne and Tim Butler:

CCTV Cameras in Urlingford

Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes, Chief Executive Colette Byrne and Director of Services Tim Butler congratulated the Community Alert Group and the people of Urlingford for raising the funds for a CCTV system in the area. They appreciated the frustration from the Community around the delays in getting the Cameras up and running. It was acknowledged that CCTV can help prevent crime and give people a feeling of safety. Unfortunately until the issues relating to data protection and CCTV systems are resolved the scheme cannot be put in place.

Crime Prevention Office Sergeant Peter McCannon explained that there is legislation governing CCTV for (a) Garda System and (b) Community based organisation but this legislation needs to be re-examined under the new General Data Protection Regulations. No further action can be taken from a garda point of view until the Government provide guidance.

Tim Butler explained that Kilkenny County Council is the data controller for some CCTV systems in place around the County but the new General Data Protection Regulations have resulted in the Council seeking guidance and advice from the Department of Justice.

Colette Byrne explained that in an ideal world there would be CCTV systems everywhere but due to the introduction of the new General Data Protection Regulations large fines can be imposed on Organisations and Individuals who are anyway in breach of the Regulations. She appealed for patience until the feedback from the audits carried out by the Data Commissioners provides the Council with best practice guidance.

Speeding in Housing Estates and on some roads in Urlingford.

Tim Butler explained that the Council continues to work with the Gardai around problems with speeding. Both education and engineering measures are the methods adopted to address the issues. Solutions are reached through the use of an evidence based approach. At present the Area Engineer for Castlecomer, Philip Beubry, is conducting a number of traffic counts to gauge usage. Once all the information is compiled the Council will look at what safety/speed reduction measures, if any, are to be installed. Measures that will be considered in Urlingford include realigning the road, ramps, signage and rumble strips. Specific areas of concerns from the public are to be addressed to the Director of Services at the end of the meeting.

Road Safety:

Inspector Anthony Farrell is responsible for traffic safety in the Kilkenny and Carlow area. He explained the four pillars of the Road Safety Strategy No 1. To reduce fatal and serious collisions. No 2. To increase Garda visibility on the roads. No 3. To increase detections of a range of offences that contribute to fatalities and serious injuries on our roads. No. 4. The implementation of an ANPR (automatic number plate recognition) strategy.

He explained about the work of the traffic core, the literature on Road Safety available and the Traffic Watch Scheme with the RSA.

Garda Visibility:

Superintendent Derek Hughes spoke about Garda visibility and explained that just because you don't see gardai activity, it does not mean that it is not happening and he used the example of the recent drug related arrests in Urlingford to make his point. He detailed the reasons for squad cars and unmarked garda vehicles, their individual benefits and the ways in which they are used. He described how the Community Base Team works, curfews and many other initiatives that the Gardai use to combat crime.

Garda Resources:

Sergeant Tom Jones explained that he is the local guard for Urlingford and he answered question on the local resources for Castlecomer, Ballyraggett and Urlingford. Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes said he would love to have more resources available to him and will continue to seek same from his Superiors. He explained that his budget has been cut and with retirements and promotions he has fewer resources available. He went on to state that while extra resources would be very welcome the Gardai were constantly keeping people safe through their community engagement teams, the armed response units, checkpoints and numerous other activities.

Motorway crime:

Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes made it clear that the gardai were aware of the threat in Urlingford from Gangs using the motorway to strike in rural area. They have strategies in place to deal with these risks and have even tracked suspects back to Dublin to make arrests. He asked the public to help in reporting anything suspicious and using the local text alert system.

Drug Problems:

Drug are a big problem in Urlingford and Superintendent Derek Hughes reassured all present that the gardai were aware of the issues with drugs in the area and were constantly vigilant. He told of recent drug arrests made in the town but also asked for the public to report any suspicions they might have in relation to people or dwellings. Working together, he advised, was the only way to deal with this problem.

Crime Statistics:

Superintendent Derek Hughes provided crime statistics for the Urlingford Area:

2017 15 Burglaries

2018 2 Burglaries

2017 4 theft from Vehicles

2018 1 theft from Vehicles

2017 5 theft of Vehicle

2018 1 theft of Vehicle

2018 1 theft from person

2018 1 theft from shop.

He confirmed that Urlingford is a safe place and the Gardai are doing everything to keep it that way.

Deputy John McGuinness corroborated that the new policing methods were working and local meeting like this one are great for the Community. He stated that he was going to raise the issues with CCTV systems and gardai resources in the Dail.

Cllr Fidelis Doherty concluded the meeting by thanking everyone present, in particular Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes and all the gardai in attendance along with Council Members, Chief Executive Colette Byrne and Directors of Services Tim Butler

