

## Kilkenny County Council – Joint Policing Committee

### Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday, 27<sup>th</sup> March, 2019 at 2.00 p.m. Council Chamber, County Hall, Kilkenny

**PRESENT:** Cllr. Fidelis Doherty, Chairperson, Cllr. Tomás Breathnach, Cllr. Pat Dunphy, Cllr. David Kennedy, Cllr. Maurice Shortall, Cllr. David Fitzgerald, Cllr Joe Malone, Cllr Michael McCarthy

Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes, Kilkenny Garda Station  
Superintendent Derek Hughes, Kilkenny Garda Station  
CPO Garda Peter McConnell, Kilkenny Garda Station  
Garda Tadhg Mohally, Scenes of Crime Unit  
Detective Sergeant Elaine Dalton, DPSU  
Mark Nother, Policing Authority

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

**Apologies:** Ms. Colette Byrne, Chief Executive, Deputy Bobby Aylward, T.D. Deputy John Paul Phelan, Deputy Kathleen Function, Mary Mescal

Cllr. Fidelis Doherty, Chairperson - opened the meeting and welcomed all in attendance. She introduced Mr. Mark Nother who is attending the meeting as a representative from the Policing Authority .

#### **Item No. 1: Confirmation of Minutes of Meetings:**

Minutes of Meeting of Kilkenny County Council Joint Policing Committee held on 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2019:

Proposed by: Cllr. Tomás Breathnach  
Seconded by: Cllr. David Kennedy  
And Agreed:

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

#### **Item No. 3: Scenes of Crime Presentation**

Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes introduced Garda Tadhg Mohally from the Scenes of Crime Unit explaining that not only does the unit excel at crime detection it also plays a big part in crime prevention.

Garda Mohally provided a brief presentation on the unit. He described how the unit is manned, structured and operated. He went on to give details on responding to and prioritising cases, taking charge of crime scenes, gathering forensic evidence including photographical, fingerprinting, preserving crime scenes, compiling written reports and giving/ defending evidence in court. The

types of calls the units attend include burglaries, criminal damage, thefts, sudden death, fire scenes and hit and runs. Garda Mohally explained that during the course of the units work they offer advice and assistance to victims and others about improving security around their property and person. He showed photos on technical examinations of premises, of a vehicle, of a fire scene and what can be determined from each.

He concluded his talk confirming that the unit provides talks to organisations and schools on their work.

Cllr. Doherty and all the Members thanked Garda Mohally for his presentation and raised the following queries/observations:

- Timescale for securing crime scenes.
- The number and location of staff in the unit.
- Possibility of the civilisation of the unit in time.
- Level/type of crime that the unit attends.

Chief Superintendent Hayes and Garda Mohally responded to the Members. Garda Mohally gave a breakdown on the makeup of the unit and explained about the timescale involved in their work. Chief Superintendent Hayes agreed that there were areas within the policing system where civilisation works very well and mentioned the recent achievement of the front of house civilian staff in acquiring the Age Friendly Charter. The Scenes of Crime unit, however he deemed would not be suitable for civilisation as the expertise needed to perform the duties could only be gained through years of practical experience in the Gardai. He explained that the unit attends all burglaries from houses but limited resources prevent the scenes of crime officers attending some minor crimes.

#### **Item No. 4: Divisional Protective Services Unit**

Detective Sergeant Elaine Dalton explained that Divisional Protected Service Unit in the Kilkenny/Carlow was launched on the 4<sup>th</sup> March after being piloted in other divisions. The unit is overseen by a Detective Inspector and manned by 2 Detective Sergeants and 10 Detective Gardai and 3 Gardai staff. It is a dedicated unit dealing with the area of rape, human trafficking, sexual offences/assault/abuse, child sexual abuse including on line and historical sexual abuse. The unit will deliver a consistent and professional approach to the investigation of these specialised crime and ensure the relevant support information is provided to victims including links to external services provided by other agencies e.g. Tusla.

Cllr. Doherty thanked Detective Sergeant Dalton for her presentation and asked if she could return to the Committee next year with an update on the unit. All the Members thanked Detective Sergeant Dalton for her presentation and raised the following queries/observations:

- Regarding the opening times and manning of the unit.
- If the unit is unique to Kilkenny or replicated country wide.
- Number of victims that might present?
- Is the unit the first port of call or are victims referred to the unit?
- Is the units location suitable for domestic assaults because of its visibility?
- Is there a specific confidential phone line in operation for victims?
- How is the unit advertised, website, social media, talks to TY students?

Chief Superintendent Hayes and Detective Sergeant Dalton responded to the Members. They explained that there are 10 guards working shifts in the unit ensuring cover at all times. The

service units have been rolled out in other parts of the Country over the last year. The unit will deal with a large number of victims/crimes on an ongoing basis with people either presenting to the unit or been referred through the main front desk in the station. There is no specific confidential phone line but all calls to the Garda station are dealt with in a confidential manner. They agreed that the unit should be highlighted more for the public's attention.

**Item No. 2: Operation Sweeper**

Superintendent Derek Hughes referred to the previous JPC meeting in which he had highlighted the reduction in crime across all areas in Kilkenny including a 20% reduction of assaults in the City area over the last year. These reductions can be attributed directly to the city safe initiative and the support of the public. There are however, he explained, always been a core group of juveniles who travel on bicycles into the centre of the City and engage in low level public order offences. In recent times this has escalated to assaults, robberies and thefts from vehicles. The high visibility of the guards is not working in apprehending these youths and a more covert approach is been introduced to try address this problem.

Superintendent Hughes provided information on the new initiative Operation Sweeper which is going to start in the coming weeks. The operation will consist of 2 sergeants working alongside 10 trained garda bicycle riders targeting these small number of youths. Each garda will be assigned one adolescence to manage with the hoped outcome of rehabilitation.

Cllr. Doherty and all the Members praised the gardai for their proactive approach in setting up this initiative and raised the following queries/observations:

- That there is a group of teenagers in the city who are intimidating other teenagers to hand over their money.
- That teenagers should be encouraged to report if they are victims of crime and not to be embarrassed.
- What are the number of youths involved in this type of crime and antisocial behaviour?
- What Community Service is available to these young offenders?
- What length of time will the operation run for?
- Could ASBO's be used in these cases?
- The responsibility of the parents of these young offenders.

Superintendent Hughes and Mr. Tim Butler responded to members. Superintendent Hughes clarified that the Gardai were aware of the intimidation to teenagers in the City and are keeping a close eye around the underage Balls. He explained that there are only a small number of youths involved in what he described as out and out thuggary and the means of exclusion zones and ASBOs is not enough to address their behaviour. They will be apprehend and prosecuted but it is hoped that their appointed garda along with the Community Service Liaison Officer can help steer them in a different path and show them another way. The operation will be ongoing and a report will be given to the next JPC on its progress. Mr. Butler explained that the Council does not have the capacity to handle young offenders for rehabilitation. They could allow the use of the public parks for community service but it would have to be administered and operated by the Court Services. He confirmed that the Council were having discussions with the Garda Youth Programme around the possibility of some of the youths on this project becoming part of the Councils summer works programme.

**Item No. 5: New Divisional Policing Model**

Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes provided details on the proposed new Divisional Policing Model. He explained that the current district model of policing will be replaced with a divisional model where responsibilities will be allocated on a functional rather than geographical basis. This divisional model of policing would see Superintendents assigned responsibilities on the basis of functions. Each divisional hub will have a management team comprising the Chief Superintendent and Superintendents with business supports including Finance and HR provided by civilian staff with appropriate experience. In the case of the Kilkenny/ Carlow policing district the new divisional model will see at least one other district e.g. Tipperary or Waterford coming under the same divisional area. Not only will this have staffing implications it also seems to be moving away from the current community policing style towards a more centralised form of policing. The current situation where local Gardai dealing with local matters, as close to the ground as possible, will be replaced by Garda managers in charge of road traffic, or human resources or finances for many or all of the districts within that division.

Cllr Fidelis Doherty vacated the Chair for a short period and Cllr Pat Dunphy took her place.

Members expressed their disappointment in relation to this new divisional model and all agreed that the current community based district policing system with new support units such as the Divisional Protective Services Unit were working extremely well. The district has the biggest number of text alert areas in the Country along with some of the lowest crime rates and any change to the current set up could have a detrimental effect.

Cllr Doherty returned to the chair.

It was proposed by Cllr . Maurice Shortall  
seconded by Cllr. David Kennedy

And Agreed by all:

“that a letter will be sent to Drew Harris Garda Commissioner from the JPC, to express the disappointment and great concerns over the proposed new Divisional Policing Model”.

**Item No. 6: Any Other Business**

The following matters were raised under any other business;

- Urlingford & Graine Community Alert CLG application for grant aid for a community CCTV system due to be submitted to the Department of Justice & Equality.

It was proposed by Cllr . Maurice Shortall  
seconded by Cllr. David Fitzgerald

And Agreed by all:

“to agreed in principle to approve the application for Community CCTV system in Urlingford”.

Kilkenny County Council will act as Data Controller and the Gardai Síochána has agreed to have the equipment in their station in Urlingford. The next step is to secure approval from the national CCTV and advisory board and finally to the Garda Commissioner to sign off.

- Update on extra CCTV in the City and around the War Memorial. Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes explained that there is a 5 year CCTV plan for Kilkenny with an investment of 120 thousand euro. He is hoping to make a presentation on Phase 1 shortly. The War Memorial will fall under this phase.

- New Garda Sergeant for Castlecomer. Confirmation received that a new Sergeant will be appointed once current Sergeant leaves.

- Possibility of holding the Joint Policing Committee meetings on a Friday afternoon to facilitate Oireachtas members attending. Ms. Anne Maria Walsh explained that new Standing Orders have to be adopted by the new JPC and the timing of meetings will form part of these orders.

As this was the last meeting of the current Joint Policing Committee the Chairperson Cllr Fidelis Doherty took the opportunity to thank her predecessor Cllr. Patrick McKee. She also thanked everyone else who was part of the committee over the last 5 years including Chief Executive of Kilkenny County Council, Ms. Colette Byrne, Director of Services Mr. Tim Butler, Senior Executive Officer Ms. Anne Maria Walsh and Administrative Officer Catherine Cooney. She went on to thank Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes, Superintendent Derek Hughes and all of the Gardai Síochána who were part of and contributed to the committee. She also thanked all the Elected Members, all the other committee members and the Media. She paid tribute to Cllr Maurice Shortall on his retirement.

Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes thanked Cllr Doherty, all the Elected Members and all who had contributed to the committee over the years. He made a presentation to Cllr. Maurice Shortall on his retirement. All present wished Cllr. Shortall a happy retirement.

Ms. Anne Maria Walsh, on behalf of the CE Colette Byrne and the Executive expressed her gratitude to the Chairperson Cllr. Doherty, the Gardai Síochána, the Elected Members, all other Members, the Media and anyone who had contributed to the committee over the years.

Meeting then concluded.