

Kilkenny County Council – Joint Policing Committee

Minutes of Meeting held on Monday, 12th December, 2021 at 2.00 p.m. Via MS Teams

PRESENT: Chairperson, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, Cllr. Martin Brett, Cllr. Pat Dunphy, Cllr. Joe Lyons, Cllr. Tomás Breathnach, Cllr. Deirdre Cullen, Cllr. Michael McCarthy, Cllr. Andrew McGuinness, Cllr. Joe Malone, Cllr. John Coonan, Cllr. Michael Doyle, Cllr Michael Delaney

Chief Superintendent Padraig Dunne.
Superintendent Derek Hughes, Kilkenny Garda Station.
Superintendent Colin Furlong, Thomastown Garda Station.
Detective Inspector Séan O ’Meara, Kilkenny Garda Station.
Inspector Peter McConnon, Kilkenny Garda Station
Anthony Morrisson, Vintners Association.
Deputy Jennifer Murnane O’Connor

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

Apologies: Deputy John Paul Phelan and Deputy John McGuinness.

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, Chairperson, opened the meeting and welcomed all present. He congratulated Superintendent Colin Furlong on his appointment.

Item No. 1: Minutes of Kilkenny JPC meeting held on 13th September 2021.

Minutes of Kilkenny County Council Joint Policing Committee meeting held on 13th September 2021:

Proposed by: Cllr. Tomás Breathnach
Seconded by: Cllr. Michael McCarthy
And Agreed:

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

Item No. 2: Update on Covid

Mr. Tim Butler gave the Committee an update on the Covid situation in Kilkenny. He advised that he had spoken with the HSE and the number of cases in the County is on the rise but are not resulting in increased hospitalisation. They are urging anyone who is not vaccinated to do so and advised everyone to take up the offer of the booster. The Gardai have addressed anti-social behaviour issues linked to outdoor seating areas. Mr. Butler thanked them for their help with Yulefest. The one-way system in the City was discussed at a recent Kilkenny MD meeting and it was agreed to keep it in place until next review date in June 2022 or until Covid subsides. He urged everyone to follow the Government guidelines on Covid.

The Committee thanked Mr. Butler and welcomed the decision in relation to the one-way system. They congratulated all involved in the success of Yulefest.

Item No.3: Update from An Garda Síochána on Crime Statistics – 1st January – 30th November 2021

Detective Inspector Sean O’Meara outlined that since the 1st January 2021, Gardai within the Kilkenny and Thomastown Districts have responded to 6,735 calls from members of the public through the Regional Control Centre:

- Arrests, searches and vehicle seizures are down from 2020.
- 14,364 crime patrols carried out, 3,423 checkpoints and 627 mandatory intoxication tests.
- Incidents of driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs are down from 2020.
- Arrests for possession and sale/supply of drugs have increased from 2020 levels.
- Public order offences are slightly down from the same period last year.
- Burglary (non-aggravated) down from 2020. These figures continue to fall year on year.
- Theft from shops are up from 2020 and the wearing of face masks has made it harder to detect the culprits.
- Theft from MPV down by over 35%.
- Theft of other property is also down on 2020.
- Robberies from person has increased slightly on last year but to date there were no robberies of establishments this year.
- Assaults causing harm and minor assaults have increased since 2020.
- Domestic abuse incidents reported increased to 399 compared to 345 for the same period in 2020.
- Incidents of Fraud/Economic crime have more than tripled since 2020.
- Traffic collisions resulting in serious injury are up on 2020 but 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.

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

- Completion date for Freshford Garda Station.
- Antisocial behaviour in Urlingford and Garda resources in the area.
- Haybarns fires in Callan and extra gardai in the area.
- Spate of crime in North Kilkenny.
- More Garda manpower in Castlecomer.
- Increase of drug usage and availability.
- Bogus tradespeople.
- Spreading the word of support for Domestic Violence victims on Garda social media
- Advise to the Elected Members on how to deal with members of the public providing them with information
- Counterfeit money.

Chief Superintendent Padraig Dunne, Superintendent Derek Hughes, Superintendent Colin Furlong and Detective Inspector O’Meara responded to Members. Superintendent Hughes confirmed that the refurbishment of Freshford Gardai Station should be completed by early February but the Garda member assigned to Freshford continues to perform his duties even without a station. Urlingford is fully resourced and other Gardai members are assigned to the area if required. Chief Superintendent Dunne and Detective Inspector O’Meara confirmed that there is a full ongoing investigation into the

fires in Callan. Chief Superintendent Dunne once again stressed that under divisional policing resources are assigned to the area that needs them and this is managed on a daily basis. Superintendent Hughes confirmed that successful check points were carried out to address a recent increase in crime in North Kilkenny. These check points will be continued to deter further crime. The Community text alerts are being successfully used by the Gardai to make people aware of illegal activity in their areas. Superintendent Furlong thanked everyone for their good wishes on his appointment. He advised that incidents of drug crime continues to rise year on year and it continues to be a challenge. A number of recent operations has led to significant seizures and the value and quantity of drugs seizures is on the increase. Drugs will always be a challenge but the Gardai intend to keep doing everything possible to deter the suppliers and dealers. Superintendent Hughes advised that Kilkenny had great success in apprehending and successfully prosecution bogus tradespeople and he urged people to report any such crime. He also urged businesses to report any counterfeit money that might be passed to them.

Chief Superintendent Dunne advised the Elected Members to get in contact with the Gardai if members of the public are too fearful to do so. Information is handled with the strictest confidence and this might encourage more people to come forward. He agreed to take on board suggestions regarding the use of Garda social media platforms to promote the supports available for Domestic Violence victims.

Item No. 4. On-Line Fraud

Detective Inspector Sean O 'Meara gave a brief outline on the current trends on on-line fraud crime which has being compounded by the pandemic and people working from home. These trends include phishing (fraud using a phone), smishing (fraud using text messaging), social media, business email compromise, investment fraud, and online shopping fraud. There were 293 crimes of this nature in Kilkenny during 2021 compared to 90 in previous years. He stressed the importance of getting the message out to the public that a) that they should not answer or return calls to unsolicited numbers b) no bank or government agency will ever ask for bank details in an unsolicited call C) they should call the recipient before transmitting any funds.

The Members thanked Detective Inspector Sean O 'Meara and urged the public to be vigilant.

Item No. 5. Kilkenny City CCTV Update

Inspector Peter McConnon gave the Committee an update on the process for securing 20 additional CCTV cameras for the City. He gave details and timelines for the Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA), Garda Mapping Service, Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Garda Telecoms and the Public Consultation Process. The Mapping and the Public Consultation Process was completed in 2021. The timeframe for 2022:

- DPIA- completed in January 2022
- SLA – completed in January 2022
- Full application returned to the National Community Relations Office January 2022
- Then forwarded to the National CCTV Advisory Board for adjudication.
- Gardai Commissioners Office to hopefully approved by Summer 2022.

The cameras will be monitored by trained Garda Members and are going to be placed in strategic locations around the City. The Council is future proofing the City for further cameras by ensuring ducting is in place .

The Members thanked Inspector McConnon and the Gardai for the progress in securing the extra CCTV for the City. Thanks was also given to retired Chief Superintendent Dominic Hayes for initiating this programme. Members asked about rolling out the CCTV programme to larger towns in the County.

Item No. 6. Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy 2020 -2025

Ms. Mary Mulholland gave the Committee an update on Kilkenny County Council's anti-social behaviour strategy. This strategy was the first of its kind in the Country and a full review of the strategy will take place in January 2022.

Ms. Mulholland explained the objectives of the Strategy. She gave details on the preventative measures that the Council have in place for Local Authority Tenants including pre-tenancy courses. Garda vetting, tenancy sustainment and mediation services. If the preventative measures fail, the enforcement process is then followed including verbal warnings, written confirmation, tenancy notification of breach of tenancy, mediation, initial tenancy warning, final tenancy warning and when there is no improvement a possession order will be sought and the tenancy terminated.

The strategy's principle aim is to sustain tenancies and communities and work with other agencies to address antisocial behaviour. It also provides for a structure approach to deal with tenants when all processes of sustainability fail. If a tenancy is terminated, they are no longer entitled to any other housing supports from Kilkenny County Council or any other Local Authority.

The Members thanked Ms. Mulholland for her presentation. The raised the following queries:

- trespass on neighbours' land
- neglect of properties.

Ms. Mulholland responded to queries.

Item No. 7: Dates for Next Meetings

The Committee agreed dates for 2022:

14th March 2022
13th June 2022
12th September 2022
12th December 2022

Item No. 8: Any Other Business

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He asked all to be cognisant of Covid, and to be mindful of online fraud. He wished all the Committee and the Media a very happy Christmas.

Meeting then concluded.