

Kilkenny County Council – Joint Policing Committee

Minutes of Meeting held on Monday, 14th June, 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. Fidelis Doherty, Cllr. Michael McCarthy, Cllr. Andrew McGuinness, Cllr. Denis Hynes, Cllr. Joe Malone, Cllr. John Coonan, Cllr. Eugene McGuinness

Chief Superintendent Padraig Dunne.
Chief Superintendent Patrick Lordan.
Superintendent Derek Hughes, Kilkenny Garda Station.
Superintendent Anthony Lonergan, Thomastown Garda Station.
Detective Inspector Séan O’Meara, Kilkenny Garda Station.
Inspector Barry Smith, Kilkenny Garda Station
Marion Acreman, Chamber of Commerce.
Anthony Morrisson, Vintners Association.
Aoife Delaney, Policing Authority.

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 Malcolm Noonan TD, Samuel Morgan, Colette Murphy, Deputy John Paul Phelan .

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, Chairperson, opened the meeting and welcomed Aoife Delaney from the Policing Authority, Chief Superintendent Patrick Lordan from the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau and all present.

Item No. 1: Minutes of Briefing of Kilkenny JPC held on 30th November 2020.

Minutes of Briefing of Kilkenny County Council Joint Policing Committee held on 8th March 2021:

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

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

Item No. 2: Online Fraud & Cyber Security

Chief Superintendent Patrick Lordan of the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau made a presentation to the members of the committee on fraud and cyber security. He provided members with a short history of the bureau, its duties, responsibilities and its structure. He gave an overview of the current trends in crime which has been 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, online shopping fraud and money mules. These type of crimes used to be a cottage industry, he explained, but have now been

transformed into a highly organised global network which has no borders and run by crime gangs. The bureau is working closely with many financial institutions in the country to get 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.

Chief Superintendent Lordan gave Members advice in regards to investment fraud and warned of the risks associated with bitcoins and cybercurrency . He also warned about the risks of online shopping.

The Members thanked Chief Superintendent Lorden for his presentation and raised the following:

- Possibility of making presentation to schools and businesses
- Raising awareness of such crime with the public and in particular older people.

Chief Superintendent Lordan confirmed that that he is planning to roll out an awareness programme in secondary schools and give presentations to the business community once the pandemic is over. Community text alert services and parish newsletters are ways to get the fraud messages out to the public.

Item No. 3: Taxi Text Alert

Inspector Barry Smith advised the committee that the Taxi Test Alert Scheme was launched in September 2013 as a crime prevention/public information communication tool and was very successful. The scheme lapsed during the pandemic but it was now being relaunched. Inspector Smith explained that it is a simple form of communication, which is immediate and cost effective. The scheme enhances the partnership between taxi drivers and An Garda Síochána and assist in preventing crime and providing information. There are 57 text alert schemes in place, 36 in Kilkenny and 21 in Thomastown. He provided Members with examples of how the scheme operates.

The Members thanked Inspector Smith and welcomed the relaunched of the scheme. They raised the following:

- Increasing the numbers of Taxi Drivers in the scheme, use of CCTV in taxi's and Cllr. Eugene McGuinness as a liaison between the Gardai and the Taxi Drivers.
- Linking in with businesses with security cameras
- Reactivating county text alert scheme.

Inspector Smith agreed to liaise with Cllr. McGuinness in relation to Taxi Drivers and with Marion Acreman for business watch. He will examine reactivating the county text alert scheme and Mr. Butler confirmed that Kilkenny County Council will consider providing funding again.

Item No. 4: Active Travel Funding 2021

Mr. Tim Butler gave the committee an update on Active Travel Funding received by Kilkenny County Council and how the funding is being utilised in the City and County. €4.33m has been allocated for construction works and design and is supplemented by further funding from the URDF and RRDF. The funding will target a move to active travel and facilitate connectivity in the City and County. He provided the Committee with details on how the funding is being spent including specifics on the City Traffic Management Plan, Parliament Street improvement, Cootes Lane to Ring Road, public lighting

improvements, St. Kieran's Street, St. Mary's Lane, Carnegie Plaza, Barrack Lane, Laneways and Street Network west of City Centre, Safe School Zones, City Demarcations, Gateways, Greens Bridge Boardwalk, Radial Cycle Routes Improvements, New River Nore crossings (design), Inner Orbital Cycling Route (design), Ring Road cycle facility upgrade (design), Linear Park ancillary improvements (design), ancillary cycling facilities, light segregation cycle schemes and low cost permeability measures.

Outside the City, he gave details on the one-way system in Callan and the widening of footpaths in Callan, Thomastown, Graiguenamanagh, Mullinavat, Gowran, Kilmacow and Urlingford. He concluded his presentation by reaffirming the importance of the funding which is designed to get people out of their cars and give the space back to people to walk and cycle.

The Members thanked Mr. Butler for his presentation and praised the works being carried out. Cllr. Joe Lyons raised the problem of speeding on the Callan By-Pass. Mr. Butler confirmed that the 5-year review of the National Speeds Limits will go before the SPC and JPC and then goes on public display. However the public should adhere to current speed limits.

5. Update from An Garda Síochána on Crime Statistics – 1st January – 31st May 2021

Detective Inspector Sean O'Meara outlined that since the 1st January 2021, Gardai within the Kilkenny and Thomastown Districts have responded to 2,591 calls from members of the public through the Regional Control Centre:

- Arrests and vehicle seizures are down from 2020 but searches have increased.
- 7,885 crime patrols carried out, 2,327 checkpoints and 260 mandatory intoxication tests.
- Incidents of driving under the influence of alcohol down from 2020 but driving under the influence of drugs arrests increased.
- Arrests for possession and sale/supply of drugs have increased from 2020 levels.
- Public order offences are 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.
- Theft from MPV down by over 60%.
- Theft of other property down 20%.
- No Robberies have been reported in the first five months of this year.
- Assaults causing harm reduced from 2020 as night time activity curtailed because of COVID. Minor assaults however have increased over 60% since 2020.
- Domestic abuse incidents reported increased to 169 compared to 153 for the same period in 2020.
- Incidents of Fraud/Economic crime has increased over 100% since 2020.
- Traffic collisions and 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.

Chief Superintendent Padraig Dunne paid tribute to Detective Inspector O'Meara, Superintendent Lonergan and Superintendent Hughes. He expressed caution as society opens up and warned that it is likely that there will be an increase in crime as Gardai were dealing with a different environment during the pandemic.

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

- Concerns over the increase in drug crime.
- Text alert subscriptions
- Increase in Domestic Violence.
- Replacement of Garda in Freshford and additional Gardaí in Urlingford
- Cycling patrol in north Kilkenny.
- Increase visibility of Gardai as society reopens and Gardai on the beat.
- Gardai staffing levels around the County.

Chief Superintendent Padraig Dunne, Superintendent Hughes, and Detective Inspector O'Meara responded to Members. Detective Inspector O'Meara confirmed that all sale and supply of drug arrests are quickly bought before the courts but there can be a time delay in relation to prosecutions for possession as there has been reduced capacity in the Labs. He agreed that using Parish Newsletters and Community notes in the Kilkenny People is a good way to inform some sections of society about text alert services and fraud awareness.

Chief Superintendent Dunne advised that under new policing structure, Waterford, Kilkenny and Carlow have joined together as one division. There is no loss of personnel from this unification but staff may be moved into areas of need as required. He asked for understanding and patients as the new functional areas are established. Divisional policing had been in place since 1922 and it will take time for the change over to be completed. He confirmed that he is very much in favour of Gardai on the beat and was disappointed to hear that there was lack of visibility in Kilkenny. He confirmed that he would speak with his Superintendents and there will be an exponential increase in gardai presence in the County. Cllr. Martin Brett and Cllr. John Coonan assured the Chief Superintendent that they had noticed Gardai on the beat all around the City. Chief Superintendent Dunne confirmed that at the beginning of each week he has an operational meeting with his Superintendents and an operational plan is put in place for the week ahead. If there is a need for more Gardaí in an area or a need for overtime it will be arranged. He reiterated that he is a full believer in Garda visibility and the return of City Safe at the weekends will increase Garda presence in Kilkenny.

Superintendent Hughes confirmed that there will be a Garda replacement in Freshford and an additional Garda in Urlingford. There is a plan in place to introduce a cycling unit in north Kilkenny.

Item No. 6: Reopening Businesses.

Chief Superintendent Padraig Dunne confirmed that operational plans are in place for the reopening of business. He advised that Gardai have been assigned to give comfort and are well prepared for the reopening of businesses. Superintendent Lonergan advised that weekly plans are submitted to HQ and resources are assigned as required. All Gardai have been trained to support reopening in line with current guidelines.

Members thanked and commended the Gardai.

Item No. 7: Dates for Next Meetings

The next meeting will take place on 13th September 2021

Item No. 8: Any Other Business

Superintendent Lonergan advised the committee on the dangers of large farm machinery on the roads during the summer period. He confirmed that Community Sergeant Ted Hughes had been in contact

with Jim Mulhall of the IFA and advice and information have been distributed to IFA members. The Gardai continue to work with the RSA and advertisements are being run at present to highlight the dangers of silage and harvest time.

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Meeting then concluded.