

Kilkenny County Council – Joint Policing Committee

Minutes of Meeting held on Monday, 13th September, 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. Patrick O’Neill, Cllr. Michael Doyle, Cllr Michael Delaney

Chief Superintendent Padraig Dunne.
Superintendent Derek Hughes, Kilkenny Garda Station.
Acting Superintendent Claire Kenealy, Thomastown Garda Station.
Detective Inspector Séan O ’Meara, Kilkenny Garda Station.
Inspector Paul Donohoe, Kilkenny Garda Station
Sargent Laura Dragoi, Kilkenny Garda Station
Helena Power, PPN.
Anthony Morrisson, Vintners Association.

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 John Paul Phelan .

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

Item No. 1: Minutes of Kilkenny JPC meeting held on 14th June 2021.

Minutes of Kilkenny County Council Joint Policing Committee meeting held on 14th June 2021:

Proposed by: Cllr. Deirdre Cullen
Seconded by: Cllr. Andrew McGuinness
And Agreed:

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

Item No. 3: Update on Speed Limits Review

Ms. Anne Maria Walsh gave the Committee an update on the Speed Limits Review which is currently in progress. Local Authorities are mandated to review speed limits every 5 years and the last review conducted in County Kilkenny was in 2016. The 2021 review includes both national and non-national roads but decisions on speed limits on national roads lies with Transport Infrastructure Ireland. There are Speed Limit Review Guidelines in place.

Ms. Walsh detailed the progress to date on the review and what the next steps involve. Councillors are now asked to submit any speed limit proposal changes before the October meeting of their Municipal District. It is hoped that a Draft of the Speed Limit Bye-Laws and maps will be prepared between December and February 2022 and public consultation will be in March 2022. Submissions and objections will be considered and Draft Speed Limits and Bye- Laws should be available by June

2022 and adopted in July 2022. The revised Speed Limit Bye-Laws will then be published and implemented in August 2022.

Item No. 2: Update on Covid Restrictions

Mr. Tim Butler gave the committee an update on the lifting of Covid restrictions in relation to public transport, indoor and outdoor events / mass gatherings, indoor and outdoor group activities (sports, arts, culture, dance classes) and attendance at work for specific business requirements.

From 22nd October all restrictions are due to be lifted. Going forward there will be guidelines in lieu of legislation in place and it will be down to each individual to exercise personal responsibility.

The Council are currently looking at resuming all types of Council meetings even if the normal venue does not provide the necessary capacity. He advised as the restrictions are lifted there will be a move back to more normally activity especially in relation to public places. The Council will collaborate with the Gardai regarding the opening up of society in a safe manner and in particular the consumption of alcohol in public and anti-social behaviour .

The Members thanked Mr. Butler and raised concerns about gatherings outdoors late at night in the Market Yard and on the Parade. Mr. Butler and Superintendent Hughes addressed their concerns.

Item No.4: Presentation from Traffic Core

Inspector Paul Donohoe gave a presentation to the Members on the work of the Traffic Core. The Traffic Core are responsible for road policing in Kilkenny and Carlow. A Road Policing Operational Plan is developed on a national level each year covering all aspects of road behaviour and all the strategies for the year ahead. A local plan for Kilkenny and Carlow is then drawn up in line with this.

Members were given statistics on road collisions over the last number of years in the Kilkenny and Thomastown Districts. They were also given details on the time of day and what days of the week collisions are most likely to occur. Particulars on seatbelt and mobile phone offences were provided and Inspector Donohoe described how the new active mobility app and oral fluid tester were assisting the Gardai in detecting offences.

He outlined the four pillars of the Garda Traffic Strategy, engagement, education, engineering and enforcement being implemented in Kilkenny. The use of social media, school talks, new technology and days of actions are among the many strategies deployed under the four pillars. For the remainder of 2021 and beyond plans include Motorway Intervention Operations, review of speed limits locations, media strategy for all operations and traffic focus on Operation Thor. The Traffic Core will continue their close partnership with Kilkenny County Council and with all stakeholders including RSA, Social Protection and Customs.

The Members complimented the Traffic Core and thanked Inspector Donohoe for the presentation. They raised the following:

- Traffic management at crash scenes and the importance of local road knowledge.
- Patrol cars in Thomastown.
- Including Waterford with the Kilkenny/ Carlow Facebook page.
- Statistics on causes of accidents.

- Use of the mobility app in detecting speeding and the ability to prosecute.
- Speed detection locations.

Inspector Donohoe and Chief Superintendent Dunne responded to Members. Inspector Donohoe assured the Members that the traffic management at crash scenes is constantly reviewed. He confirmed that the patrol cars in Thomastown are official patrol vehicles. There are no official statistics on the causes of accidents as many components are involved, however speed is acknowledged as the biggest contributory factor. The new technology for speed guns can detect a speeding vehicle as far as 2k away on the Motorway and can be used to successfully prosecute. Speed detection locations will be reviewed in conjunction with the Speed Limit Review. Chief Superintendent Dunne reassured the Members that the Garda Facebook page will be shared between the 3 counties in the division.

Inspector Donohoe acknowledged the success of Rás Na mBan and thanked the staff of Kilkenny County Council for their assistance in the joint operation of running this event.

5. Update from An Garda Síochána on Crime Statistics – 1st January – 13th September 2021

Detective Inspector Sean O'Meara outlined that since the 1st January 2021, Gardai within the Kilkenny and Thomastown Districts have responded to 4,914 calls from members of the public through the Regional Control Centre:

- Arrests, searches and vehicle seizures are down from 2020.
- 11,473 crime patrols carried out, 3,090 checkpoints and 480 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 33%.
- Theft of other property down 25%.
- No Robberies have been reported in the first eight months of this year.
- Assaults causing harm and minor assaults have increased since 2020.
- Domestic abuse incidents reported increased to 277 compared to 246 for the same period in 2020.
- Incidents of Fraud/Economic crime have nearly tripled 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. The Taxi Text Alert was relaunched in September.

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

- Increase in scam calls and texts.
- Increase in availability of drugs.
- Making it easier for victims to report domestic violence.
- Permanent Superintendent in Thomastown.
- Manpower in Thomastown Garda Station.
- Relocation of crime unit from Thomastown.
- CCTV at the Skatepark in Kilkenny and more options to keep people safe around the park.
- More detailed examination of the Crime Statistics including the number of people who have been

- effect by these crimes.
- Speeding traffic on Lord Edward Street.
 - Traffic management around Nolan Park during match times.

Chief Superintendent Padraig Dunne, Superintendent Derek Hughes and Detective Inspector O'Meara responded to Members. Detective Inspector O'Meara advised the Members that very few of the scam calls and texts were coming from an actual phone number but created over the Internet. Scam calls should be blocked and reported directly to the service provider. He reassured the Members the Gardai continue to battle this type of crime. He agreed that availability of drugs is increasing but Garda Members are working harder and detecting more. They continue to engage and educate youths in the dangers of drug use. There are more victims of domestic abuse coming forward but it is important that the social media messages are helpful and don't cause more harm. CCTV will assist with combating antisocial behaviour in the Skatepark but the problem may move elsewhere. Garda patrols will be increased in the area. He confirmed that comparative analysis of crime statistics are carried out and the aim is always to reduce crime to zero. He advised that it is hard to quantify and qualify the total number of crime victims.

Chief Superintendent Dunne advised that the Garda Facebook page reflects the new division. He told the Members that most young people are reliable and responsible and it's only a small cohort causing problems at the Skatepark. The Garda Commissioner is looking at the Superintendent position in Thomastown but for now there is an Acting Superintendent Claire Kenealy in place. He confirmed that there are no plans to relocate the crime unit from Thomastown and assured all that no Gardai were working on civilian duties in Thomastown except in cases where they are recovering from injury.

Superintendent Hughes confirmed that a number of speed checks had been carried out on Lord Edward Street in recent months but no drivers were found to be speeding. The narrowness of the road might give an illusion of speed and he confirmed he had spoken to the Council about looking at it from an engineering perspective. The Gardai continue to engage with the Local Authority, GAA and the locals regarding traffic management around Nolan Park on match days.

Item No. 6: Dates for Next Meetings

The next meeting will take place on 13th December 2021

Item No. 8: Any Other Business

Cllr. Fidelis Doherty raised concerns around the dangerous of electric scooters being driven on roads and streets.

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Meeting then concluded.