

Kilkenny County Council – Joint Policing Committee

Minutes of Meeting held on Monday, 14th September, 2020 at 2.00 p.m. in Watergate Theatre, Parliament Street, Kilkenny

PRESENT: Chairperson, Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick, Cllr. Martin Brett, Cllr Michael Delaney, Cllr. Pat Dunphy, Cllr Joe Lyons, Cllr Tomás Breathnach, Cllr Deirdre Cullen, Cllr Patrick O’Neill, Cllr Fidelis Doherty, Cllr Andrew McGuinness, Cllr. Michael Doyle, Cllr. John Coonan, Deputy Malcolm Noonan TD, Deputy John McGuinness TD.

Superintendent Derek Hughes, Kilkenny Garda Station.

Inspector Sean O’Meara, Thomastown Garda Station.

Sergeant Laura Dragoi, Kilkenny Garda Station.

Colette Murphy, PPN

Samuel Morgan, PPN

Marion Acreman, Chamber of Commerce

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: Cllr Michael McCarty, Cllr Denis Hynes, Helena Power, PPN.

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

Item No. 1: Minutes of Briefing of Kilkenny JPC held on 6th July 2020.

Minutes of Briefing of Kilkenny County Council Joint Policing Committee held on 6th July 2020:

Proposed by: Cllr. Michael Delaney

Seconded by: Cllr. Deirdre Cullen

And Agreed:

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

Item No. 2: Update on Crime Statistics

Inspector Sean O’Meara outlined that since the 1st January 2020, Gardai within the Kilkenny and Thomastown Districts recorded a total of 6,542 crime incidents:

- Arrests and Searches have increased since 2019 but vehicle seizures are down.
- 13,242 crime patrols carried out and 3,989 checkpoints mounted.
- Incidents of driving under the influence of Alcohol down from 2019 but driving under the influence of drugs arrests increased.
- Arrests for possession and sale/supply of drugs down from 2019.
- Public order offences down YTD from 2019.
- Property crime down 30% from 2019.
- Burglary (non-aggravated) down slightly from 2019.
- Theft from shops down by 33%
- Theft from MPV down by over 50%
- Theft of other property down 35%.

- Robbery down 1 from 2019 but from a very low starting base.
- Assaults causing harm reduced as night time activity curtailed
- Traffic collisions down by 2 from 2019.

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

- Gardai knowledge of animal cruelty incidents in specific areas/places around the City.
- Worrying increase in drug driving offences.
- Anti-social behaviour around St. Canice's steps.
- Anti-social behaviour strategy for Housing Estates.
- The reinstatement of 'Business Watch and City Safe'.
- Gardai manpower in Kilkenny.
- Road safety issues at Henebry's Cross and Clinstown NS (St. Joseph's).
- Issues on the Callan Road and the need for Garda presence.

Superintendent Derek Hughes responded to Members. He acknowledged that animal cruelty incidents were reported to the Gardai but not on the scale mentioned at this meeting. He confirmed that the statistics provided did not include animal cruelty figures but will do so going forward. The suggestion that the Gardai be part of the new animal welfare committee was welcomed. He admitted that the nature of public order incidents had changed amid the Covid restrictions. With public houses closed anti-social behaviour was occurring more on the streets and in housing estates. He thanked the Members for bringing certain places to the Gardai attention and reassured all that there will be a reduction of public order incidents in these areas. He confirmed that once the public houses reopened 'City Safe' would be reinstated. 'Business Watch' will also recommence. He advised there has been no reduction in Gardai manpower in Kilkenny.

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick confirmed that Director of Housing, is in the process of completing an Anti-social Behaviour Strategy for housing estates and this will be presented to the next SPC. Ms. Colette Byrne acknowledge the challenging times at present and the need for the relevant stakeholders to get involved.

Item No. 3: Update on CCTV

Superintendent Derek Hughes confirmed that the CCTV system for Urlingford has been officially signed off by the Commissioner and has gone to tender.

The application for CCTV in Kilkenny has been recalled twice to include additional cover for the Western Environs and to seek clarification on the Data Controller question. It was confirmed that the four cameras on the Hebron Road will come under the new CCTV scheme application. Three of the cameras are still in need of repair. Mr. Butler confirmed that the works have been ordered by the Council.

Item No. 4: Update on establishment of Drug's Awareness Steering Group

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick explained that at the last briefing of the Joint Policing Committee the Members agreed to establish a Drug Awareness Steering Group following many concerns in relation to increased drug activities in Kilkenny. A number of meetings have taken place with the Gardai, Kilkenny County Council, HSE and the Regional Drug Taskforce. The terms of reference and multi-stakeholder membership for the committee have been drafted. Approval from the Kilkenny Joint Policing Committee for the establishment of the Drug Awareness Steering Group is required.

The Members agreed that there is a major drug crisis in Kilkenny affecting many homes and young people. Death's, beatings, abductions and threats to burn family homes have become common in Kilkenny as a result of the drug culture. The Members wholeheartedly supported the establishment of this sub-committee and agreed that all the different stakeholder must work together to fight this scourge through education, engagement, support and partnership.

Proposed by: Cllr. Andrew McGuinness

Seconded by: Cllr. John Coonan

And Agreed:

“That a Drug Awareness Steering Group for Kilkenny be established.”

Item No. 7: Set Date of Next Meeting

Next meeting set for the 30th November 2020 @2.00pm (venue to be reviewed later)

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Meeting then concluded.