

## LONGFORD JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE

### ANNUAL REPORT 2017

The Joint Policing Committee (JPC) is a body established under the Garda Síochána Act 2005 to serve as a forum where local authority representatives, Oireachtas members and community and voluntary interests work together with senior Garda Officers to discuss and make recommendations on matters affecting the policing of the County. The County Longford JPC is chaired by Councillor Gerry Warnock.

The Committee held 4 meetings in 2017 on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, and 4<sup>th</sup> December. The Committee also held a public meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2017. At each meeting the members were updated on Garda activities in the county, public order and anti-social issues as well as statistics on crime levels in Longford. The members welcomed the increased success of Gardai in tackling crime and noted that pressures were being experienced by Garda management at local level in meeting the day to day demands of running their districts with diminished staff numbers. The JPC agreed to write to the Minister for Justice to request upgrading of the Garda Barracks in Ballymahon and Edgeworthstown and to request that the Minister meet a delegation from the Joint Policing Committee regarding adequate personnel and financial resources to maintain a satisfactory level of Garda services in County Longford.

The Joint Policing Committee was also updated at each meeting on local authority matters including details of various funding schemes that became available during the year as well as updates on various community projects. Progress was noted in relation to economic development including the Council's Regeneration programme, the Longford Tourism Strategy and the CenterParcs development. Other areas of activity noted included the Public Participation Network, the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, the Intercultural Strategic Plan and the Resettlement Programme. The members discussed many other issues including Road Safety, Speed Control in housing estates, the Text Alert Scheme, the supply and sale of drugs and community policing.

CCTV was also an ongoing topic of discussion during the year. The members expressed frustration with ongoing difficulties regarding the completion of a Memorandum of Understanding between Gardai HQ and the local authority regarding the CCTV system in Longford Town. The members welcomed the Government announcement that grants of up to 60% of the total capital costs associated with the establishment of local community CCTV systems would be made available to support local communities who wish to install and maintain CCTV security systems in their area. The members agreed that communities would have difficulty in achieving the required matched funding of 40%. Funding for effective CCTV systems and the need for a National Strategy were emphasised by the members of the committee.

During the year a number of presentations were made to the JPC. Sergeant Lionel Mullaly gave an overview of the Crime Prevention Ambassador Programme which is designed to empower older people within the community by working in partnership with An Garda Síochána through local Community Policing Gardai and Crime Prevention Officers. The members welcomed the initiative which is proving to be very successful in the prevention of crime and noted that the overall aim of the Programme is to deliver crime prevention information to older people, provide them with clear and effective crime prevention advice and address the fear of crime.

Mrs. Kitty Hughes gave a comprehensive report on the activities of the Longford Older Persons Council which was established in December 2016. She also advised them in relation to the ongoing County Longford Age Friendly Strategy 2015-2020.

### **Joint action Plan -pilot initiative.**

At the JPC meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2017, Mr. P. Mahon, Chief Executive and Supt. Jim Delaney announced the launch of a Joint Action Plan by the Gardai and the Local Authority. The members noted that the Local Authority and Gardai are committed to working together to secure a better quality of life for residents in some areas of Longford town. The following Mission Statement was agreed - Longford Joint Action Group working in partnership towards focussed regeneration and reassurance of its communities to deliver an enhanced quality of life. The JPC members agreed that a pilot initiative be conducted to tackle anti-social behaviour in the Ardnacassa/Palace Crescent/Grian Ard areas of Longford town.

During the year the members noted that the combined focussed approach between the local authority and the Gardai was producing steady progress in the area. Very positive meetings had been held with residents of the area and relevant agencies and key issues facing the community in the area were identified.

Actions ongoing and completed to date included-

- Audit/Inspection/Micro-chipping of dogs
- Neighbourhood watch clinics
- Estate Clean up day and large Waste collection.
- Dog Control
- Public Lighting
- CCTV
- Management of vacant houses
- Storage of tyres at the rear of houses and burnt out houses

### **Public meeting.**

The JPC hosted a public meeting in relation to matters affecting the policing of the County on 2<sup>nd</sup><sup>h</sup> November, 2017 in the Longford Arms Hotel, Longford. Cllr. Gerry Warnock, Chairperson of the Committee welcomed the members of the public who attended and advised that the theme of the meeting would be "Embracing our Diverse Communities". The Garda representatives emphasised the importance of the meeting as a welcome forum for engagement with members of the public on local policing issues.

A Garda Specialist on Diversity delivered a presentation on the integration of new communities throughout the country. A representative from the immigrant community outlined his experience of integration in Longford. A development officer from Longford Community Resources Clg gave details of the Longford Traveller Primary Healthcare Programme while the FAI Development Officer made a presentation in relation to the FAI Community Programme in Longford which is part-funded by the FAI and Longford Co. Council.

A discussion ensued in relation to the integration of diverse communities in Longford. This was followed by a question and answer session in relation to different aspects of policing in Longford.

Mr. Paddy Mahon, Chief Executive of Longford County Council concluded the meeting by noting the mainly positive feedback from the public and emphasising the level of ongoing co-operation between the Local Authority, the Gardai and the community. He thanked the members of the public for their input and confirmed that the JPC would take on board the various views expressed.