

LONGFORD JOINT POLICING

ANNUAL REPORT 2019

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. Councillor Seamus Butler was elected as Chairperson of County Longford JPC at the Committee's meeting on 29th July 2019, succeeding Councillor Gerry Warnock in the role. Councillor Paul Ross is the Vice-Chairperson.

The Committee held meetings on 4 occasions in 2019 - 4th March, 29th July, 30th September and 2nd December with a public meeting also being held on 18th November 2019.

At each meeting the members were updated on Garda activities in the county, public safety and community engagement and public order and anti-social issues as well as statistics on crime levels in Longford. The members were also briefed in relation to various Garda operations throughout the year including Operation Stola which involved a high level of proactive policing engagements as part of efforts to curb a major upsurge in violence between feuding families. The members welcomed the improved success rates of Gardai in tackling crime. The members discussed many other issues including Road Safety, the Text Alert Scheme, the supply and sale of drugs, illegal dumping, operation of the Criminal Assets Bureau, community policing and increased Garda visibility at events.

The JPC noted that additional resources were required for the provision of an appropriate service to the community. The Chairperson advised that he had written to the Assistant Commissioner to request that the Garda authorities are sufficiently resourced so that permanent patrols are provided in Longford town. The members were briefed on possible improvements to Garda stations in the Granard and Longford Districts as well as the proposed operational changes arising from the establishment of new Garda divisions. as well as the new Garda Divisions.

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 other areas including the Council's Regeneration programme, Longford Sports Partnership, the Age Friendly Programme, the Intercultural Strategic Plan and the Resettlement Programme. Members also received a briefing in relation to the Council's activities in relation to Planning and Environmental issues.

CCTV continued to be an ongoing topic of discussion during the year. The members noted that while grants were available towards the capital costs associated with the establishment of local community CCTV systems, communities experienced difficulties in achieving the required matched funding. It was agreed to request the Minister for Justice and Equality to establish a National Fund for the provision of CCTV cameras.

Joint action Plan – Ardnacassa area.

At each meeting the members were updated on progress in relation to the Joint Action Plan for the Ardnacassa/Palace Crescent/Grian Ard areas of Longford town. The members welcomed the ongoing focussed approach and ongoing improvements in the area particularly in relation to Public Lighting, CCTV, litter/dumping issues, dog control/animal welfare, neighbourhood watch, estate clean-up day and management of vacant houses.

Property Marking Machine.

The Property Marking Machine was launched in May 2019 following a recommendation from the Joint Policing Committee. Longford Co. Council agreed to provide funding for the purchase of the equipment and training. The Scheme involves marking property with the owner's Eircode number, which is a unique identifier. The Property Marking Machine is available on loan to local community groups free of charge working in conjunction with An Garda Síochána and Longford County Council.

Certificate of Commendation.

A Certificate of Commendation was presented to Mr. Denis McGrath at the December meeting of the JPC. Mr. Mc Grath was commended for his courageous action in coming to the assistance of a young woman who was subject to an assault.

Public meeting

Cllr. Seamus Butler hosted a public meeting of Longford Joint Policing Committee (JPC) in Granard Community Library on 18th November 2019 in relation to matters affecting the policing of the county with "Crime Prevention" as the theme.

Chief Superintendent Tony Healy referred to recent successful Garda operations which involved a policy of high visibility, pro-active speedy investigations, strict monitoring of bail conditions and the seizure of criminal assets. He welcomed the re-assignment of additional Garda personnel to the division and advised that the Gardai would continue their plan to increase visibility in the community. Superintendents Seamus Boyle from the Granard District and James Delaney from the Longford District highlighted statistics showing increased Garda detections and successful prosecutions. The high visibility approach adopted in a recent policing initiative had resulted in a significant reduction in the level of criminal activity in the county. The community policing model, in particular, its work with local and voluntary groups was very effective in helping the Gardai to combat crime and build confidence and trust in the community. Sergeant Paul McDermott, the Crime Prevention Officer for the Roscommon/Longford division gave simple and practical advice on how to protect homes and businesses from crime.

Other speakers included Ms. Eileen Finan, manager of the Lús na Gréine Family Resource Centre, Ms. Heather Mc Kenna of Longford Women's Link, Ms. Carmel Broughan in relation to HSE Adult Safeguarding services and Ms. Claire Gavigan from Foroige who referred to the positive benefits of the Garda youth diversionary project for young people in Longford. Mr. James O'Neill from Property Marking Ireland complimented Longford Co Council and the JPC on the success of the Property Marking initiative.

Cllr. Butler chaired a discussion in response to issues raised by members of the public both at the meeting and submitted in advance of the meeting in relation to crime prevention and different aspects of policing in Longford. He referred to the importance of law and order in society and assured the audience that the JPC in conjunction with the Gardai would work tirelessly to tackle crime and ensure that communities throughout Longford would have a better quality of life.

Ms Barbara Heslin, Deputy Chief Executive of Longford Co. Council concluded the event by thanking the speakers and members of the public for their valuable input. In summarising the contributions from the individual speakers, she stated that by working together in consultation and collaboration with the Gardai, the local authority and other agencies, the community could look forward to ensuring that Longford would be a safe place to live, work and grow old in.