

Fermanagh and Omagh District Council
Fermanagh and Omagh Policing and Community Safety Partnership

Policing Committee Meeting

Minutes of the Fermanagh and Omagh Policing and Community Safety Partnership Policing Committee meeting held on Tuesday 15 December 2020 at 6 pm via MS Teams.

Present: Councillors

John McClaughry (Chairperson), Josephine Deehan, Stephen Donnelly, Keith Elliott, Deborah Erskine, Tommy Maguire, Barry McElduff, Thomas O'Reilly and Allan Rainey.

Independent Members

Monica Coyle (Vice-Chairperson), Noeleen Hayes, Norman Kirkpatrick, Vida Lake, Bernie McCrory, Margaret McCrory, Sarah McQuaid, and Pauline Treacy.

Designated Members

Superintendent Alywin Barton (PSNI) and Ryan McGee (EANI).

Apologies: Councillor Paul Blake, Maria Thompson, Michael Curran (NIFRS), Sinead Dolan (YJA), and Oonagh McAvinney (NIHE).

In attendance: Inspector Will Brown (PSNI), Inspector Joni Beatty (PSNI), Inspector RoRy Hoy (PSNI), Carol Follis (PCSP Manager) and Alan Crooks (PCSP Community Safety Liaison Officer).

PC 17/20 **Welcome and Apologies**
The Chairperson welcomed Members to the meeting and apologies were accepted.

PC 18/20 **Declarations of Interest**
No declarations of interest were declared.

PC 19/20 **Notification of AOB**
No items of business were notified.

PC 20/20 **Minutes**
The minutes of the Policing Committee meeting held on Tuesday 27 October 2020 were considered and approved. Proposed by Councillor Thomas O'Reilly and seconded by Margaret McCrory.

PC 21/20 **Matters Arising**

PC 07/20 Engagement with ethnic groups
Vida Lake congratulated Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Good relations staff on their work with ethnic groups in the district. The PCSP Manager added that it is through such work that the PCSP is engaging with groups to raise awareness of the work of the PCSP to promote community safety.

PC 22/20

Members' Questions

No members questions were received.

PC 23/20

PCSP Action Plan 2021-2022

The PCSP Manager explained that this is an item of PCSP business and has been brought to the Policing Committee due to meeting schedules to allow for the Plan to be ratified by Members and submitted to the Joint Committee. Members had previously participated in a workshop and the Plan presented reflected the changes requested by Members. The Action Plan was proposed by Councillor Tommy Maguire and seconded by Councillor Keith Elliott.

Recommended

- That the 2021-2020 PCSP Action Plan is submitted to the Joint Committee.

PC 24/20

Neighbourhood Watch Scheme

Inspector Rory Hoy and Alan Crooks delivered a presentation on Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. Members were informed that there are 77 active schemes with 10 schemes in development. The benefits of Neighbourhood Watch in terms of reducing fear of crime and fostering a sense of community spirit was highlighted. The close relationship between the PCSP and PSNI in developing and managing the schemes was highlighted. Members were asked to consider if there are opportunities for a scheme in their area and if so to contact Alan Crooks to progress.

Following the presentation Members were given the opportunity to ask questions.

Question 1

Councillor Maguire: What is the role of NPT officers in promoting Neighbourhood Watch?

Response

Inspector Hoy responded that officers are tasked to take the lead in promoting Neighbourhood Watch in the course of their problem-solving duties. Councillor Maguire highlighted an area in Enniskillen that it is felt would benefit from a scheme and ongoing community development programmes. Alan Crooks stated that he will contact Councillor Maguire to see discuss a way forward.

Question 2

Sarah McQuaid: Could the Silverhill scheme be extended to include Loughshore Manor.

Response

Alan Crooks said that he would contact Sarah to discuss further.

Question 3

Councillor O'Reilly made an observation that it is essential that co-ordinators are able to link with the PCSP Members to share good news stories and celebrate the work that they do.

Response

The PCSP Manager informed the meeting that the usual programme of activity for co-ordinators was cancelled due to the restrictions but that Alan Crooks maintains regular contact with all co-ordinators and has done so throughout the pandemic.

Question 4

Bernie McCrory commented on a European funded programme that aims to address social isolation exacerbated by the pandemic. She felt that it would be beneficial if this information was circulated to the co-ordinators.

Response

The PCSP Manager said that she would circulate this information to PCSP contacts.

Question 5

Sarah McQuaid: can the PCSP access the database currently being compiled for the Council initiative Christmas Cheer.

Response

The PCSP Manager said that where individuals have given their consent, they can be contacted in the future regarding other initiatives including PCSP activity.

The PCSP Manager delivered a second presentation on the findings of the Neighbourhood Watch Survey issued to co-ordinators in November. In making recommendations she informed the Members it is important that when restrictions allow regular co-ordinator events are held, that the PCSP and PSNI continue to maintain regular contact with the co-ordinators and that the PCSP and PSNI Facebook pages are heavily promoted.

Recommended:

1. That PCSP Community Liaison Safety Officer contact Councillor Maguire and Sarah McQuaid to discuss Neighbourhood Watch scheme.
2. That the PCSP Manager circulate information on the European funded programme when available.

PC 25/20

PSNI Uniform Pilot

Superintendent Barton gave a briefing on the uniform pilot. To date feedback from officers involved in the pilot has been very positive that it is very practical, durable, and comfortable. Margaret McCrory queried the low numbers of female officers involved in the pilot and was assured by Inspector Beatty that female officers had been consulted as to their specific uniform needs. Some female officers who are going through the menopause have been issued with the trial uniform and will be asked to specifically comment on its suitability. Superintendent Barton added that the number of female officers included in the pilot reflects the gender balance of the teams participating in the pilot. Sarah McQuaid queried the process for uniform disposal and was informed by Superintendent Barton that there is a system already in place for the collection and destruction of old uniform.

Members discussed the new uniform with the consensus that its needs to be functional, durable, comfortable and portray a professional image.

Recommended:

- That the Members comments are forwarded to the Chief Superintendent leading the pilot.

PC 24/20

Update on Local Policing Plan 2020-2021

Superintendent Barton presented a comprehensive report on the delivery of the Local Policing Plan 2020-21 to date.

Some of the facts highlighted included:

- A continued decrease in number of crime incidents from the same period in the previous year. This is compatible with a lockdown environment.
- ASB continues to rise up by 719 incidents on the same period in the previous year. Covid related incidents account for some of this. Four wards show a marked increase in ASB against the 5-year average; these are Ederney & Kesh, Derrygonnelly, Newtownsaville and Owenkillew.
- Season Greetings is ongoing with a focus on Prevention First approach. There will be increased patrolling, stopping of vehicles and a continued proactive approach to dealing with domestic abuse.
- Significant drugs seizures resulting from pre-planned search operations.
- Community engagement continues to feature heavily across the district with many joint engagements carried out with the PCSP.

Superintendent Barton updated the meeting on the realignment of the District. He confirmed that Inspector Hoy is responsible for Enniskillen and Erne West, Inspector Beatty Omagh, Mid Tyrone and Vulnerability team and Inspector Brown Erne North, Erne East, West Tyrone, and the District Support Team. Each of the inspectors introduced themselves to the Members and were formally welcomed to the PCSP by the Chairperson. Going forward Superintendent Barton informed the Members that preparing for the EU exit in whatever form it takes will be a focus over the next few months.

The Chairperson thanked Superintendent Barton for his report and invited the Members to ask questions.

Members raised the following questions:

Question 1

Sarah McQuaid: How will the European arrest warrant operate after Brexit?

Response

Superintendent Barton confirmed that post Brexit the option to use this will cease but that there are other international agreements that already exist which can be employed. He added that there is significant cross border co-

operation with Garda Síochána which will be ongoing as part of measures to track the movements of organised criminal gangs.

Question 2

Margaret McCrory: How does the PSNI view the lack of social distancing at the anti-abortion protest in Market Street, Omagh on Saturday 12 December?

Response

The PSNI had engaged with the protest organisers prior to the event to emphasise the need to adhere to social distancing. The police are aware of concerns raised by the public over the graphic nature of the posters on display. He added that there is a balance between right for a peaceful protest and adhering to covid-19 restrictions. Do you allow people to stop and have a look at the protest or ask them to move on?

Question 3

Councillor Deehan: What are the plans to address the circulation of drugs in sweets and vapes?

Response

Superintendent Barton reassured the meeting that all information received regarding drugs is acted on and the results if this can be seen in the drugs seizures over the past number of weeks.

Question 4

Councillor Deehan: Is there an update on the modern slavery case in Omagh?

Response

Superintendent Barton stated that he is not in a position to comment on the case at this time.

Question 5

Councillor Donnelly: I have received a lot of complaints about the anti-abortion protest where protesters engaged in verbal abuse with shoppers. Is this behaviour and conduct have a potential public order implication?

Response

Superintendent Barton stated that if the PSNI had witnessed verbal abuse this would be a tipping point for interaction/engagement. It is understood that further protests are planned and as part of the briefing officers will be asked to pay attention to the nature of the interaction with the public.

Question 6

Councillor Donnelly: As part of the protest there was a singer, is singing allowed outside?

Response

Superintendent Barton said he was not aware that there was a singer and was not sure if this is permissible under the current restrictions.

Question 7

Councillor Rainey: Is the Christmas message clear enough re drink driving?

Response

Superintendent Barton responded that breathalyser tests are being carried out. Specific guidance has been issued to officers re covid-19 and the robust risk assessment in place so that no person asked to give a sample could refuse on the grounds of risk of spread of Covid. said there is co-operation working within GDPR restrictions.

Question 8

Councillor McClaughry: Did ASB activity at Muckcross influence the increase in ASB recorded for Kesh & Ederney?

Response

Superintendent Barton responded that yes it did have some impact but that there are other ASB issues ongoing which are contributing to the increase.

PC 25/20

AOB

There were no items of AOB.

The Chairperson thanked everybody for their contribution and wished everybody a Happy Christmas and Peaceful New Year.

Rising

The Committee rose at 8.05 pm

Date/time of next meeting

Policing Committee Meeting Tuesday 23 March 2020 at 6.00 pm.