



Minutes of JPC Subcommittee No. 2 – To Enhance Community Safety responses in Galway City with a view to Crime Prevention

Meeting held on Wednesday 17th June 2020 online via Zoom

In attendance: Inspector Peter Conlon, An Garda Síochána
Sergeant Michael Walsh, An Garda Síochána
Mr Tommy Flaherty, Galway City Community Network
Mr Cameron Keighron, Galway City Community Network
Ms Caitriona Morgan, Galway City Council
Ms Breda Glynn, Galway City Council

In the absence of the Chairperson Cllr Mike Cubbard, Ms Caitriona Morgan chaired this meeting. Ms Morgan opened the meeting with a welcome to members and reminder of the protocols with regard to Zoom meetings as previously circulated.

1. Review of JPC Subcommittee No. 2 priorities within the context of COVID-19 & planning for Strategic responses to COVID-19

Ms. Morgan reminded the JPC subcommittee on the objectives as set out in the JPC Strategic Plan 2017 – 2020 under this particular strategic goal and in order to inform the discussion on this she presented and shared the update on the Galway City COVID-19 Community response. She spoke about the establishment of the Community Response Forum, set up and co-ordinated by Galway City Council as required. The purpose and role of the Forum which includes over a twenty agencies, organisations and community and voluntary groups was highlighted which is to lead the co-ordination of COVID-19 community supports and resilience and to ensure that there is a co-ordinated community response, enabling all the voluntary and statutory agencies to collaborate in support of our communities and particularly our most vulnerable members. Following an update on the membership and weekly meetings held she updated on the COVID-19 Community Call Helpline, noting in particular the change in operating hours from 9.00am to 5.00pm, 7 days a week by Freephone to 1800 400 150. She noted that the helpline had been operational since 30th March 2020, its key purpose and number of requests dealt with to date.

The COVID-19 Community Response Map, the interactive map developed with the Galway City Community Network (GCCN) was referenced, noting its benefit and number of organisations and agencies on it currently.

In relation to the COVID-19 Emergency Fund she referred to this grant programme which provided funding to groups that are directly involved in providing supports to vulnerable groups on behalf of the Community Response Forum, (the Community Call), noting that 15 projects had been approved to date. Finally she referred to Phase 2 of the Community Call, with an emphasis on Wellbeing and promoting different opportunities to support individual and community resilience, noting this

this aims to help everyone to Stay Connected, Stay Active, and look after their Mental Health throughout the COVID-19 emergency.

Sergeant Michael Walsh then gave an update on issues they are encountering particularly in relation to COVID-19. He noted the change in policing response due to COVID-19, the change in crime figures e.g. cybercrime / scams and domestic violence are on the increase. He advised there is no notable increase in elder abuse, highlighting the active engagement An Gardaí Síochána currently have with older and more vulnerable members in the community. It was noted that consideration could be given to developing a printed version of the cybercrime / scam posters and leaflets which could be disseminated along with other materials for older and more vulnerable groups.

In respect of Domestic Violence he noted the 'Bright Sky Ireland' mobile phone app – given the increase in this crime type in recent weeks which is something worth promoting. See the link to the Garda website with more information on this app: <https://www.garda.ie/en/crime/domestic-abuse/support-services.html>

In relation to supporting existing safety network, Serg. Walsh noted that he is working with the Business Watch community as Galway re-opens its businesses and will look into the feasibility of hosting relevant crime prevention webinars covering the different areas of business interest. One particular issue going forward is that thieves and robbers can legitimately wear face coverings entering retail outlets making identification more difficult. So cash management and physical security are even more important now. In relation to student safety he spoke about work he had done with Campus Watch in both NUI Galway and GMIT and that this can resume or refocus in line with the return of students to Galway City, if needed.

Tommy Flaherty advised that the Galway City Community Network can assist with communicating these relevant and important messages, in addition to doing a presentation/talk for the relevant Community Safety linkage group.

Cameron Keighron also spoke about the issues facing young people and the importance of messaging for young people and the possibility of targeted campaigns online in this regard.

In terms of a more strategic response to Crime Prevention Serg. Walsh spoke on some very practical suggestions in relation to liaising with the Planning Department to explore how best to incorporate crime prevention through environmental design into planning.

Inspector Peter Conlon also spoke about An Garda Síochána's response to COVID-19 in particular to initiatives of the Community Policing Unit in Galway City, which included practical supports with the collection and delivery of items, in addition to safe and well checks to ensure that the most vulnerable in our community are kept safe and well. With reference to an initiative with Muintir na Tíre he noted that this can be looked at if needed for the City. A particular issue of noting has been a rise in Domestic Violence which has significantly increased. He felt as a committee more investment in awareness with victims on ways to come forward and of the services which Galway city has available to them.

2. Priorities within the context of COVID-19 - To Enhance Community Safety responses in Galway City with a view to Crime Prevention

Cybercrime / Scam awareness during COVID-19. Developing a printed version of posters and leaflets which could be disseminated along with other materials for older and more vulnerable groups.

Domestic Violence – identify and communicate the range of services and supports for victims of domestic violence. Ongoing promotion of the ‘Bright Sky Ireland’ mobile phone app.

Continue to support the existing and new safety networks e.g. Business Watch, Community Safety linkage group and explore the feasibility of hosting relevant crime prevention webinars covering the different areas of business / community interest.

3. Any Other Business

There were no issues raised under AOB.

It was agreed and noted that Ms. C Morgan would give a verbal update on the above to the JPC Committee at their next meeting being held on Monday 22nd June 2020.