

WEXFORD JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE

REPORT ON MEETING HELD ON 10th JULY 2017 AT 11.30 IN WEXFORD COCO OFFICES

The meeting was convened at 11.30 by Chairman Cllr M. Whelan and he welcomed the new PPN Rep, Tina Smith to the meeting. He also welcomed Fran from MEND (Men Ending Domestic Abuse) who was going to give a talk on the issue of abuse.

1. MEND Presentation

The organisation was set up in 2002 in Wexford and its purpose is to try and reform men who abuse their wives or partners. 1 in 4 adult women suffer abuse and the refuge in Wexford is always full. The men involved are mostly referred to MEND by either their GP or the social services and the rest are self referred. The men who self refer are obviously well aware that their behaviour must change. The other men that are referred have to be willing to engage with the program. Their partners are an integral part of the program and are contacted for updates on their behaviour on a regular basis. There is also a program for the partners themselves (should they wish to avail of the support – but not all partners do.) Alcohol and drugs can have an impact but don't, on their own, cause the abuse. There are currently 8 men in the program.

Fran then invited questions from the panel:

She was asked what happens if anyone on the program drops out – to which she replied that the only thing they can do is inform the referrer i.e the GP or the social services. Robbie Ireton then asked about the abuse of men by women, to which she replied that she had no information on that only that should they become aware of such abuse then they refer them to AMEN which deals specifically with men that are abused by women.

2. Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 10th July 2017 were agreed and adopted. Robbie Ireton asked if, arising out of the minutes, anything had been done regarding the standardisation of the text alert system. At this point the Chairman introduced Margaret Quinn from Muintir na Tíre who spoke about the advantages of having the same alert system throughout the county. The different groups can be more effective if using the same system and the Gardai believe that it is working well and far better than having several different systems.

3. JPC Subcommittee Reports

1. Crime Prevention & Community Safety:

- The parking situation at Wexford park was discussed and it was agreed that there has been an improvement since the introduction of cones blocking people from parking in the road leading into the park.
- The issue of car thefts was discussed and it was decided that there was going to be an initiative introduced to reduce the incidence.
- The importance of community Gardai was also discussed.

2. Reduction in Anti Social Behaviour:

- This subcommittee met for the first time and elected a Chairman. The new Chairman said that the committee had some highly skilled people and they will try to exploit these strengths to make it a very effective subcommittee.

3. Misuse and of Alcohol & drugs and related crime:

- Robbie Ireton, Chairman of the subcommittee informed Chairman Cllr Whelan that the subcommittee meeting did not go ahead as he had still not received a reply from Minister Francis Fitzgerald regarding new legislation written to tackle the escalating issue of drugs being carried through the postal system. Without this, he felt there was no point in meeting.

Superintendants Report

1. Report on latest crime figures:

- Thefts on cars are down by 13% and down in retail by 1%.
- Robberies in business premises are up 12% in Wexford town but down overall in Gorey, although home robberies in Gorey are up slightly.
- Offences against persons is down and at this point, Chief Superintendent John Roche outlined what options are open to people who are assaulted.

They include barring orders which means:

- The person accused must leave the premises**
- Must agree to stop violence**
- Is in effect for 3 years**
- If the person accused does not adhere then it empowers the police to arrest.**

They also include safety orders which means:

- The person accused does not leave the premises but has to agree to stop the violence**
- Is in effect for 5 years**
- If the person accused does not adhere then it empowers the police to arrest.**

- Traffic Offences are all up –
 - i. Speed offences are up 10% to 565 arrests
 - ii. Use of mobile phones whilst driving is up 4% to 446 arrests
 - iii. Non use or misuse of seatbelts is up 21% to 386 arrests
 - iv. Drink driving offences are up 4% to 124 arrests

2. Ongoing investigations:

- The Superintendent explained that whilst the Gardai are very busy with all the offences listed above, there are many other ongoing investigations that take up a lot of time and manpower too. Some of these investigations are:
 - i. **London bridge terror attack** – as documents were found on the attacker with Wexford connections, this has now become an international ongoing investigation.
 - ii. **Kilmuckridge shallow grave** – a murdered woman had been temporarily buried in a shallow grave and although the perpetrator has been arrested, the investigation and gathering of evidence continues.
 - iii. **St. Mary's cemetery** – an exhumation of a grave(s) has been conducted in connection with historical sex abuse in the area and the investigation is continuing.
 - iv. **Organised crime** – a gang is operating in the Enniscorthy area with international links and is taking up a lot of man hours in the investigation.
 - v. **Community policing** – in addition to all of the above, the Gardai are still assisting at public events such as matches, festivals and entertainment events which assists in mutual engagement between the Gardai and the public.

3. Other matters:

- The Superintendent informed the committee that they have 4 new Gardai with another 10 to come next week and they will be distributed throughout the county with 6 going to Enniscorthy. He also reported that the new Station is due to open in September and it will not have a diminishing effect upon the Enniscorthy and New Ross stations which will remain as is. The only time criminals will be transferred to Wexford is if they have to be detained for up to 4 days because the facilities are more suited to longer term stays. In addition, a new cyber unit person is being allocated to Wexford.
- Superintendent Roche also informed the group that he shall be bringing with him an expert in the new road side drugs testing program to explain how the program is working and how they are approaching the controversial issue of over the counter medications.

Any other business

1. Chairman Whelan told the committee that he had met with the policing forum which he found to be very informative. They have issued a “Code of Ethics” booklet along with a list of priorities. Also discussed were initiatives in other counties which could be looked at by Wexford. These included:
 - To appoint an Ambassador to the elderly
 - A “good morning” service (phone calls to the elderly in the community)
 - Websites (Wexford’s is under construction)
 - Home security scheme
 - CCTV in public areas
 - Purple flag initiative (Wexford already has this)

2. In a final note the committee extended their best wishes to the staff of the Echo group, which has now closed down.

The date of the next meeting was set for 10th October 2017 at 11.30am.

The meeting concluded at 12.45pm.

Report compiled by Tina Smith