

	PUBLIC MEETING SOUTH WEST INNER CITY LOCAL POLICING FORUM ST. JAMES' PARISH HALL, JAMES' STREET Thursday, 13th June, 2019
	Chair: Michael King Attendance: Inspector Paul Maher; Community Sergeant Ian Lambe; Brian Lyons (Dublin City Council). World-Café Facilitator: Pat Tobin Minutes: Rea Lavelle

Michael King introduced himself as the new Chair of the Forum, as well as An Garda Síochána and Dublin City Council representatives in attendance. He also gave a brief outline of the structure of the SWIC Local Policing Forum, and this information was also distributed to the tables in printed form.

The format of this meeting was 'World-Café' style, which meant that members of public were seated in small groups with a facilitator from the Forum's Management Committee on each, and were asked to answer two questions:

- 1) **What is happening in your community at the moment to make it feel unsafe?**
- 2) **What progress has been made on any of these issues?**

After a half-hour discussion at each table on these topics, facilitators fed back the answers given to the Garda and Dublin City Council Representatives.

The answers to **question 1** fell broadly under the following categories:

Anti-social and criminal Behaviour

Almost every table reported issues around open drug dealing and drug consumption, as well as alcohol being consumed in public on a daily basis – for instance at the triangle at James' Street and the Thomas Street area, particularly outside LIDL. Young people in bike gangs were also making people feel intimidated. Vandalism was seen in many areas, as well as aggressive begging. Mobile phone snatching and other robberies, even knife crime had been witnessed taking place in day-time hours; James' Hospital LUAS stop and the adjacent SPAR were mentioned by a number of tables as focal points for anti-social behaviour.

Organised groups of 12-16 year olds have targeted local businesses to the extent that some of them have had to close doors temporarily. The managers of some businesses seem to tolerate unacceptable behaviour by these young people, which impacts in turn local people accessing the premises.

Frustration was also expressed that even when drug-dealers are arrested, they seemed to be back on the streets within hours, so no deterrent exists for their drug-trade.

At the same token, some of the tables were concerned that there are few facilities for engaging with children/young people in the area, which makes them more prone to acting out. A gap in services for 18-23 age group was pointed out.

Lack of visible Policing

Almost every table reported that they would like to see more visible police presence on the streets, especially given the millions of tourists who travel through the area every year to access Guinness

Storehouse and (to a lesser extent) Kilmainham Gaol, and the amount of antisocial and criminal behaviour that is known to take place around Merchant's Quay, Thomas Street and James' Street.

Gardaí were also seen as not using existing powers of enforcement to counteract antisocial behaviour.

Estate management by Dublin City Council

Participants at some of the tables thought that Basin Street flats were used as a dumping ground for anti-social tenants/families. Some were of the opinion that choice-based lettings was partly to blame, as it allowed both vulnerable people (who may become targets to the antisocial element), as well as antisocial tenants, to move in. One table also reported that families in their DCC accommodation for decades had recently had to move because of the intolerable antisocial behaviour of their neighbours, instead of these neighbours getting their marching orders.

Illegal dumping, building dereliction, poor maintenance, dog fouling etc., were also all having an impact on community morale.

Carriage Operators

A number of tables reported issues around the behaviour of the numerous new horse-and-carriage drivers who are currently able to operate without any licensing/other restrictions, and heavily concentrated in the area because of Guinness Storehouse. Some of these new drivers are under 18 years old (a 14-year old had been seen driving a carriage near a school, for example) and have insufficient knowledge or respect for rules of the road, the safety of other road-users safety or the welfare of their horses. Urgent action is required to regulate these operators.

Planning Decisions

There is a shortage of affordable housing, while transient accommodation keeps getting approved by planning authorities, such as hotels, homeless hostels and student accommodation. There was a feeling that the community has no say in these planning decisions.

The proposed supervised injection centre at Merchant's Quay was mentioned, and how the location beside a primary school does not make sense. It was recognised that open drug dealing and using are happening around the school at the moment also.

There are no bins between MACE on James' Street and Mount Brown in Kilmainham.

Traffic Management Issues

Parking is an issue in the Basin Street area, as Children's Hospital construction workers arrive every morning at 7am to take up these parking spots. Congestion is dangerous and causes traffic chaos, and issues for the schools and crèches on the street.

It was also reported that cars were driving through the Oliver Bond flats complex, to avoid traffic in order to access the quays.

One table with representatives of local residents reported many issues around the conduct of BAM and subcontractors around the entrance at Mount Brown for large trucks etc. to the Children's Hospital site. These included operation of the entrance and the site well outside of the allowed hours; dangerous reversing of trucks on to the road, with front walls of old houses sometimes inches away from parts of these reversing trucks, and extreme rudeness of the site supervisors/staff when residents had tried to voice their concerns. A community benefit policy is in place but has not been effective in monitoring and responding to community concerns.

Dangerous cycling on footpaths at Mount Brown and elsewhere was also reported; there had been many near-miss incidents with elderly people.

Bridgefoot Street is a wide street with no traffic management. A pedestrian crossing should be considered.

Answers to question 2 (What progress has been made on any of these issues?) included:

Communities coming together to fight for a park/sporting facilities for example, and formation of new Residents' Associations. In addition, Parks being opened up and park attendants on site, and new developments, such as The Masonry, were seen as having a positive impact.

One table thought that the student accommodation was a positive, supporting business and bringing new life to the area.

Gardaí from Kilmainham do respond to calls, even if they have limited resources. Increased drug squad activity was also noted.

Community Gardens and community events.

In addition, participants at one table suggested reforms to the Local Policing Forum, including a 'solution based' approach, where issues to tackle, the person responsible, and a time-scale for action, would be agreed at each public meeting, and reported back to those who attend the public meetings. There was frustration with the slow pace at which any progress seemed to be moving.

Other suggestions for improving the area included a safe place for young people to socialise – perhaps with wi-fi facility. A new Task Force in Drimnagh is planning an integrated youth guidance service, and a similar model would be very useful here.

An Garda Síochána and Dublin City Council Responses to the concerns raised at tables:

- Sgt. Lambe will meet locals and bring in DCC Planning Enforcement regarding BAM and subcontractor operations. Good results have been achieved elsewhere.
- Regarding Drugs; Gardaí are exploring introduction of Assertive Case Management approach developed by Ana Liffey Drug Project (<http://www.aldp.ie/services/>). To respond to dealing Gardaí are developing a Garda Bail Project that will target people offending while on bail.
- Inspector Maher also supported the Wi-Fi suggestion and said that we need to work with young people; criminal prosecution is not the answer to the involvement of youngsters in this area.
- More broadly - Gardaí cannot cure addiction and cannot raise children - i.e. we need a broad approach involving/supporting parents and engaging the wider community. Youth outreach programme about to start in the area. The Juvenile Liaison Officer (JLO) approach has been effective and it is intended to strengthen the JLO team and to extend the JLO approach within the community policing unit.
- Insp. Maher has met the managers of emergency accommodation services; Gardaí will extend beats around problem areas (including MQI/St. Audoen's)
- Garda Presence: There will be higher visibility on Thomas Street, and 20 Gardaí are about to be trained for bicycle patrols.
- DCC: Brian Lyons did not accept criticisms of choice based lettings, but said he would follow up any issues brought to him.
- Cllr. Tina McVeigh spoke about guidance to participants on conduct of Public Meetings and asked that this be covered at the start of every meeting – no personal comments should be made or names mentioned. Cllr. McVeigh also said she would be raising the lack of services for young people and would convene a meeting of all public representatives for the SWIC area to seek a common strategy.

Chair closed the meeting by stating that the management committee is working to enhance effectiveness of the Forum. Some of the matters raised cannot be addressed by either AGS or DCC alone, but require a more integrated response. Much of what was raised (youth anti-social behaviour, issues around horse welfare and carriage licensing, emergency accommodation and addiction services within the community) fall within the three areas already prioritised by the committee. Importance of open drug dealing had been particularly highlighted at this meeting. LPF has limited resources but we will continue to work to address these issues.