



**Canals Area Local Policing Forum**  
**Public Meeting 7-9pm, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2019**  
**Our Lady of the Wayside N. S., Bluebell D.12**

**USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS:**

**Dial-to-stop-Drug-Dealing Confidential Freephone Helpline:** 1800 25 00 25

**To report illegal bonfire materials** members of public are advised to ring 01-222 2222, or after 5pm 1800 29 39 49

**Chair:** John Burns

**In Attendance:** Superintended John Gordon; Community Sergeant Martin Comerford, Pat Delaney (Dublin City Council)

Chair welcomed the public and explained that the meeting would run in Café-style, with an independent facilitator Pat Tobín, and a host at each table to guide discussions in small groups. Pat Tobín explained the format further and asked everyone not to mention any names of individuals in their discussions, or make direct comments about another person.

Superintendent Gordon then gave a report on some of the organisational developments that had taken place within An Garda Síochána in the past year, including the implementation of a new divisional model of policing which means a realignment of Gardaí, including community Gardaí, from offices to frontline policing. There is a sergeant and an inspector now on every unit, and community policing is currently up to 3 sergeants and 15 Gardaí. A new, updated drug-unit is now fully operational, and Gardaí are also fully committed to Halloween safety.

The questions brought to the table discussions were:

- 1. What are the greatest concerns in the Bluebell area regarding community safety?, and;**
- 2. Have you seen any positives / improvements in the past year?**

The following topics were noted from the table discussions for question 1:

**Rubbish and general maintenance**

Dumping was reported many times. This is seen taking places very regularly in the back lane behind the maisonettes for example. DCC come and clean up often but this is not seen as very efficient, and a lot is left for the volunteers of the environmental group.

It was reported that staff from the local crèche have to go to the playground to clean needles and other dangerous waste before children can go out and play there every morning; this should be done by DCC. There does not seem to be a litter or a dog warden operating in the area. This issue may be compounded by the fact that while tenants/residents of flats have free rubbish removal, those in houses do not. (Yellow) bin sheds at flats have also sometimes attracted ASB, and in addition, rubbish is now being burned in bonfires. Someone also commented that there are only two bins in the whole of Bluebell.

Trees around the park and houses need to be pruned. Roots are also breaking up footpaths, but this could be remedied by resurfacing the path, as had been done in Inchicore. Grass also needs to be maintained better.

### **Garda visibility and response times**

Several tables mentioned that there were no Gardaí seen in the area, and they did not know who the community Garda was. A group of people had been unable to leave the local convenience store for almost half an hour waiting for the Gardaí to arrive to disperse youths who had been threatening staff and customers. It was also thought that there was no follow-up with incidents that had been reported.

### **Youths and intimidation**

Behaviour of some of the young people is still an issue in the area. They seem to have no fear and do not seem to get pulled up by Gardaí; members of public are afraid to complain for fear of retaliation. These youths are involved in many types of ASB, and lately aggressive knocking/kicking on doors, and sometimes firecrackers are being put through letterboxes. It was also reported that a van has been seen several times at a certain location selling fireworks to very young children.

There are fears of shops and Café closing for good because of ASB and intimidation. The Café has changed hands several times in the past couple of years. Joy riding also takes place

Youth Centre is very good but not many youths go into it

### **Horses**

Horses are being allowed to mate at Camack Park. Horses are also running freely on roads.

### **Public transport and traffic**

LUAS is always too full, difficult to get on it from Bluebell, especially if travelling to the city centre. Traffic is very congested to get out of Bluebell through the one exit. Speeding also an issue

### **Dublin City Council Estate Management**

Complaints of ASB/intimidation by tenants are not being taken seriously, and there seems to be no repercussions for the perpetrators of ASB. Some of those present reported that they had been dealing with the same problems with the same tenants for 5 years with seemingly no action taken by DCC.

More than one table mentioned the slow turnover time of houses and flats for new tenants. It was reported that two flats have been vacant for two years.

Maintenance of the maisonettes was also reported as needing improvement, and one table reported issues with sewage and water pressure.

It was also mentioned that an area manager of DCC had attended the Forum meetings in the past, and it would be better to have that level of representation again, to match the engagement from An Garda Síochána.

### **Drug-dealing and robberies**

More than one table reported drug dealing in broad daylight at LUAS stop and local shops. Public feels too intimidated to report this. Canal area is dangerous after dark. One table reported racist incidents. Poor lighting also encouraging robberies, and there was thought to be a need for increased CCTV coverage.

For question 2., **Have you seen any positives / improvements in the past year**, the host reported that table discussions had not initially revealed many positive developments in community safety; but the two improvements mentioned were the police helicopter seen patrolling the area more, and recent increase in Garda patrols where the officers are getting out and inspecting the stairways and balconies of flats. This meant that for the first time in many years there are no teenagers involved in antisocial behaviour around one block in particular.

More general positives about the area were also teased out in further discussions, and included:

- Great community centre
- The regeneration plans for the area, however these will take many years to be fully implemented, and some expressed concern that even more social housing will be put in
- New football pitch, new allotments and good local amenities in general
- Environmental group cleaning up the area has helped with look of the place and community spirit
- Summer programme
- Fishing group

A WhatsApp group alerting residents/businesses to activity in the area was suggested by one table.

#### **RESPONSE FROM SUPERINTENDENT JOHN GORDON**

Superintendent Gordon again assured that Gardaí will be present at Halloween. He was disappointed to hear that increased Garda visibility was not yet felt on the ground, and will work to improve it further. Drug dealing an issue across the wider area also but more resources can now be given to this problem.

Garda response times are allocated according to priority/seriousness of the call. Gardaí are making arrests and will try to keep an eye on the person even after they have been released from a custodial sentence.

Gardaí push for parental responsibility, and will also work with TUSLA even more closely in the future, and TUSLA have agreed to attend meetings of the Policing Forum.

The DCC CCTV footage is going to be piped to Kevin Street Garda station, which allows for it to be monitored more closely. Superintendent urged the public to keep reporting any criminal activity. He is aware that both robberies and racist incidents are taking place, often in and around the LUAS stops and sometimes these only get reported as robberies. Gardaí have met with LUAS staff to discuss safety issues.

Sgt Comerford added that an arrest had just been made around intimidation at the shops, and there had been drug searches and seizures taking place recently. Name of the community Garda is John Murphy; smaller policing area mean that community Gardaí can get to know the area better. The [www.garda.ie](http://www.garda.ie) website is currently being updated to include contact details of all local community Gardaí. Sgt Comerford also added that Gardaí can help with setting up a neighbourhood watch type alert system, however residents would be needed to act as street representatives for this, which some thought might make them a target.

#### **DUBLIN CITY COUNCIL RESPONSE (Pat Delaney)**

- ❖ Two large skips are going to be placed at Bluebell on the 18<sup>th</sup> of October, for householders to use, one at Hubbard Road and one opposite the community centre.
- ❖ A drone will be used from next week to search for illegal bonfire materials
- ❖ Most properties that come up for re-letting are prepared by contractors, and as soon as they are ready, they are immediately re-let to Garda-vetted tenants.

- ❖ DCC are dealing with complaints of ASB against their tenants
- ❖ Clinic is held at the community centre by Pat every Wednesday from 10am-12am. Estate management or maintenance issues can be brought to this clinic, and a private room can be requested if discussing sensitive estate management issues.