

	PUBLIC MEETING SOUTH WEST INNER CITY LOCAL POLICING FORUM ST. CATHERINE'S CHURCH, THOMAS STREET Thursday, 17th October, 2019
	Chair: Michael King Attendance: Superintendent John Gordon; Inspector Paul Maher; Community Sergeant Ian Lambe Brian Lyons and Paul White (Dublin City Council). World-Café Facilitator: Pat Tobin Minutes: Rea Lavelle

Halloween activities for children and young people: A new community Halloween Festival for Dublin 8 is taking place on October 31st, 2019 and includes Haunted House, Games, Crafts, PlayStation competitions, street performers and face painters etc., takes place at two locations:

LIBERTIES HAUNT from 5.30 to 8.30pm at **SWICN**, Digital Court, Rainsford Street; includes a Parade

THE CABBAGE PATCH CAULDRON from 5.30pm to 10pm at Cabbage Patch Gardens off Kevin Street, with Trick or Treat and screening of 'Hocus Pocus' at 8pm

Halloween Hotline Numbers: To report illegal bonfire materials ring **01 222 2222** (office hours), or; **1800 29 39 49** (out-of-hours)

Meeting Minutes:

Pat Tobin welcomed everyone and introduced the Café format of the meeting. Participants were reminded not to mention individual names or make personal accusations at the table discussions or comments. The Chair gave a quick update on work that had been carried out by the LPF management committee around issues reported at previous meetings by the public. Planning permission for the supervised injection centre at Merchant's Quay had been denied. Cllr Tina McVeigh also spoke about the efforts to try get more youth workers, including outreach workers, employed in the area which currently has a very low number of these compared to the population.

Superintendent Gordon then gave a report on 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 front line 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.

Meeting participants were seated around tables with a host/facilitator at each, and were asked to discuss the following two questions:

- 1) **What is happening in your community at the moment to make it feel unsafe?**
- 2) **What is happening now to make it feel safer?**

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

Anti-social and criminal behaviour, including drug-activity

Drug dealing that takes place on a daily basis in several locations in the locality was mentioned at every table. This activity is blatant and it was questioned why do Gardaí etc. see it as normal/acceptable in this area?

Lane leading from Manning's Bakery to Hanover Lane is a drug-den and needs to be closed off; drugs were also being used at top of Bridgefoot Street.

Gangs of street-drinkers, sometimes up to 20 people in each, are wandering the streets from early morning until late at night. Many of their members would appear to be homeless.

School Street flats are attracting young people to act anti-socially from other areas/flat complexes.

Hanbury Lane suffers from general vandalism and stone throwing by youths. Youths congregating in and around some Oliver Bond blocks leave residents feeling terrified and unsupported by AGS and DCC.

Drinkers and injecting drug users also congregate on Ushers Street, outside a private apartment block. A lot of injecting equipment can be seen every day in this area. The Merchant's Quay needle-cleaning operation is not sufficient, and many did not know that DCC can also provide this service.

Go-car rental car drivers are being mugged for keys and cars are then robbed. It was also stated that drug-dealers hire these cars for a day to ply their trade from.

Break-ins had been taking place at Thirlestane Terrace recently.

Gangs of youths are cycling dangerously and causing other trouble on pushbikes.

Assaults/beatings are commonplace, and many streets feel generally unsafe.

Reporting incidents does not seem to have any effect, as the Garda response is so slow.

At the same token, some of the tables were concerned that very young people/children were being used in the drug-trade.

Lack of visible Policing

Almost every table reported that they would like to see more visible police presence on the streets.

Gardaí were also seen as not using existing powers of enforcement to counteract antisocial behaviour. Only seen out in any meaningful numbers when checking car tax and insurance

Dublin City Council Maintenance Issues

CCTV does not seem to be working, or the evidence caught on them is not always taken into account? Maintenance issues around specific flat complexes were also raised, including safety gates.

Maintenance of Meath Street was reported to be lacking.

Halloween-related ASB

A number of tables reported issues around fireworks and bangers, including lit fireworks being thrown at passers-by and traffic. Rockets had been fired during culture night at the Digital Hub. Question was raised whether the Pimlico Green would be cordoned off for Halloween.

Planning Decisions

Planning for the new park in Bridgefoot Street will need to take into account how it will be kept safe.

Traffic Management Issues

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

Miscellaneous

Horse manure on the streets

Dog excrement and lack of bins in the area

Sexual favours being asked for drug debts

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

There was a general feeling that not much, or in some cases no, progress had been made. No more Gardaí are seen on the streets, if anything things seemed to be getting worse. Gardaí need to make a consistent effort to tackle the issues.

The re-establishment of a football team at Oliver Bond flats was positive, as was the programme under which a local business took local young people on work experience for the summer.

DCC environmental improvements in Thomas Street and James's Street were appreciated and it was noted that DCC responded quickly to requests to remove waste left on the street.

Gardaí do a lot of work with schools and youth projects, which many people are not aware of.

The following suggestions were made for improving the area:

- A campaign by Gardaí targeting the drug-dealing etc. at the flat complexes where it was most prevalent.
- More Gardaí on bikes
- Monthly bulletin on the Forum's progress; provide information on youth services in the area, to inform discussion on youth support
- Half-day 'Policing Seminar' with Gardaí for community representatives

An Garda Síochána responses to the concerns raised at tables:

Superintendent Gordon informed that Garda overtime had been approved for Halloween, so the policing will be done at same level as last year on Halloween night.

Is also concerned about youths and has been working closely with TUSLA to collaborate around child safety. A TUSLA representative had been invited to attend tonight but had been unable to be here. Supt. Gordon will, however, keep meeting with them and urge them to be active in the LPF.

Working with a group at Merchant's Quay Ireland and will ask them about needle clean-up. Has also asked Local Drug and Alcohol Task Force to target Oliver Bond, and AGS are targeting the location too with arrests on a daily basis.

Kevin Street Garda Station has full access to CCTV at Oliver Bond and other locations via DCC. An upgrade to the system will shortly enable live footage to be viewed directly in Kevin Street.

Burglary figures are actually declining year-on-year.

Gardaí are working with My Lovely Horse charity on projects to involve local young people and these have already had great success. Dublin City Council are in the process of fixing the loophole in the carriage licensing.

Arrests are continuously taking place for assaults and drugs; urged members of public to keep reporting incidents. In addition, updates are currently being made to the www.garda.ie website for it to include contact details for all local community Gardaí, who will welcome all quality of life-complaints from members of the public.

Garda presence is as high as the resources currently allow, however will try to increase visibility for people to feel safer. Requests to Kevin Street for immediate help are routed to the 999 call centre and allocated priority according to the urgency of the problem as reported. To respond to local issues an Operational Support Unit is being established in Kevin Street which will be operated by a Sergeant and two guards. Residents will be able to contact this unit directly and its sole function will be to respond to local community safety concerns.

Dublin City Council Responses

Paul White introduced himself as the new Project Estate Officer for many of the local DCC flat complexes, including Oliver Bond. He is available to talk to and will always return calls.

Dublin City Council's CCTV is working and being utilised. The dilapidated community centre will be demolished, and the football pitch upgraded at Oliver Bond after Halloween. Traffic calming measures are being looked at, which would still allow access for emergency services; however this was disputed by some of the residents, who said that currently even fire brigades are not able to enter parts of the complex because of ASB and intimidation by DCC tenants.

With regard to specific maintenance issues, Paul would be available to discuss these after the meeting. He will also bring up the Bridgefoot Street issue with the relevant DCC department.