

	<b>PUBLIC MEETING</b> <b>SOUTH WEST INNER CITY LOCAL POLICING FORUM</b> <b>ST. CATHERINE’S CHURCH, THOMAS STREET</b> <b>Thursday, 5<sup>th</sup> March, 2020</b>
	<b>Chair:</b> Michael King <b>Attendance:</b> Community Sergeant Ian Lambe Tony Smithers, Frank Murphy, Brian Lyons (Dublin City Council). <b>World-Café Facilitator:</b> Pat Tobin <b>Minutes:</b> Rea Lavelle

**Meeting Minutes:**

The Chair gave a quick update on the work of LPF management committee around issues raised at previous meetings; copies of a printed progress report, including advice on who to contact to dispose of discarded drug paraphernalia, were distributed at tables.

Meeting participants were seated at 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 and what progress has been made on these issues?**
- 2) What is happening now to make it feel safer?**

Following discussion each table reported back. The answers to **question 1** fell broadly under the following categories:

**Anti-social and criminal behaviour, including drug-related 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 Gardaí and other bodies with relevant responsibilities see it as normal/acceptable in the South Inner City area? Was drug dealing being confined to Dublin 8 to remove it from business districts? All tables also reported daily sightings of people using drugs; crack smoking is still prevalent, including on several Church premises.

Human defecation takes place outside people’s homes; this could be partly due to lack of public toilets in the area.

Groups of street-drinkers are gathering at regular spots and moving around the area.

Cars, homes and businesses had been broken into. Assaults/beatings are commonplace, many streets feel generally unsafe, particularly after dark. A Priest had been physically attacked in a local Church.

**Lack of visible Policing / Garda response**

Reporting incidents does not seem to have any effect, as Garda response is so slow. Reports had been made for many years about drug-dealing at a particular playground, but there has been no improvement. Gardaí are often very slow to attend at scenes of even serious incidents including the attack on a priest.

Locals had had to resort to ringing 999 when no response was received at Kevin Street. Gardaí were also seen as not using existing powers of enforcement to counteract antisocial behaviour, but were targeting minor traffic offences (such as parking) more seriously. Are calls/complaints made to Kevin Street recorded?

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

### **Development/Planning**

Molyneux Yard, which currently houses regular drug-dealing and drug-taking activity, is being redeveloped to make way for yet another hotel; concern expressed that this will push the drug-dealing to surrounding residential and business areas.

Extensive building works on the former Tivoli site are making local residents' lives a misery with noise and dust pollution. Why is Dublin City Council not enforcing the planning restrictions on the site?

### **Lack of Facilities**

Lack of a community centre was mentioned again at many tables. There are very few green areas and no sporting facilities in the area despite a very sizeable population. Youth services operating in the South West Inner City do not have the capacity to cater for the size and types of youth population; a dedicated (outreach) youth service would be especially needed for Oliver Bond. The model of the Ballymun Youth Service (BRYR) was suggested.

### **Unlicensed carriage horses**

A group of ten horse and carriage operators highlighted the continuous lack of regulation around horse and carriage operations. In many cases this means that insurance is also impossible to obtain. The new, unlicensed operators often have little regard for public safety, and are making the serious operators look bad by association. The dangerous driving of these carriages was reported by a number of other tables also. Compulsory wearing of nappy sacks would help with the horse-dirt issue. The Dublin City Council officials reported to be responsible for licensing are impossible to contact. There are only three carriage parking spots in the city, which are located at Guinness's, however even there the yellow paint has worn off.

Carriage operators asked that a DCC official with responsibility for the operation of horse carriages attend the next LPF meeting to brief the meeting on the issue and respond to queries.

It was also reported that horses are being kept at Oliver Bond flats.

### **Traffic Management Issues and Parking**

Business owners reported that parking on Meath Street was originally restricted to facilitate buses but more than 10 years after buses stopped using Meath Street, parking is still not allowed, which is making life difficult for businesses as well as customers. Similar issues on Francis Street, and cars parked on both streets are regularly ticketed by Gardaí.

Cars often park on yellow lines outside LIDL on Cork Street; this was deemed unnecessary as LIDL has a free carpark. Cycle lanes are being blocked by parked cars in several locations.

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

Footpaths are not fit-for-purpose for wheelchair users. One table reported cars and carriage horses driving both ways on one-way streets. A resident complained that parking permit holders often could not find parking near their homes as students, construction workers etc. had paid for and taken most of the spaces.

## Miscellaneous

Sexual favours are being asked to cover drug debts.

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### **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, however a few tables reported that there had been some improvement in uniformed Garda presence. The greening strategy, and the green spaces that had started to emerge, were also mentioned, and the progress report from LPF management committee was a positive, as it is going some way to ensure that agencies take their responsibilities seriously. The fact that more people are coming to meetings too is a positive. Dublin City Council respond quite quickly when asked to come and collect rubbish, and a team from Merchant's Quay Ireland patrol many of the streets on foot. Some new services for young people had recently opened up.

The following comments and suggestions were made for improving the area:

- A different person from Dublin City Council had attended the last 3 or 4 meetings, and it was questioned whether DCC even keep a record of the issues that are brought up by the public. An overall manager of the area should attend LPF meetings consistently to answer questions around the various issues that are brought up
- A campaign by Gardaí targeting drug-dealing at the flat complexes where dealing is most prevalent.
- Problems require a more joined-up response from all agencies. Progress towards this was welcome but more is needed.
- Serious investment in development of a youth service – on the lines of the service provided by Ballymun Youth Service or TRY on Donore Avenue
- Even though a small improvement had been seen in Garda presence during the day, this stops in the early evening, which makes the area feel very unsafe and businesses sometimes have to close early because of 'incidents'. Can patrol times be adjusted?
- Could young people interested in carriage driving be trained to do this properly?
- Could the Forum send out an agenda with names of Dublin City Council and An Garda Síochána officials who will be attending a few days prior to public meetings in future?
- Could AGS provide figures for parking fines in the area?
- Increased street lighting would help

### **An Garda Síochána responses to the concerns raised at tables:**

Unfortunately Gardaí don't have the resources to combat drug-dealing everywhere it occurs. The Active Case Management Initiative outlined in the hand-out, mean that An Garda Síochána are working closely with homeless service providers to tackle antisocial behaviour issues, including aggressive begging. AGS are also engaging with local off-sales to combat street-drinking. There had been an initiative to bring young people to horse-centres to get trained but not everyone wants to engage. Arrests are continuously taking place for drug-dealing, including in and around DCC flat complexes.

Sgt. Lambe noted the issue of parking on yellow lines on Cork Street and will also speak with team about ticketing of cars on Meath/Francis Street and the possibility of discretion around this.

Sgt. Lambe will bring back the suggestion for increased evening-time patrols in the area to provide Garda presence when it is needed most.

Responding to this feedback a participant from the floor noted that the issues raised at the meeting were the same as those raised at meetings for several years, with similar responses. Perhaps it was

time to accept that the efforts made to manage problems have not been effective, possibly due to lack of resources. Rather than continue in this vein failures should be acknowledged and we should have a more realistic conversation about what needs to be done.

### **Dublin City Council Responses**

Tony Smithers introduced himself as the Dublin City Council housing manager. Redevelopment of Oliver Bond complex is underway, guided by consultation with the residents. A park is also being developed on Bridgefoot Street, and a new playground has opened at Poole Street. A green area had also just been completed on Marrowbone Lane. Dublin City Council is working closely with An Garda Síochána to combat drug-activity in their flat complexes.

CCTV has been updated, is working and being utilised.

Rough sleepers can be reported to DCC and will be referred to the housing welfare section.

Tony offered to speak to resident near Tivoli site afterwards and will ask DCC planning enforcement to investigate possible flaunting of planning restrictions. Will also request Kevin Meade and Ronnie Hamilton to meet with carriage drivers.