



## Public meeting

### Canal Area Community Safety Forum

St. Andrew's Community Centre,  
Rialto

**03/10/23**

**Present:** Justin O'Brien (Chair), Sgt. Pat Culhane (Gardai), Linda Fanning (DCC), Frank Murphy (DCC)

**In Attendance:** Cllr. Darragh Moriarty (DCC),

**Facilitator:** Ali Warner

**Minutes:** Cillian O'Donoghue (covering for Valerie Scott, DSCP)

Justin opened the meeting and explained the rationale and purpose of the meeting and Forum to those in attendance. He introduced the different members of the forum and noted that there was a good attendance from the local community.

Ali then explained the process and format of the meeting to those in attendance, as well as the principles of the meeting. Tables were then instructed to begin discussing the two questions of:

- What is working well in terms of community safety in your area?
- What are the challenges relating to community safety in your area?

**What is working well in terms of community safety in the area?**

- There is a strong sense of community spirit in the area.
- Local residents continually share relevant information through WhatsApp groups with each other.
- Residents help each other.
- There are good relationships with locals and Gardai.
- St. Andrew's Community Centre is a great resource for the local area.
- Improvements have been made to streets and public spaces.
- HSE Primary Care Centre and other primary services such as Dolphin House Community Centre and the F2 Centre, provide an important benefit to the community.
- Youth Services are active in the community.
- New playground in Fatima and new local cycle lane a positive.

**What are the issues /challenges affecting Community Safety in your area?**

- There is a sense that there is a poor level of Garda visibility and presence in the area, although it was acknowledged that this is likely due to a lack of resources. Need for Community Gardai to be more visible. Some residents reported a poor Garda response to calls.
- There is open drug-dealing, especially at certain hot spots like the along the Red Luas line, Suir Road and Rialto Church bus stop. This is combined with open drug and alcohol-use along the canal.
- There are a lot of un-muzzled and un-leashed dog breeds around the area, while there have been reports of domestic pets and local wildlife being attacked and even killed by such dogs.
- Horses have been seen running and out of control locally, in Sundrive and Eamonn Ceannt Park.
- There is a lot of double parking in the area, as well as parking in cycle lanes and on footpaths. This is widely seen as a result of local construction projects, such as the Hospital and at Dolphin's Barn, with workers leaving cars for the day.
- The removal of large planters on footpaths has led to cars parking in these spaces and causing obstructions, while some streets are dirty and there a lack of bins.
- Anti-social behaviour and aggression is still a persistent problem, with gangs of younger people intimidating local residents.
- There are local traffic and road safety issues, such as speeding and vandalism of cars.
- Petty theft of bikes and garden items has been reported.
- A lack of street lighting in certain area is encouraging more open and consistent drug dealing.

### **Suggested Solutions and Questions**

- What plans are in place to deal with known drug-dealers from Gardai?
- Who is the Community Garda?
- Are there dog and horse wardens in DCC?
- Do DCC and the Gardai cooperate on animal control and welfare?
- What is being done about local parking problems?
- What is the process and who are the agencies for reporting and dealing with dogs attacking pets or other animals?
- Something needs to be done to prevent construction workers parking on the street.
- There needs to be more Gardai visible in the local area.
- The response to local issues and concerns from both DCC and the Gardai needs to be more proactive.
- Services in the area need to be more visible and present.
- Issues related to dangerous dogs need to be prioritised.

#### **DCC Response**

- DCC have a Public Domain Officer, who can respond to reports of dirty streets and investigate issues with road maintenance. There is a contact number for the public in these cases that DCC can respond to calls through.
- DCC have a Public Realm Officer, who can respond to calls and concerns related to the removal of planters from footpaths and parking issues.
- In relation to drug-dealing in the Linear Park, some recent improvements have been made through inter-agency cooperation and coordinated actions along the Grand Canal, namely DCC, the Gardai and Waterways Ireland. CCTV is being considered for this area while lighting concerns are also being addressed.
- Suir Road Bridge is a problem spot for drug-dealing, there are considerations to block off spaces used for this as a result, through for example, deterrent surfaces. The introduction of recent initiatives to increase activity along the canal, such as kayaking, will also likely act as a further deterrent to future drug-dealing.
- Concerns about stretches of overgrown vegetation along canal between Suir Road and Rialto bridges, will be brought back to DCC Parks department.
- Traffic issues raised in relation to Rialto Street, such as dangerous driving and speeding, will be discussed individually in detail by Linda and followed up on.
- In terms of DCC's remit, dog related issues are complex. There is a need for animal welfare representatives to be further engaged at a local level, through for example attendance at future Community Safety Forum meetings. DCC deals with animal welfare concerns while Gardai deal with criminal concerns. Welfare concerns can be brought in confidence to DCC through phone calls. In response to a question about pound locations, Ashtown is the pound for stray dogs and they can be contacted directly. Gardai should be contacted in relation to dangerous dog breeds being un-muzzled or acting dangerously. It is noted that the dog breeds issue is escalating and was raised by multiple residents, and this will be reported back to a higher level in terms of the Gardai and DCC.

### **Gardaí Response**

- Community Gardaí are still working and remain the same, for Rialto these are Debbie O'Sullivan and Stephanie Bible. The Community Gardai continue to develop a presence in and relationship with the local community.
- Designated units are tackling drug-dealing in the area, with a recent number of successful local raids and seizures in the area. This has displaced drug-dealing to other areas, such as the Linear Park and Suir Road. This work is supported by the drugs task force, the local community and other Garda units. There has also been significant cooperation between the Gardai and outreach services, while drug-dealing along Grand Canal is now being targeted. Locals can report drug-dealing to any Garda station in confidence.
- The new Garda rosters have created issues around recruitment and retention of Gardai, leading to issues around resources and in turn Garda presence and visibility. This is evident for example, in a current lack of patrols or Gardai on the beat.
- There is a set budget for Garda overtime, but overtime is currently affected by industrial action related to the above issues. It is unsure as yet as to how this will be resolved.
- In terms of dangerous dogs and related issues, there are different remits for DCC and the Gardai in this area. Garda enforcement is an issue again related to available resources. If a dog is reported as having attacked pets or a person, an investigation is conducted as standard procedure, including legal requirements around dog licences and due care from owners. This is all part of the remit of An Garda Síochána, who liaise when appropriate with other agencies.

Justin concluded the meeting, by noting that the issues raised and feedback given, will be reported back to inter-agency meetings to identify how community safety improvements can be made. Previous meetings have seen issues raised, that have since had successful inter-agency interventions. These include overgrown vegetation influencing drug-dealing along the Grand Canal, being cut back appropriately in certain areas.

Ali noted some positive responses on the night, while Bridin from KRIB Youth Service, introduced herself and the service to those in attendance.

### **Email Contacts:**

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