

Submissions for Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland

Firstly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the commission for affording me the opportunity to take part in this consultation process. I want to firstly recognise and pay tribute to the outstanding public service and bravery An Garda Síochána do every day in Policing our villages and towns across the country. Most people I speak too in the main speak very positively on their dealings with the Gardai and like all large institutions and organisations it is always perceived as been very slow to change or modernise when the reality is many aspects of An Garda Síochána are changing and modernising. However, if there is one thing I would like to really strongly emphasise and that is when people across our towns and villages see Gardai walking on the beat engaging with the community and constantly gathering intelligence it is remarkably positive and reassuring. I am not talking about Gardai driving through in Cars and motorbikes I am talking about Uniform Gardai on Foot or on Bicycle out from behind desks and Garda stations. If we were to simply see a lot more of that it would go an awful long way to rebuilding trust and confidence between The Gardai and the public.

Please see below another number of more specific points for this submission.

Community Engagement and Public Safety

I largely represent as a Public Representative the Peninsula of Donabate and Portrane in North Co. Dublin which has grown significantly over the last 15 years and will continue to grow over the next ten years as currently there are many planning applications for housing within Fingal County Council for more new developments within the area. The current population of Donabate Portrane is almost ten thousand people and when you add in the St Ita's Hospital Campus a large amount of Mobile home and caravan parks within the Peninsula as well as two very popular beaches, the regional Newbridge House and Park and the local Hotel you can get the picture of a very vibrant busy and active local community. There is also a commitment this year from the local authority to build a new by-pass road between Donabate and Portrane. The Peninsula as well as been a fast growing residential area, has 5 Golf courses, Large Public park Newbridge House and Farm, a number of Caravan/Mobile home operators which brings in a large amount of tourists and the very large St. Ita's hospital campus in Portrane. Donabate and Portrane also have two very popular beaches which also attract a large amount of visitors to the areas.

Currently there is no Garda Station on the Peninsula of Donabate and Portrane and the area is manned through Swords Garda Station. Swords Garda Station is already under severe pressure

given the large area that it is currently serving and with the population expected to significantly grow within both Swords as well as Donabate and Portrane this station will not be able to meet the needs of the Public given currently it is overstretched and at times unable to even get a patrol car to the peninsula. It is time as Donabate Portrane transitions from a local village to a large town to make serious plans for the commitment of its own Garda Station in the medium to longterm and in the shorterterm to significantly allocate resources to Swords Garda Station which will allow for a modern community model of policing for Donabate Portrane.

Is in important to particularly address the short to medium policing plans for the Peninsula of Donabate and Portrane. Given , in the next two years the New National Forensic hospital at St Ita's Hospital Portrane will become fully operational which will see the transfer of all the facilities from the Central Mental Hospital Dumdrun to the St Itas' Campus Portrane. Not only will this Hospital be operational but the HSE has also plans for a special care unit , Crannog Nua to become operational on the St Ita's hospital Campus Portrane , this facility at Crannog Nua will be specifically designed to facilitate the needs and functional requirements for a young person to develop in a "secure" environment; together with general and public access needs associated with the supporting activities involved in organising the treatment, care and development of children with challenging behaviour, lawfully detained under a High Court Order on welfare grounds.

The population on the Peninsula of Donabate and Portrane, within it's growth has a very young population and with this there has been an increase in Anti-Social behaviour with groups of youths gathering at the shops, around the village centre and on occasions have also intimidated people at the train station. It is my view that with an increased Garda presence on the peninsula and eventually a Garda Station on the Peninsula this will help prevent this type of behaviour as the teenagers currently know that it would be unlikely that a Garda Car will reach the area in time.

It is also my opinion that at least Two Garda should have an ongoing visual presence within the village of Donabate and Portrane on a daily basis as to deter Anti-Social behaviour. I also firmly believe the Garda should be in a position to issue ASBOs to those caught offending. I am of the view that it is a tiny percentage of youths who are engaging in Anti-Social behaviour and following an initial warning about their behaviour if it comes to the Gardai attention the possibility of an" Asbo" needs to be seriously considered if the same youths are consistently coming to the Gardai attention. I believe there is a need for joined up thinking between An Garda Siochana and Irish Rail given the level of Anti-Social behaviour that the Garda are dealing with either at the Train stations or on the trains particularly in the Summer Months given the increase in visitors to the Peninsula.

It is my opinion that legalisation needs to be consistent in dealing with drinking alcohol as currently the public- bye laws differ per council area and Gardai end up reverting to the Criminal. Visual presence is also needed with signs and posters reminding individuals of acceptable behaviour including posters in all shops with an alcohol licence explaining to the customers that to drink alcohol in public is an offence, liable to a fine on the spot and having the alcohol seized.

Roads Policing

It is my opinion that there is a need for a Road policy given criminals will drive no matter and if there was a dedicated specific unit to target known criminals. There is need for the courts to become consistent in the matters of Road Traffic Acts as a deterrent to drivers. I will believe the Garda should have the same powers as other countries like France and Turkey to be able to issue on the spot fines instead of large resources wasted dealing with administration after a speeding fine is issued.

Another issue that needs a national approach is the number of foreign registered cars in use around the area of not only Donabate and Portrane but the wider Dublin these cars are driving around with impunity and there needs to be an enforcement policy on this issue.

Once again I would much like to thank you for the opportunity to make this submission and I look forward to seeing the recommendations following all the submissions.

Kindest Regards,

Adrian

Deputy Mayor Cllr. ADRIAN HENCHY

“PUTTING THE COMMUNITY FIRST”

Tel: 087 681 4485

www.Adrianhenchy.ie

Follow Adrian on twitter@adrianhenchy

Check out Adrian's Facebook: Councillor Adrian Henchy

Designated Public Official under *Regulation of Lobbying Act, 2015*. See www.lobbying.ie