



Senator Catherine Ardagh

Seanad Leader & Spokesperson on Social Protection



Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland

Second Floor
St. Stephen's Green House
Earlsfort Terrace
Dublin DO2PH42
Ireland

10 January 2018

Re: Submissions to the policing commission on how to improve community policing in urban areas

Dear Sirs,

Please find enclosed my submissions to the policing commission on how to improve community policing in urban areas.

I look forward to engaging with the commission at future meetings.

Best regards,


Senator Catherine Ardagh

Received

11 JAN 2018

Commission on the Future of
Policing in Ireland

- In my experience, having an increased police presence at a local level and engaging with the community can have an extremely positive impact. This is shown to increase trust levels between locals and An Garda Síochána. Community policing can allow for greater engagement on issues as the members of An Garda Síochána can sit down with locals, get to know them and are more acutely aware of issues on the ground. Increasing Garda visibility creates a safer environment particularly for more vulnerable members of the community, reduces the fear of crime.
- In areas where there is persistent anti- social, increased communication between residents associations, individual residents and An Garda Síochána is extremely important. I can think of one example in particular where a number of residents have contacted my office to request meetings with local Gardaí to discuss an ongoing issue in the area. Though this alone would not solve the issue, it would help open a dialogue and perhaps offer potential solutions to what is an ongoing issue.
- The engagement between local Gardaí and our schools is another aspect of community policing that should be highlighted for its positive impact. This is one of the vital components of developing trust between young people and Gardaí from an early age.
- Neighbourhood watch schemes are another area of interest which is consistently brought to my constituency offices. These initiatives cannot replace the policing services but can be effective in helping to prevent smaller crimes by encouraging communities to help look out for each other. These schemes should be encouraged by An Garda Síochána as a means of creating a greater social cohesion and increasing engagement with community groups. These schemes can also be beneficial to Gardaí as local people are often best placed about issues impacting the community.
- One development in neighbourhood watch schemes in more recent times has included, the introduction of text alert systems which help local people remain vigilant and keep them informed about incidents happening in the area. I know that this has been adopted by a number of residents' associations independently but with further integration between local Garda Stations and these services can only help them improve. I appreciate that funding of these type of schemes can be prohibitive but when implemented effectively, can prove to be a great example of local people working in conjunction with Gardaí to provide a safer community for everyone involved.

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- The shooting on the South Circular Road on Friday 26 January is just the latest in a series of attacks associated with Gangland Crime in our communities. It is necessary that An Garda Síochána is afforded the resources to tackle this problem as it continues to spiral. The escalating nature of this feud and the increasing number of attacks is an indication that the Government are losing the battle against gangland crime and immediate action needs to be taken.
- I have heard the completely understandable reports regarding the fear that spread through the boxing arena when the gunshots that rang outside were heard. Innocent people enjoying their Friday evening should not have any expectation of being caught up in an incident like this. The danger posed to innocent civilians needs to be urgently highlighted when tackling this issue. I appreciate that funding and the provision of increased resources may be costly, but in the grand scheme of things, it is certainly necessary.
- Local people, particularly more vulnerable members of our society regularly contact my office to highlight the fear that they have that themselves or family members may end up being innocent bystanders caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. In areas where there gangland crime is particularly prevalent increased communication between residents and An Garda Síochána is extremely important. Though this alone would not solve the issue, it would help open a dialogue and offer an avenue of support for innocent people negatively impacted by the issue.
- I have raised the need for a larger Garda presence on our streets and increased engagement with communities on a number of occasions as both a Councillor and a Senator and I will continue to do so. Increasing this visibility will have a double effect in that it can act as an increased deterrent and it can reassure innocent people in the community.
- It is due to the hard work and bravery of the Gardaí curtailing this gangland feud that it has not been even more devastating. It is vital that our policing services have the resources that they require to deal with this escalating and dangerous situation. Any cuts to policing hours and overtime at this time for those responsible for monitoring and investigating gangland crime are counter intuitive and should be reinstated.
- As a society, we cannot let this become the norm. The regularity of these attacks and incidents can lead you to become desensitised to this issue. Perhaps people have gotten to the stage where they can compartmentalise it as being a problem that will always be there. This can't be allowed to happen, this is our country, city and community and we cannot allow it to be taken over by gangland crime.