

## **Opening Statement for Cormac O'Donnchú**

### **Justice Oireachtas Committee on the topic of Anti-Social Behaviour**

Chairperson, thank you for the opportunity to make a brief opening statement regarding the Local Community Safety Partnership and its views on Anti-Social Behaviour.

We have detailed in our written submission our views on the topic of anti - Social behaviour and how it currently presents in the Area of North Inner City Dublin. We have outlined a number of strategies which may be considered in addressing the issue by this committee – in particular review of judicial procedures, legislation, and judicial/community engagement. I am happy to discuss any of the content of our written submission further with members but for the purposes of this opening statement I wish to outline the structure and intended role of Local community safety partnerships in addressing matters of Local Community Safety.

The concept of community safety is about people being safe and feeling safe in their own community. The new Community Safety Policy is intended to ensure communities are safer and feel safer by making community safety a whole of Government responsibility and priority, with a focus on prevention and early intervention. Community safety in the most complete sense requires the proactive and ongoing input of a range of public, community services and local residents and cannot be met by any single state agency or voluntary organisation alone.

The landmark Policing, Security and Community Safety Bill will provide for this key principle from the report of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland - that preventing crime and harm and making our communities safer does not rest with An Garda Síochána and the Department of Justice alone. Rather, it will be best achieved as a 'whole of government' responsibility with Departments and agencies responsible for health and social services, education authorities and local authorities, the Gardaí and the wider community working together.

This new Bill will achieve this by establishing innovative Local Community Safety Partnerships to develop local safety plans, tailored to the priorities and needs identified by

communities themselves. The Local Community Safety Partnerships will replace and build upon the existing Joint Policing Committees and will provide a forum for State agencies and local community representatives to work together to act on community concerns in relation to anti-social behaviour.

This Local Community Safety Partnership structure will ensure that communities are empowered to have a strong say in what actions are prioritised by the services operating in their area, and will also have a key oversight role in ensuring those actions are followed through.

In many instances of anti-social behaviour the greatest risk a person poses may be to themselves, but their behaviour can also negatively impact on the sense of safety within their community. Ensuring that people in these situations can get the right support at the right time is vital. This means harm prevention and interventions delivered pro-actively, by the service best placed to deliver it, in a joined up, integrated way with other services.

Community safety, and within it, anti-social behaviour, needs a holistic approach that goes far beyond a traditional policing response. The goal of the Partnerships is that all relevant state bodies and voluntary organisations will work together effectively, in partnership with the local community, to prioritise and address issues in their own area. By harnessing those community and state services that focus on mental health issues, educational work, drug prevention, and other key issues to work together, we can make meaningful contributions to local communities across the country.

Three Local Community Safety Partnerships are currently being piloted around the country, in Dublin's North Inner City, Waterford City and County and Longford County. These pilots will run for 24 months and are subject to a robust independent evaluation conducted by the University of Limerick in conjunction with the Centre for Effective Services (CES). The learnings from the pilots and their evaluation will be taken into account and will be applied to the national roll out of the Local Community Safety Partnerships across the country.

The pilots bring all relevant public services and the community together at local authority level, to serve as a forum for discussion and decisions on community safety priorities, inclusive of anti-social behaviour.

Membership of the Local Community Safety Partnership Pilots includes: residents; community representatives, including representatives of youth, new communities and the voluntary sector; business and education representatives; representatives from relevant public services in the area, including the HSE, Tusla, An Garda Síochána, the Probation Service, the local authority and local councillors.

As residents and community representatives are central to identifying problems and solutions for their local communities, the partnerships have a 51/49% split in their favour on the committee. Each Local Community Safety Partnership pilot is also supported by a full-time coordinator and an independent voluntary chairperson.

Each of the partnerships are currently hard at work addressing local issues and work developing a Community Safety Plan tailored to their area to guide future actions and interventions. The plans will identify issues most in need of prioritisation, ensuring actions taken are strategic and effective. They, along with the actions taken to address their content, will also serve as templates for the work of future partnerships.

In conclusion, I would thank you again for this opportunity to speak on the Local Community Safety Partnerships and anti-social behaviour and I look forward to continuing to actively support collaborative progress towards achieving a safer society for all.