



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY



Guidelines for Joint Policing Committees

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Introduction

These guidelines have been developed by the Policing Authority as part of its statutory role in relation to Joint Policing Committees (JPCs). They replace all previous guidelines, which are now withdrawn.

The Authority believes that JPCs have significant potential as a forum through which communities can engage with matters affecting the policing of their area and work cooperatively to tackle those issues affecting them. These guidelines set out in some detail the purpose and function of JPCs. They provide information for JPC members and the community as to how the committees work.

They also articulate a set of expectations of JPCs, that they:

- be accountable to their community in all its diversity;
- are alert and responsive to that community, using existing and new community structures to listen and understand its needs;
- are strategic; and
- continue to evaluate their work and challenge themselves to ensure they deliver on these expectations.

Detail in respect of certain aspects of the guidelines, designed to assist the JPC membership in conducting its work, is provided in the appendices. Templates and guidance to assist with the development of key documents and agendas will be available on the Policing Authority website, www.policingauthority.ie.

Role of the Joint Policing Committee

1.1 What is the purpose of a JPC?

- a.** Section 36 of the Garda Síochána Act, 2005 (the Act) provides for the establishment of a JPC in each local authority administrative area. The purpose of a JPC is to provide a forum where a local authority and senior Gardaí responsible for policing in the area, along with Oireachtas members and community interests can consult, discuss and make recommendations on matters affecting the policing of the area. It is generally intended that the actions of each JPC will be resourced by the organisations represented on the committee.
- b.** Under the Act, the JPC is required to keep under review the levels and patterns of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour in the area, including the patterns and levels of misuse of alcohol and drugs. It is also required to keep under review the factors underlying and contributing to the levels of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour in the area.
- c.** The JPC is to advise the local authority and the Garda Síochána on how they might best perform their functions, having regard for the need to do everything feasible to improve the safety and quality of life, and to prevent crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour within the area.
- d.** The JPC is a mechanism through which the local authority can convey information and views to senior Gardaí to assist them in the formulation and operation of their annual policing plans. It allows local Gardaí to convey information and views to the local authority to assist it in carrying out its duties, functions and activities, including its statutory obligation to consider the importance of taking steps to prevent crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour within its area of responsibility.
- e.** The JPC does not replace the regular day-to-day contact or consultation at ground level, which is a feature of good policing, or the local liaison which happens between the local authority and Gardaí. It is an additional and important community resource, which can facilitate the type of partnership working necessary to solve many of the issues facing communities.
- f.** The JPC presents an opportunity for the local authority and the Garda Síochána to work with Oireachtas members and community interests in partnership to contribute to and improve the safety and quality of life of the community. It is a partnership that recognises the need for cooperation in order to find solutions for the issues that are affecting or causing concern for the local community.

1.2 How can the JPC's purpose best be achieved?

- a. The JPC presents an opportunity for consultation and an exchange of views, but ultimately it must find ways to coordinate its resources and prioritise actions that deliver solutions for the community.
- b. The JPC must also hold itself and its members accountable for the delivery of those solutions. The JPC is a strategic forum and its discussions outcome-focused with a shared sense of responsibility and accountability among all its membership. It is not sufficient that information is shared and presented.
- c. It is essential that there is a collective partnership approach to assigning and accepting responsibility for the effective operation of the JPC and the implementation of its Strategy.

1.3 What kind of issues does a JPC deal with?

- a. A JPC is focused on improving the safety and quality of life within an area, so that it can be a safe community in which to live and work. The kind of issues can include different types of crime, anti-social behaviour, traffic management, planning for major events, substance abuse, estate management and crime prevention efforts.
- b. The JPC serves the community in all its diversity and should ensure it stays alert to the whole variety of issues that may be affecting differing sections of the community.

Functions of the JPC

2.1 Steering Group

- a. Each JPC must establish a Steering Group, which consists of the Chairperson of the JPC, the senior representative of the Garda Síochána and the Chief Executive of the local authority or a person of appropriately senior grade, nominated by them.
- b. The Steering Group is charged with facilitating the efficient functioning of the JPC and ensuring that it retains a clear focus on strategic and collaborative action.
- c. Practically, it also arranges procedures for the appointment of any new or replacement members, draws up the agenda and arranges documentation for and administration of meetings. In drawing up agendas the Steering Group should ensure it consults periodically with all members as to items for inclusion.

- d. The Steering Group is also the point of contact for cooperation and joint action with other JPCs and Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), and with any subcommittee of the JPC.
- e. A JPC can establish subcommittees when satisfied that this is necessary for the pursuit of its objectives, as described in its multi-annual Strategic Plan, and there are sufficient resources available to support the effective functioning of the subcommittee. Typically, subcommittees will be established to deal with thematic, rather than geographic, areas. Any proposal to establish a JPC subcommittee should be agreed in advance by the Steering Group and the necessity for the existence of the subcommittee should be reviewed on an annual basis.

2.2 JPC Meetings

- a. It is envisaged that each JPC should hold at least four meetings each year (one in each quarter) with at least one of those meetings to be held in public. Meetings should be held in person but may occur remotely, or a combination of both, as circumstances allow and a degree of flexibility may be required.
- b. In general, JPC meetings should be open to the public and press upon request, unless this is not possible due to legal or confidentiality reasons, or where a member of the JPC has deemed the presence of an individual not to be in the public interest. The JPC may also decide to hold part or all of a meeting in private (in committee) if they believe the business to be discussed necessitates such privacy, including the planning of future committee business.
- c. Public JPC meetings concerning matters affecting the policing of the local authority's administrative area may be centred around a theme relevant to policing in the area. The focus should be on the delivery of strategic goals and on partnership between JPC members. Additional public meetings may be held to address different issues or to provide geographical spread.
- d. Public meetings of the JPC should be planned with a minimum of formality, in order to reflect the cooperative nature of the JPC and to maximise the engagement and participation of the community. The meetings also present an opportunity for the JPC to inform the public of the work planned and outcomes achieved in line with its Strategic Plan.
- e. The JPC should make particular efforts as part of its communications strategy to publicise and raise awareness in the area where it has been established, of what its purpose and functions are, when and where it is meeting, and invite the public to attend its public meetings. Appropriate efforts and provision should be made to ensure that marginalised and seldom-heard sections of the community are made aware of the meetings. This includes an alertness to issues such as disability access.

- f. In order to ensure that the opportunity to attend is available to all, consideration should be given to meetings taking place throughout the local authority area. Meetings should be held at times and locations which facilitate maximum attendance of all members of the committee. The location and time of public meetings should be determined to facilitate maximum community attendance.
- g. The JPC may, where appropriate, invite a non-member to attend the meeting and speak on a particular topic to provide information and/or expertise to assist the JPC in its understanding of an issue or its work in general. *(Additional detailed guidance on the holding of meetings is provided in the appendices).*

2.3 Local Policing Fora

- a. The JPC can also establish, under section 36(2) of the Act, and in consultation with the local Garda superintendent, Local Policing Fora within specific neighbourhoods of the area.
- b. The procedures for such fora can be similar to those for JPCs but, to the greatest extent possible, less formal.
- c. These Local Policing Fora can discuss and make recommendations to the JPC concerning crime and anti-social behaviour and those matters that impact on the ability of those living and working in the area to feel safe and to be safe.
- d. It is important that the JPC is aware of the plans and activities of the local fora within the local authority administrative area and should facilitate the fora in bringing key concerns to the JPC to explore whether and how best it can assist in addressing these concerns.

2.4 Working with other structures in the community

- a. The JPC should be alert to and familiar with the work of other community structures, working in partnership with Local Community Development Committees, local drugs taskforce(s) and other local structures working to combat criminality and antisocial behaviour and enhance the lived experience within their community. JPCs should also strive to familiarise themselves with the work of the Local Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs), which at the time of writing are being piloted in three locations (Dublin North Inner City, Waterford and Longford). JPCs may also carry out joint actions with other JPCs or CSPs through a resolution of both committees. This work may be along thematic or strategic lines, sharing information and resources to the benefit of their communities.

- b.** Public bodies and organisations whose work relates to the remit of the JPC or to the safety of the community being served should be encouraged to attend JPC meetings so as to provide a broad and holistic view when discussing matters of community safety and so that multi-agency solutions can be considered.

2.5 Strategic Focus

- a.** In order to give their work focus each JPC should develop a brief Strategic Plan, which is focused on achieving coordinated actions with desired outcomes and within specified timeframes, to support enhanced policing and crime prevention.
- b.** The Strategic Plan is a multi-year plan from which annual plans can be developed. Both the strategic and annual plans should be published and made available to the community. The Strategic Plan should have regard to existing local development plans, as well as the Annual Policing Plan for the area.
- c.** The strategic and annual plans, while ambitious, should be realistic, contain measurable goals and form a useful basis by which the JPC can evaluate its own effectiveness and hold itself and its membership to account.
- d.** The JPC should also develop a communications strategy. This is essential both to ensure that there is awareness of the JPC and the opportunities that exist for members of the community to engage and participate in its work, and to communicate details of the positive outcomes of its work. Any public statements issued on behalf of the JPC should be agreed upon by the JPC and issued by the Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson.
- e.** In addition to its own Strategic Plan, a JPC should take an active role in making inputs to the development of the local Annual Policing Plan, engaging with the Garda Síochána not later than three months before the end of the year and with a focus on the strategic objectives of the JPC. It should also provide a view to the Garda Síochána as to the effectiveness of its implementation. The JPC is an important means by which the community supports and holds its police service to account.
- f.** The JPC should take an active role in making inputs to the local authority, which might include recommendations for changes in policies, regulations or bye-laws.

Governance

3.1 Appointment of the JPC Chair and JPC members

- a. The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of a JPC shall, in accordance with section 35(2) of the Act, be drawn from the elected members nominated to the JPC by the relevant local authority, and appointed by agreement of the local authority elected members of the JPC.
- b. The term of office of a Chairperson shall be not less than two years with a maximum term of five years. The Chairperson, along with the Steering Group, is responsible for ensuring that these guidelines are followed.
- c. There are five categories of membership of a JPC. These are: Garda members; officials from the local authority; elected members from the local authority; members of the Oireachtas; and community representatives.
- d. The Garda Síochána representatives on the JPC shall be appointed by the Garda Commissioner.
- e. The other members appointed shall be appointed by resolution of the local authority by which it was established, or in such other manner as the local authority may provide for by resolution.
- f. A JPC should ensure that local authority elected members reflect the elected representational spread on the full council, with consideration given to diversity. They should, as far as is practical, be representative of each municipal district within the local authority area, and in local authorities without municipal districts, be representative of each of the areas covered by the JPC.
- g. In relation to community members, each JPC should decide the most appropriate community-based representation and should utilise key sources, such as Public Participation Networks, in identifying nominees. It should be ensured that those community members selected reflect a broad-based demographic representation of the range of local community interests and voices. This includes representation of particular localities, young people and children, victims groups, business interests and particular communities, such as Traveller or migrant communities.
- h. Each community is different and the JPC should challenge itself to ensure that the community in all its diversity is represented in its membership, or, where this is not possible, that efforts are made to ensure that those not represented are, through other means, given an opportunity to contribute their views and be heard.

- i. To the greatest extent possible, the objective of achieving at least 40% gender balance in the making of appointments, as well as the need to foster social inclusiveness and equality when selecting membership should be adhered to.
- j. Members of the JPC should be of sufficient seniority within their respective organisations to ensure that they can engage meaningfully in decision making.
- k. Members of the JPC are not entitled to appoint substitutes to attend and participate as members of the JPC, with the exception of officials and members of the Garda Síochána.
- l. Actions, decisions and proceedings of a JPC shall not be invalidated on the basis that there was a vacancy in its membership, a member was or should have been disqualified, or that there was not a sufficient number of Oireachtas members available to participate.
(Additional detailed guidance on membership of the JPC is provided in the appendices).

3.2 Accountability

- a. Section 36(5) of the Act requires each JPC to complete and submit an annual report to the local authority and supply a copy of the report to the Policing Authority, Minister for Justice, Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Garda Commissioner no later than 3 months after the end of each year.
- b. The annual report should outline in detail key achievements of the JPC, an assessment of its performance against its strategic goals, a record of meetings held and membership of the JPC. This is an important document as it provides transparency for the community on the work and achievements of the Committee against its annual and strategic plan. It can also provide valuable insights into successful initiatives or learning that might be adopted by other JPCs.
- c. Where possible, a webpage for each JPC should be hosted on the relevant local authority's website. This page should include copies of the annual reports, details of upcoming meetings, agendas and minutes from previous meetings and updates on agreed actions. Minutes should be made available online as soon as practicable following their approval.
- d. To facilitate transparency and accountability to the community, meeting dates, agendas, minutes, documents and reports to and from the JPC are to be made available to the public online.

Evaluation and Capacity building

4.1 Approach to Evaluation

- a. The JPC should, at a minimum on a biennial basis, collectively consider its own effectiveness. In doing so it should seek the views of the local fora, as well as the views of community groups and organisations. Matters that could be included in such a discussion are:
 - i. The degree to which there is awareness of the work of the JPC.
 - ii. The level of attendance at public meetings and the degree to which attendance reflects the full breadth of the community and has allowed for the views of the community in all its diversity to be heard and considered.
 - iii. The quality of information received from the Garda Síochána and the degree to which the information is sufficient as the basis for an understanding of the policing issues to be addressed, and to inform the development of solutions.
 - iv. The degree of cooperation with local fora and how effectively the JPC is responding to issues raised.
 - v. The degree to which the Committee has engaged with local Gardaí on the development of the Annual Policing Plan and the ongoing assessment of its impact.
 - vi. The progress made against the Committee's own Strategic Plan.
 - vii. The degree to which the Committee is adhering to the spirit and letter of the guidelines.

4.2 Building Capacity and knowledge sharing

- a. Upon completion of the evaluation, efforts should be made to identify areas for future development. If training or capacity-building is identified, the inclusion of these in the development of strategies and annual work plans should be considered.
- b. Training should be on a collective basis and should include training on JPC roles and responsibilities, with an emphasis on cooperation and collaboration. Training of Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons in the facilitation of committees is important, and training of community members should seek to build confidence, leadership skills and their capacity to represent their communities.
- c. Every JPC should look to other JPCs, CSPs, community structures including the Public Participation Networks (PPNs), public bodies and organisations working within the same local authority area that may have expertise or knowledge that could be shared to expand the capacity of the JPC.

Appendix 1: JPC Membership

- a. Diversity of members is an important feature of JPCs. Every attempt should be made when selecting members from the Garda Síochána, the local authority, community members, locally elected members and members of the Oireachtas that diversity is considered and that the local authority area demographic and community is represented amongst members.
- b. Members of the Oireachtas who wish to be a member of their relevant JPC should indicate their interest to the Chairperson of the JPC. Oireachtas members should not be members of more than one JPC, except in a situation where the constituency they serve includes a number of JPCs. Members of the Oireachtas cannot be on any subcommittee of more than one JPC.
- c. Members of the Oireachtas who are not members of a JPC are entitled to attend meetings without providing advance notice, and are to be provided with the advertisement notice, agenda and minutes of meetings, as well as reports by and to their local JPC, upon request.
- d. The Chief Executive of the local authority, or their nominee, will be a JPC member; they may be accompanied to meetings by local authority officials deemed appropriate to the business of the meeting. If the Chief Executive chooses to nominate a proxy in their stead they should be of appropriate grade to deliver the requirements of the role.
- e. The Senior Garda representative on the JPC should be the relevant Chief Superintendent or of a rank no lower than Superintendent; they may be accompanied by other Garda members and staff, as deemed appropriate for each meeting.
- f. Each JPC should have 25-35 members depending on the size of the local authority area it is representing. The membership breakdown should roughly reflect the percentage breakdown outlined below. JPC administration or support staff will not be counted in membership figures.
 - i. Local Authority Officials (10%),
 - ii. Gardaí Síochána representatives (10%),
 - iii. Local elected representatives (45%),
 - iv. Community representatives (25%),
 - v. Members of the Oireachtas (10%).

- g.** Casual vacancies may arise through the death, resignation or disqualification of the sitting member, or for other reasons. A member appointed to fill a casual vacancy may serve the remainder of that term.
- h.** Members who are elected local authority members shall cease to be a member of the JPC if they cease to be a member of the local authority. A member of the JPC other than elected local authority members shall cease to be a member of the JPC if they resign from the JPC or cease to be a member of the grouping from which they were nominated to the JPC. A person who has resigned or whose term has ended can be re-elected if they qualify for membership.

Appendix 2: Meetings of the JPC

- a.** The JPC may have as many meetings as are deemed necessary by the Steering Group to perform its functions.
- b.** Public meetings should be inclusive, widely advertised and promoted in the local area to encourage attendance and participation from all sectors of society, including marginalised or seldom heard communities. Public meetings should allow for engagement, which can be questions submitted in advance from the floor. The emphasis of public meetings should be on general policing issues and may be themed.
- c.** The Garda representative will present a report to the JPC at each meeting on local crime levels and trends. This report should include a general overview and reference statistical data across a number of crime types selected by the JPC. It should provide context to the factors influencing these levels, as well as crime prevention efforts. The JPC may wish to periodically seek information on particular crime types not included in the standard reporting to assist with discussions on key topics.
- d.** The Chief Executive of the local authority, or their nominee, will present a report about their functions in relation to the remit and work of the JPC.
- e.** Where possible, reports from the Garda Síochána and the local authority should be submitted in advance to allow members to consider them. Documents may be identified as confidential if required.
- f.** Each of the presentations should be followed by a brief question and answer session with JPC members, and a discussion of future response(s). Actions arising should be noted in the minutes of the meeting.

- g.** Discussions at JPC meetings must adhere to all civil, criminal, human rights, privacy and data legislation. Information identifying any individuals should not be disclosed or discussed. The JPC may not, under any circumstance, discuss specific cases, criminal investigations, State security, disclose information prejudicial to Garda operations, or make public appeals. Confidential or operational information should not be disclosed, even in response to questions.

Appendix 3: Administration of meetings

- a.** JPC meetings should be set at least 15 working days in advance, preferably at the preceding meeting, and should not be cancelled bar exceptional circumstances, and only with the agreement of the Steering Group.
- b.** Members should be advised in writing of the time, date and location of meetings at least 15 working days in advance. If a meeting is cancelled the Chairperson should agree new arrangements and advise members of those as quickly as possible.
- c.** Meetings should be arranged at times and locations that will maximise attendance, and with reference to the Oireachtas schedules and the council commitments of relevant members.
- d.** At least 10 working days before a public JPC meeting, advertisements should be placed informing the public of the date, time, place and purpose of the meeting, that they are welcome to attend and ask questions of JPC members, the address, telephone number and process for submitting questions in advance and stipulating that any information sought may not be available, but will be provided where possible. Local authorities, the Garda Síochána and all members of the JPC should promote awareness of the JPC and its subcommittees.
- e.** An agenda, documents and minutes of the previous meeting should be provided to members and attendees five working days before each meeting, and treated as confidential until the meeting occurs. Agendas must be concise and reflect the time available, as well as the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders. Requests to add urgent matters to an agenda, in advance of the meeting, will be considered by the Chairperson.
- f.** A quorum for each meeting should be decided in the same manner as any meeting of the local authority.
- g.** JPC members should openly declare any conflict of interest with matters being discussed, and withdraw from the meeting while such a matter is discussed.

- h.** Minutes of each meeting shall be recorded and submitted for confirmation by the JPC members at the next meeting following confirmation of accuracy and amendments. The minutes should contain the time, date, place of a meeting, names of attendees, apologies, visitors, items discussed, actions agreed, and status of outstanding actions. Confirmed or amended minutes will be signed by the Chairperson and become the official record of proceedings.
- i.** The JPC should aim to develop cross-sectoral strategy and build consensus. Decisions should be made by agreement, unless that is not possible, in which case voting is acceptable. If voting occurs each member has one vote, but is entitled to abstain, which should then be recorded. If a vote is tied, the Chairperson has the casting vote.
- j.** Non-members can be invited to meetings of the JPC or subcommittees, when appropriate, to speak on areas of their expertise that are on the agenda. Arrangements for this should be coordinated by the Steering Group.
- k.** Questions asked and answers given in meetings should be recorded, for example in the minutes, as they form part of the official records of the JPC.
- l.** In the event of disorderly behaviour in a meeting, the Chairperson may take the following actions:

 - i.** if the Chairperson feels that a JPC member is persistently disregarding their ruling, or behaving irregularly, improperly, offensively or obstructing the business of the meeting, and the chair has advised the members present by naming the member involved, then the Chairperson or any member can move “that the named member leave the meeting”; if that motion is seconded there should be a vote on it without discussion. If it is agreed that the member should leave, they are not entitled to participate further in that meeting on that day.
 - ii.** if the Chairperson feels that there is general disorder or disruption that impedes the business of the meeting, or a member who has been asked to leave following application of the procedure in i) above refuses to do so, the Chairperson may adjourn the meeting until such a time that they feel order can be restored.

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