

Revision to Joint Policing Committees Guidelines (August 2014)

Preface

The existing guidelines for the operation of Joint Policing Committees were issued in 2008 and heralded the establishment of these important partnership structures in all of the then existing local authority areas, as provided in the Garda Síochána Act 2005.

A review of the operation of the Committees commenced in 2012, to see if there were ways in which their operation could be enhanced and ensure that they were functioning as intended. The review process included a questionnaire to all existing members of Committees throughout the country and the production of a discussion document which helped to facilitate a public consultation process. The review was managed in consultation with an Oversight Committee which included representatives of the Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government and An Garda Síochána.

To assist those already using the guidelines these revised guidelines are presented as an addendum to the previous guidelines. The changes which are being made reflect feedback received during the review process as well as input received by the Department of Justice and Equality during the public consultations in relation to the preparation of the White Paper on Crime. The revision of the guidelines is particularly timely as it allows for the alignment of Joint Policing Committees with the new local government structures. The most significant changes to the guidelines reflect both the new local government arrangements and a strengthening of strategic and collaborative functioning within each Committee. Important changes include,

- Committees will operate at a City and County level following the abolition of Town Councils, reflecting a more modern and streamlined approach to the management of local issues.
- There is a requirement for Committees to develop six year and annual strategic plans, and to report on their implementation in Annual Reports.
- The number of community representatives is increased, as this was a recurring theme during the review process.
- The need for a proper communications strategy to support interaction with local communities and effective and efficient coordination with other local structures is emphasised.

We are hopeful that the new guidelines will assist Committees in renewing their commitment to collaborative efforts to support policing and enhance community safety.

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Minister for Justice
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1 Introduction

1 (a) This addendum and its Appendices form part of the guidelines which apply to Joint Policing Committees (JPCs) under Section 35 (2) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005. A consolidated version of the JPC guidelines, which also contains minor consequential amendments to the overall guidelines, is being published on the website of the Department of Justice and Equality - www.justice.ie

1 (b) The revised guidelines highlight a number of key issues which have been given particular consideration following a review process carried out in 2012 and 2013. This addendum emphasises a number of existing provisions and expands and amends other aspects of the existing guidelines which were issued in 2008.

1 (c) In particular, the need to ensure that JPCs take a genuinely strategic and collaborative approach to the policing issues in an area is emphasised. This is particularly appropriate in the context of the wider changes occurring in local government structures, which provide a welcome opportunity to strengthen the strategic alignment of JPCs with other relevant local structures.

2 Local Government Reform

2 (a) In accordance with the Garda Síochána Act 2005 a JPC is established in respect of each local authority area and so a total of 31 JPCs will operate in the City, City and County and County Council areas which remain after the change to the new local government structures. (It should be noted that the existing arrangement in Dublin City where there are five area sub-committees remains unchanged).

2 (b) The changes to local authority areas will mean that many of the provisions in the guidelines relating to Town Council areas will become obsolete. In this regard paragraphs 13.2, 13.3 and 13.4 of the guidelines are deleted entirely.

2 (c) JPCs are encouraged to have regard to the provision in paragraph 6.5 which encourages the holding of meetings in different parts of the local authority area.

3 Strategic Focus of JPCs

3 (a) A new paragraph (1.4) and a new Appendix 2 (attached) are added to the guidelines to emphasise the strategic nature of the work of JPCs, and provide templates for six year and annual work plans as follows,

“1.4 It is essential that JPCs take a strategic approach to their work so that issues arising can be dealt with in a considered and properly coordinated manner. Conversely, the business of a JPC cannot be progressed by simply having an exchange of views on relevant Garda or local authority reports. It is imperative that local issues are addressed collectively and strategically and in this regard each JPC must have strategic plans which are focussed on achieving coordinated actions to support enhanced policing and crime prevention. Templates for JPC work plans are included in Appendix 2. These

include a Six Year Strategic Plan designed to link with the Local Economic and Community Plan for the area and an Annual Plan which will include objectives derived from the relevant Annual Policing Plans. JPCs should use the templates provided but are free to include other relevant information in their plans if they so wish.”

3 (b) A new paragraph 2.7 is added to the existing Code of Practice in Appendix 1 of the Guidelines as follows,

“2.7 JPCs should be pro-active in making constructive inputs in relation to District and Divisional policing plans and relevant local authority plans and initiatives. JPCs should also support local Garda management and local authority management in relation to any relevant consultation which may arise with respect to Garda or local authority plans”

3 (c) The provisions in relation to sub-committees in Paragraphs 12.1, 12.2 and 12.3 of the guidelines are revised as follows

“12.1 Care should be taken to avoid a proliferation of sub-committees, which would represent an unproductive use of scarce resources. JPCs should not establish more than four sub-committees. In the case of Dublin City Council, these would be in addition to the five area subcommittees. The establishment of a sub-committee should only be proposed where the JPC is satisfied that this is necessary for the pursuit of objectives described in the Six Year Strategic Plan described in Appendix 2 and there are sufficient resources available to support the effective functioning of the sub-committee. In this regard, any proposal to establish a JPC sub-committee must be agreed in advance by the JPC Steering Group.

12.2 Apart from the five Dublin City area sub-committees, JPCs should consider the establishment of sub-committees to address thematic issues rather than on the basis of geographical areas. However where a JPC considers it necessary, area based sub-committees may be established, provided that any proposal to establish these is agreed in advance by the JPC Steering Group. In addition, JPCs must ensure that the establishment of an area-based sub-committee does not lead to duplication of work being done by the JPC at city or county level.

12.3 To ensure continuing efficiency, the need for the continuation of sub-committees, other than the Dublin City area sub-committees, should generally be reviewed annually by the JPC.”

3 (d) To further underline the strategic focus of JPCs the provision in paragraph 6.6 for quarterly meetings is emphasised. In addition paragraph 6.7 is amended as follows,

“6.7 Any proposal to hold additional meetings of a JPC must be agreed in advance by the Steering Group.”

4 Annual Reports

The making of an Annual Report, which is a statutory duty for JPCs, is emphasised and the guidelines are strengthened as follows, in paragraph 9.4 and in a new **Appendix 3**, (attached).

“9.4 Annual reports should reflect closely the work done to achieve the objectives set out in JPC annual work plans. In this regard JPCs should use the template which is included at Appendix 3 for their Annual Reports. Annual reports must include information on achievements during the year. JPCs are required to highlight at least three areas of achievement in their reports, and this is reflected in the template. The information specified on the template is considered sufficient for the purposes of annual reporting, but JPCs are free to include other relevant information if they so wish.”

5 Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Steering Group

5 (a) Guidelines relating to the Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Steering Group are strengthened. A new paragraph 4.3 highlights the desirability of continuity in the role of Chairperson as follows,

“4.3 The term of office of a chairperson shall be not less than two years and, in view of the central role of the chairperson to the success of the JPC, committees are encouraged to consider appointment of a chairperson for a longer period.”

5 (b) The role of the Chairperson, supported by the Steering Group in ensuring the coherent functioning of JPCs is emphasised in new text for paragraphs 4.4 and 11.1.

“4.4 The chairperson of a JPC and the other members of the Steering Group (see paragraph. 11.1) have a key role in ensuring that these Guidelines are followed.”

“11.1 Each JPC must establish a Steering Group, consisting of the chairperson of the JPC, a representative of An Garda Síochána and the Chief Executive of the local authority or a person nominated by him or her. The function of the steering group will be to facilitate the efficient functioning of the JPC and in particular to ensure that it retains a clear focus on strategic and collaborative action. It will also arrange procedures for the appointment of any new or replacement members, draw up the agenda and arrange for documentation for meetings (see paragraph 15.7), be the point of contact for co-operation and joint action with other JPCs (see section 13) and with any subcommittees of the JPC.”

6 JPC meetings

6 (a) The existing provision to allow attendance at meetings by non-members is highlighted and expanded as follows in paragraph 15.8

“15.8 If considered appropriate by the JPC, a non-member may be invited to attend a meeting and speak to a specific agenda item or items. This applies in particular to representatives of statutory agencies or persons with specific expertise or local knowledge which would be of assistance to the JPC. The Chairperson, in consultation with the Steering Group, should manage any proposal to invite non-members to attend with reference to the strategic objectives in the JPC work plan, and facilitate any appropriate arrangements which may be required. The same arrangements for non-member participation may be applied in relation to JPC sub-committees.”

6 (b) Particular attention is drawn to the need to ensure that discussion of Garda or local authority reports is time-limited so that the main business of the JPC meeting can be devoted to progressing items on the work plan. (Revised paragraph. 15.11)

“15.11 Members of the JPC may ask the relevant Garda and local authority representative questions on matters contained in their report or other matters for which they have responsibility and which are relevant to the work of the JPC. Such questions should not take up a disproportionate amount of the time available for the meeting, and the main business of the JPC meeting must be devoted to progressing items on the annual work plan.”

6 (c) Similarly, the need for advance circulation of documents and for advance notice of questions is underlined and paragraph 15.12 is expanded to provide that “... JPCs should set appropriate time limits to ensure timely distribution of documents and adequate notice of questions to be asked.”

7 Communications

7 (a) The importance of good communications in relation to the work of other local committees and fora is underlined with section 13 of the Guidelines being re-titled “**Communications between Joint Policing Committees and with other local structures**”. A new paragraph 13.2 is also inserted,

“13.2 It is clear that the range of local fora which exist in a JPC area can play an important role in collaborative actions which may be pursued by a JPC. Therefore it is essential that JPCs are aware of the plans and activities being pursued through other relevant local structures, in particular Local Community Development Committees. JPCs should maximise their engagement with all such structures and relevant community based groups to coordinate appropriate partnership approaches.”

7 (b) With the dissolution of City/County Development Boards as part of the local government reform process there is a need for effective linkage between JPCs and other local structures. It is expected that this will apply particularly to the Local Community Development Committees to be established in each local authority area. A new paragraph 13.3 is inserted,

“13.3 JPCs should ensure that there is effective linkage between them and relevant local authority committees including the Local Community

Development Committee. Such linkage should include copies of the JPC plans and reports being provided to the relevant local authority committees.”

7 (c) In addition the Code of Practice in Appendix 1 includes additional guidance (paragraph 5 of the Code) on communications with the general public, as follows

“5.1 A communications strategy is an essential element of the work of JPCs, as indicated in the template in Appendix 2. This strategy must include communications with the public in relation to the work of the JPC and also communications with other local fora.

5.2 To raise awareness and support for the work of the JPC full use should be made of existing networks available to Garda and local authority members. Engagement with local community networks should also be maximised to increase the effectiveness of partnership approaches and to prevent duplication of efforts among the various local stakeholders.

5.3 This approach may include the production of a periodic JPC newsletter and JPCs should make full use of opportunities to publicise their work through local press and radio and through the use of on-line communications, including social networks.”

8 Local Policing Fora (LPF)

The position in relation to Local Policing Fora established in areas with Local Drugs Task Forces is set out in new text in paragraph 14.3. It is not proposed to expand the establishment of such fora at this time, both with regard to the need to minimise pressure on Garda and local authority resources, and also to focus on maximising the communication with other local resources such as Community Alert, Neighbourhood Watch and Business Watch Groups and other community based fora as set out in paragraph 13.2 of the guidelines

“14.3 In accordance with commitments in the National Drugs Strategy 2009-2016, Guidelines for the operation of local policing fora in Local Drugs Task Force areas issued in 2009.”

9 Resources

New text is inserted in paragraph 10.1 in relation to funding for JPCs

“10.1 It is generally intended that the actions of each JPC will be resourced by the organisations represented on it.”

10 Membership

The format of the section of the guidelines dealing with membership is revised and accordingly the existing paragraphs 16.1, 16.2, 16.3 and 16.4 are deleted. These are replaced by the following sections which include provision for an increase in the number of community representatives.

“16.1 JPCs should ensure that local authority elected members reflect the elected representational spread on the full council, as far as it 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 area committees.

16.2 In relation to Community Members, each JPC should decide the most appropriate community based organisations or groups to be represented. In doing so JPCs should have regard to relevant guidelines on community representation which may be issued by the Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government. JPCs should also ensure that those community members selected will ensure broad based representation of the range of local community interests, as well as considering the need for representation of particular localities, young persons and children, victims groups, business interests and particular communities (e.g. Travellers or Immigrant Communities).

16.3 The following table shows the number of JPC members applicable to different local authority areas, and the numbers applicable to each category of membership.

Joint Policing Committees Membership

	Local authority elected members	Oireachtas elected members	Local authority official	An Garda Síochána	Community
Counties with 32 or more elected members)	15	5	2	2	7
Counties with 26 to 31 elected members	14	5	2	2	6
Counties with less than 25 members	13	5	2	2	6
Dublin City	13	6	3	2	6
Dublin City areas	All members	6	2	2	6
Cork City	16	6	2	2	7
Limerick City and County	15	5	2	2	7
Waterford City and County	15	5	2	2	7
Galway City	11	5	2	2	5

16.4.1 In relation to the local authority official members, the Chief Executive of the local authority shall be an ex-officio member, and another person shall be nominated by him or her. They may be accompanied to meetings of the JPC by such other officials as he or she considers appropriate

16.4.2 In relation to representatives of An Garda Síochána, two Garda officers are nominated by the Commissioner, and they may be accompanied by such other Garda officers as they deem appropriate.”

In relation to General Membership Matters a new paragraph 16.5.5 is added,

“16.5.5 To the greatest extent possible, the objective of achieving a 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.”

JPC Work Plans

Each JPC must make strategic work plans which link with other appropriate plans and strategies. In this regard each JPC must put in place

A six year plan linked to the relevant objectives in the Local Economic and Community Plan of the local authority.

An Annual Work Plan which, as well as linking to the LCD Plan, must include relevant objectives from the Garda Annual Policing Plan(s) applying to the local authority area.

JPC plans should be confined to a limited number of strategic objectives to facilitate appropriate monitoring and review.

JPCs plans should focus on areas where cooperative and collaborative actions can add most value to the existing work of relevant stakeholders. It is important that plans set specific and measurable objectives, identify lead individuals or agencies as well as others responsible for contributing to relevant actions, include relevant resource allocation and set out defined timescales. In addition to including key objectives derived from the LCD and Annual Policing Plans as set out above, consideration should be given to linking JPC plans to

Appropriate elements of other local authority or Garda strategies (e.g. accommodation plans or particular crime prevention initiatives)

Drugs Task Force Plans relevant to the area

Other issues which the JPC considers to be important for crime prevention, policing and public safety (including road safety) in the area

Strategic actions to enhance communications with the public and to ensure adequate communication with other local fora (e.g. Drugs Task Forces, local policing fora, Community Alert and Neighbourhood Watch, Groups, and other relevant local fora) to prevent duplication and support coordinated action

Annual work plans should include consideration of how JPCs can enhance overall efforts to address key issues affecting community life, including

Crime Prevention

Anti-social behaviour and street crime

Misuse of drugs and related crime

Support for crime victims, including those affected by domestic violence

In addition, work plans must prioritise objectives and highlight at least three strategic priorities. Templates for the JPC six year and annual work plans have been devised and it is hoped that these will assist committees in their work. JPCs should use the

templates provided but are free to include other relevant information in their plans if they so wish.

JPC Six Year Strategic Plan

<p>Strategic Objectives (derived from the Local Economic and Community Plan and which the JPC considers that it can add significantly to collective efforts to achieve the objectives)</p> <p>List these in order of priority with at least three High Priority objectives</p>	<p>Summary of strategy to be pursued in relation to each objective</p>	<p>Lead /agency key partners</p> <p>Name of JPC sub- committee where relevant</p>	<p>Anticipated outcomes</p>
<p>High Priority Objectives (at least 3 of these)</p>			
<p>1</p>			
<p>2</p>			
<p>3</p>			
<p>Other Objectives</p>			

Annual Report of _____ Joint Policing Committee 20__

ITEM 1 - Summary of progress in implementing the JPC's work programme.

	Strategic Objectives (Please list in the same order as on JPC Annual Work Plan)	Summarise the actions taken and the progress achieved during the year and any significant difficulties which were encountered	Summarise the advice given by the JPC give to the local authority / Gardaí – identify specific recommendations made	Results of advice / recommendations – identify the feedback received from the local authority / Gardaí
	High Priority Objectives			
1				
2				
3				
	Other Objectives			

ITEM 2 - Please highlight three key achievements of the JPC during the year and give reasons why these are considered to be significant?

Achievement 1

Achievement 2

Achievement 3

ITEM 3

Public meetings hosted by the JPC during the year.

Please provide details of the public meetings that the JPC hosted during the year concerning matters affecting the policing of the local authority's administrative area.

