

CASTLEREA PRISON VISITING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2015

Introduction:

The Committee meet each month on the first Thursday of the month. The meetings were well attended. Visits were undertaken by two members of the Committee who are nominated at our monthly meeting. The Committee conduct detailed and comprehensive tours of the prison, visiting workshops, education. They meet and engage with both prisoners and staff. They conduct regular visits to the committal area where all committals are housed until assessed by the Governor on his daily parade.

Staffing Levels:

Staffing levels have improved under the transformation process. A total of 211 staff is required of which currently there are 210.

Retirement of Staff:

The number of retirements have greatly reduced. We wish the best of luck to all staff that have transferred to Castlerea prison.

Retirement of Members of Visiting Committee:

Two long standing members of our committee retired this year. Michael Nevin and Edward Brady retired last October. We wished them well in their retirement.

New Members to our Visiting Committee:

We have two new members in our committee. Thomas Garvey and Pauline McDonagh. They have been welcomed to our committee.

Attempted Suicides:

The number of attempted non serious suicides have reduced. This is mainly due to the facilities on C1 landing which accommodates those who are most vulnerable and suffer from mental health issues. The Committee would like to express its gratitude to the staff involved in saving the attempted suicides in custody and we know from speaking to these offenders that they are grateful to the staff involved.

Prisoners before the committee

In addition to the offenders that the committee have met in the course of their visits to the prison there were some written requests and several offenders requested to meet the entire committee. All cases were discussed at length and the relevant course of action taken. The small number of offenders requesting to see the committee is taken as an indication of how well the prison is being run.

Surgery:

The local GP attends Monday to Friday and at any other time once called to the prison. The level of care offered to prisoners in Castlerea is second to none, the Committee is fully aware how much extra pressure is placed on the staff in this area with the increase in the numbers in custody, with all the services available to persons in custody i.e. dentist etc. The Red Cross training has been rolled out by the VEC, Department of Education and Healthcare.

Chaplaincy:

The great work carried out by lay chaplain Margaret Connaughton continues in Castlerea whereby she co-ordinates Mass with the local Parish Priest and with any other needs of other religious denominations. She also does great work in dealing with family bereavements of offenders, and the committee would like to thank her for doing this very difficult task so professionally.

School Area:

The work done in the school area once again is acknowledged. There is a very high level of interest in the classes provided, with some classes over subscribed.

Kitchen:

Here the prison provides a wide range of training within a production kitchen. This training ranges from elementary cookery with City & Guilds Certificates and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland. They hope to get budgeting for a more advance level of training.

Tuck Shop:

The Prison Tuck Shop is a resounding success. It supplies a large array of items for Prisoners to purchase. It also supplies newspapers to allow prisoners to stay in touch with current affairs. The staff can also arrange for special purchases with the permission of the Governor. It is noted by the Committee that the staff working in this area are extremely busy with nearly 320 prisoners looking for the tuck shop on a weekly basis.

Waste Management:

In line with our commitment to environmental issues we provide the best possible training in waste management. We are in the process of introducing HETAC accreditation for this training. We are currently leaders in the implementation of composting techniques and are almost cost neutral in the management of all our other waste. 20 offenders currently work in this area. It is now combined with horticulture and prisoners engaging in a number of City & Guilds Horticulture Courses.

Comparative Visit:

The Committee have not done any comparative visit this year. It is hoped to do a visit in the near future.

Facilities

There is a high standard of education, work and training provided for all prisoners. Timetables in the school allow all prisoners access to the facility, and classes are run on the reserve period to accommodate this. All workshops, education and gymnasium are designated safe free zones under the Red Cross. This allows for a much greater take up by prisoners in these facilities. Further programmes in mental health education for prisoners are being considered.

Visiting Committee Administration

A PASO 3 does the administration for the Visiting Committee.

Conclusion:

The prison has been inspected on numerous occasions during the year by members of the Visiting Committee. The prisoner complaints procedure is working well and prisoners have confidence in the procedure. Overall prisoners and staff have a good working relationship, and this has a positive effect on the day to day running of the prison. Once again this year the members of the Committee feel that Castlerea is a very well run prison with very professional and courteous staff. The Committee would like to acknowledge the courtesy and help extended to them by the Governor and Staff over the last year.

Visiting Committee Members Annual Report Castlerea 2015

MR M. DALY

MR J. KEAVNEY

MR M. LEONARD

MR T. GARVEY

MS. P. MCDONAGH
