

Arbour Hill Visiting Committee Annual Report For Year Ending December 2007.

The Minister For Justice, Equality & Law Reform,
72/76 St Stephen's Green,
Dublin 2

A Chara,

The Visiting Committee to Arbour Hill Prison have pleasure in submitting herein our Annual Report for year ending December 2007.

The Visiting Committee.

The Committee consists of eight members, four short of our optimum size. Mr Patrick Culloty who had served on the Committee since September 2005 died in late December 2006. Paddy who was a retired probation officer brought knowledge, expertise and extraordinary compassion to his role on the Committee and his passing diminishes the world we all share.

The Committee met every month and at least two members of the Committee made unannounced visits to the prison in the interim. Contrary to the impression so often erroneously carried in the media the Committee continuously visited every area of the prison, availed of every opportunity to speak with prisoners and always made themselves corporately and individually available to meet and hear the concerns of any and every prisoner. It is important to reiterate this fundamental function of a Visiting Committee, as its importance cannot be over stated. This Committee has adopted a pro-active approach with a focus on presence and contact with the prison's population.

Inspector of Prisons.

The Committee again met with The Inspector of Prisons Mr Justice Dermot Kinlan to establish common ground in the context of approach and application. The Committee wish to sincerely record their profound sadness on hearing of the sudden and unexpected death of Judge Kinlan. He was a man of enormous ability, energy and enthusiasm combined with an extraordinary awareness of the need to create a just and caring society for all.

Psychiatric Service.

Consultant Psychiatrist Dr Dearbhle Duffy and Senior Registrar Dr Aoife O'Neill met with the Visiting Committee in continuance of our programme of meetings with all the heads of services. Their dedication and professionalism is to be admired and Arbour Hill Prison is very fortunate to have such enthusiastic and caring persons available to it. It would be remiss of this Committee not to record a very special thank you to Dr Helen O'Neill, the outgoing consultant psychiatrist who contributed so much to the care of prisoners at this facility.

The Committee continues to have serious concerns apropos bed availability at the Central Mental Hospital. During the year one prisoner had to wait 47 days before he was admitted. This man had been deemed in

need of psychiatric care in a hospital setting and yet was unable to access same for 47 days; this is not only intolerable, but also unjust. There is a need for clarity around this issue and it is ethically and morally unjustifiable that this situation is permitted to exist.

Suicide Watch.

Arbour Hill Prison, we are pleased to note, has had no suicide or suicide attempts in the past year. We had two incidents of self inflicted injury, neither was of a very serious nature. Both the prisoners in question have a history of such incidents, but thankfully resorting to this behaviour has become less frequent over time.

Psychology Service.

Dr Esther Lonergan the Senior Clinical Psychologist met with the Committee early in the year. Dr Lonergan briefed the Committee on the broad areas of engagement involving the psychology service at Arbour Hill, consisting of herself and one other psychologist. However a third psychologist was available during most of this year, on a part time basis. Mindful that the Sex Offender Programme accounts for one psychologist full time, we were pleased to hear of the resources available for clinical and 'one to one' work. Dr Lonergan and her team are a wonderful resource and their contribution to the well being of the prison population cannot be overstated.

Sex Offender Programme.

This year there were eight places available on the programme, however only two of those places were filled by prisoners from Arbour Hill Prison. Mindful of such a 'less than enthusiastic response', we feel that questions must be asked whether the efforts, expenditure and manpower resources expended on the programme would or could be more beneficially spread across a wider client base, perhaps with a lesser intensity? If and when Integrated Sentence Management is implemented it will be imperative to review the therapeutic options available, particularly in the case of sex offenders and in this context we would like to see an input and indeed an involvement by the courts service, the court's probation service and the Gardaí. Every effort must be made to encourage sex offenders to seek assistance in dealing with their offending behaviour.

Integrated Sentence Management. [ISM].

The Committee regrets that Integrated Sentence Management is still not up and running. As referred to in previous reports we are of the view that this development has the potential to be the biggest event in the Irish Prison Service for decades. It is imperative that ISM is launched and supported with staffing and funding, at the earliest possible opportunity. While acknowledging that ISM will require resources to successfully implement, it does however offer, for the first time, an opportunity to positively manage custodial periods with a view to bringing about a major change in the focus and ambitions of persons in custody. We are of the view that this approach offers the best possible chance to seriously reduce recidivism and offers positive opportunities for former prisoners to be

reintroduced back into society in a structured and supported system that gives them a real chance of a sustainable law abiding existence.

Security & Drugs.

Only constant vigilance has enabled this facility to maintain its drug-free status. There were incidents during the year which were quickly and effectively dealt with by the staff. Our sincere thanks to all involved, their vigilance and determination is imperative to sustaining the drug free status which is such an important aspect of the Arbour Hill atmosphere and ethos. Additional security cameras are expected to be installed in the foreseeable future and screening for all will be implemented within a few weeks.

Postal Voting.

Postal Voting was implemented in Arbour Hill Prison for the first time this year and 44% [61] of the prisoner population responded. It was pleasing to note that so many of the prison's population felt it worthwhile to participate in the electoral process as very often prisoners, especially long term prisoners are of a view, that their voice will not be heard or indeed does not matter. It is pleasing if not surprising to note that Arbour Hill has somehow successfully combated the apathy so prevalent elsewhere.

New Prison Rules.

It's particularly pleasing to note the implementation of the new prison rules which were signed into law in 2006; replacing the 1947 Rules & Regulations For The Government Of Prisons.

Change of Governors.

Governor Sean Quigley moved on during the year (April) and we should like to sincerely thank him for his positive and visionary concept of prison management. By the same token we would like to compliment his replacement Governor Liam Dowling who we are pleased to say is determined to maintain Arbour Hill's unique ethos while adhering to a progressive programme of development and innovation.

Requests/Complaints/Applications.

In the course of the year not a single prisoner (formally) requested to see the Committee in pursuit of a complaint or concern.*

*In this context it should be borne in mind that the Committee maintained a high profile on the prison floor and were always available to listen and respond to any prisoners concerns: this would obviously impact on prisoners need to formally seek a meeting with the Committee.

Facilities & Services. [Health care.]

24 hour Medical Orderly/Nurse cover.

A G.P. five days a week. (On call at weekends).
Two resident Psychologists. [at year end].
A visiting Psychiatrist.+
Dental care provided by Dublin Dental Hospital.
Visiting Psychotherapist.
Visiting Chiropodist.
Optician as required.
AA.
NA.
GROW.
Samaritans. [Including a LISTENER programme.]

Treatment Programmes.

Thinking Skills Programme.
Group Skills Programme.
Sex Offenders Programme.
'Lifers' Programme.
Alternatives To Violence Programme.
Anger Management.

Education Activities!

The school is one of the major areas of this facility and it accounts for a large proportion of the prison's daily activity. More than twenty teachers, some full time and some part time contribute to an educational curriculum that stretches from basic literacy to a PhD! More than 85% of the prisons population partake at some level in educational activity and this in itself, is testament to the dedication and enthusiasm of Ms Una Lyes, the supervising teacher and her team here at Arbour Hill. Additionally the educational staff play an active roll in the design and delivery of a number of the therapeutic programmes.

Workshops, Training and the Industrial Area.

The Industrial Unit continues to be a key constituent in the provision of training and employment. It consists of five separate work areas: print, fabric, woodwork, braille and catering. End products are supplied throughout the public service, private bodies and other prisons. Notwithstanding the production capacity of these areas it is of even greater importance to note their capacity to provide employment for almost all of the prisoner population in addition to providing training and experience to such a large number of prisoners. FETAC certification has been sought and approved for a number of prisoners in the woodwork and printing areas. Efforts are continuing to broaden the certification process to include the maximum numbers of prisoners in the various categories. Recently the woodwork area completed a major project to provide almost all of the furnishings for the Durrow Castle Project. ** We would wish to commend the Industrial Staff for their skill and enthusiasm in constantly seeking to develop and progress this important aspect of prison life.
**Durrow Castle is a Barrettstown Gang Camp type facility for children who

have experienced trauma.

The Kitchen:

Arbour Hill Prison has a 'Q' Mark Kitchen and we would like to congratulate the catering staff and prisoners working in the kitchen area for their momentous achievement in succeeding in gaining this status. Hygiene and cleanliness are paramount in the preparation and presentation of food and mindful of the physical limitation of their work area their achievement is all the greater.

Major structural changes have had to be implemented in this area, to facilitate dedicated toilets and wash and shower facilities. A 28 day rotating menu is used in addition to specific diets for Muslims and some other non-national prisoners. Rice is routinely offered as an alternative to potatoes. Operating standards are such that it's no surprise that a "Q" Mark has been awarded.

Special Observation Room.

The Special Observation Room was used on fourteen occasions during the year.

On nine occasions the placement was at the request of the prisoner. On one occasions the placement was out of concern for a prisoner's safety pending medical intervention. Three Occasions were for medical reasons and the remaining occasion was to facilitate the movement of a prisoner who was pending transfer to the Central Mental Hospital

Waste Management.

Major ongoing operation continues, building on the momentous achievements of last year, a huge all weather recycling area has been created and a state of the art process is now routinely part of the operation of this facility. Of equal importance is the awareness of 'Waste management' that permeates throughout this facility.

Chairman's summary.

I want to thank each and every member of this Committee for their willingness to contribute positively to what is an important component in the operation of this custodial facility. This prison has in our view, been run and managed very efficiently with an emphasis on rehabilitation, humanity and environmental awareness. We would sincerely hope that future developments will reflect the current ethos. As in previous years the staff prisoner relationship is excellent and this is the key element in sustaining this facility's unique atmosphere. We wish to thank the previous and present Governors and staff for their cooperation and assistance and for their willingness and desire, to create and sustain a pleasant and caring regime in what some might consider the most unusual of settings. No

annual report would be complete without an acknowledgement of the dedicated, humane and professional manner of which the inmates are treated by all staff. They are a credit to the service and in many ways they are the "unsung heroes" of what I suspect is a quite unique custodial facility. In conclusion may I say that it is the Visiting committee's sincere wish that Arbour Hill Prison will continue into the future, and in so doing, will retain its' atmosphere, humanity and ethos. Finally it would be remiss of the Committee and I, not to sincerely acknowledge the contribution of our excellent Secretary Mr P J McAndrew, his knowledge, willingness and efficiency has contributed so much to the effectiveness of this Committee.

Mr James O'Hanrahan. _____ [Chairman].

Ms Rita Hayes. _____
[V/Chairman].

Ms Ita Greene. _____

Ms Eithne Killeen. _____

Ms Mairín Hyland. _____

Ms Wilhelmena Daly. _____

Ms Angela O'Connor. _____

Mr Philip Cantwell. _____