

CLOVERHILL PRISON VISITING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2007

The Visiting Committee to Cloverhill Prison has pleasure in submitting our annual report for 2007 to Mr Brian Lenihan T.D, Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

The Committee.

The Committee met on the second Thursday of each month. The committee increased from 9 in 2006 to a full compliment of 12 during 2007. There were 3 new appointments and 4 reappointments of members. The meetings were always well attended. Two members of the committee each month carried out unannounced visits to the prison to ensure that everything was in order and that the prison was being run in a safe, humanitarian and efficient way. During the monthly visits we made a point of conducting detailed and comprehensive tours to the different areas of the prison. The Committee set an agenda at the start of the year of issues they wished to both achieve and explore at all times conscious of the need to understand both security and prison sub cultural issues.

Prisoners before the committee.

Throughout the year we as a committee continued to see large numbers of prisoners. There were 30 prisoners who requested to see the Visiting Committee. As the prison is a remand prison and there is a large turnover of the prison population we make ourselves available so there is little delay in seeing prisoners not only at the monthly meetings but also during the monthly visits. On monthly meeting days any prisoner who wishes to see us was facilitated by 2 members meeting him before the meeting. There were various issues raised by respective prisoners who came before us this year, requesting non -screen visits and transfers have continued to be the main issues. Other issues raised by prisoners seen by the committee this year were asking the committee to follow up on requests they had made for single cells and non smoking cells request. On all occasions members listened to requests/complaints, advised prisoners of procedures and spoke to the Governor on the day about the problem or request. Subsequently the committee continued to monitor the progress of the individual prisoners who had come before them. A number of prisoners were seen by the committee on several occasions as part of this procedure.

Hunger strikes

During the year there were three occasions that Prisoners went on Hunger strike. On each occasion the committee came in to see the hunger strikers. The committee spoke to 2 prisoners on hunger strikers on 2 separate occasions hoping to affect a positive resolution. In these two cases it involved individuals who were foreign nationals. One case was a prisoner who wished to obtain a transfer and in the other a prisoner was being held on a European arrest warrant and was anxious about the nature of the charges. Both of these hunger strikes were finished shortly after the committee and Governor spoke to the hunger strikers.

The third hunger strike involved a number of foreign national prisoners in the new security unit, who made a series of demands of the Governor. This was resolved after a meeting with Prison Service officials and the Prison Governor.

CLOVERHILL PRISON VISITING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2007

Overcrowding

It is still a continuous cause for concern in 2007. Prisoners have complained to the committee during the year that prisoners have been put in their cell during the night on a mattress, causing tension and disruptions during the night. There is a consistent link between overcrowding and tensions in prisons in the view of the committee, this is aside from the obvious health and safety issues for both staff and prisoners.

Late committals continues to be a major problem, there can be as many as 45 prisoners committed after 8pm at night. It is on the face of it unacceptable. The prison which has a capacity of 431 hit a high of 466 during the year. This puts an additional burden on the Officers, which in turn has a knock on effect on the prisoners. The IPS need to be more proactive in dealing with this potentially dangerous situation in order to be more effective in finding a solution. The committee considers this as one of the most urgent problems facing prison management and urges the minister to direct a reappraisal of this situation.

It is to the disadvantage of Cloverhill Prison that on frequent occasion's person's for deportations are housed overnight or for only a few hours. The committee feel that these prisoners should be going to a secure holding centre, not Cloverhill prison. The prison should not have to deal with what are specifically immigration problems. The Governor has been proactive and put forward a suggested staffing solution to this issue, which the committee strongly recommends the IPS to look favourably on.

Foreign Nationals

Cloverhill continues to accommodate more foreign nationals than any other prison in the country. The committee wish to reiterate its comments made in 2006 we call on the minister to review the area of communication which has become an increasing problem. The language barrier creates problems that need to be addressed. The committee have previously identified this as an area where there is room for development of the role of the Prison Officer. It is suggested that one of the ways that this can be addressed is by either specifically recruiting or training up serving prison officers in language skills. Their role would be to act as prison interpreters and they would be used to deal with prisoners on committal and as required when there is a need for an interpreter. We also feel that the possibly of Prison Governor's who are interested in learning language skills should be explored. This would be particularly useful if a prisoner has a complaint.

We wish to highlight that Cloverhill has on average 100 foreign nationals in Cloverhill Prison on remand/ sentenced on a daily basis, a large percentage of this number are immigration cases. These individuals largely speak little or no English.

The committee feels there are core languages commonly spoken by the prisoners that can be identified and these languages should be the priority languages in which to get either specific staff recruited and/ or identify if there are serving staff with these language skills or staff that are willing to receive appropriate language training.

Special Unit

An existing area in the prison was adapted to create a new secure unit to accommodated high profile prisoners. The long term suitability of this area is

CLOVERHILL PRISON VISITING COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT 2007

questionable. We the committee feel that these prisoners should be accommodated in a purpose built facility. The actual opening of this unit resulted in prisoners who were accommodated there on protection being moved to a more restrictive regime.

Protection Prisoners

There has been a massive growth in the number of prisoners requesting protection in the last twelve months. There can now be upwards of 90 prisoners on protection some days. This is significant percentage of the prison population. This places a massive strain on the prisons resources and can be a logistical nightmare. All of these prisoners have to be segregated and within that segregation there can be further segregation. The alarming growth of protections is a consequential reflection of the gang culture present in society. Gang external feuds and affiliations do not stop when people are committed to prison.

Drugs

A passive Drug detection dog is now in use. It is too early to say what impact this will have on drugs coming into prison. We the committee recognise screen visits as a proven effective method, together with the netting on the exercise yard, for reducing stopping drugs being smuggled into prison. However, the smuggling in of drugs continues to remain a problem in prisons. We strongly recommend exploring the possibility of establishing a Drug Free unit within this prison.

We welcome the proposed introduction of Drug counsellors from Merchants Quay, who we understand will look at motivational relapse therapy.

Mobile Phones

The enacting of section 36 of the Prison Act 2007 on the 1st May 2007 has made the possession/use or supply of a Mobile Phone or component in Prison without the permission of the Prison Governor an offence where a fine not exceeding €10,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 5 years can be imposed on conviction. However, despite diligent detection by Prison staff and investigations by Gardai, the committee feels the sentences being imposed at present are not a deterrent. The committee welcomes the proposed introduction of a mobile blocking system.

Bullying and Racism

It is clear that right across society bullying and racism is on the increase. Prisons are no different. Cloverhill Prison has a racism officer, whose job involves monitoring the situation and educating prisoners and staff on this subject. We continue to feel that a lot of problems are caused by communication difficulties and will continue to monitor it closely during the year.

Investigations – limitations

During the year, an issue arose for the Committee concerning the procedures to be followed when dealing with a complaint received from a particular prisoner who believed he had been mistreated by certain Prison Officers. The complaint had already been investigated internally by the Governor, who held the complaint to be unfounded, and the Committee was provided with copies of all statements which had been before the Governor. The Committee felt that these statements supported the decision made by the Governor but also felt that further external witness statements,

CLOVERHILL PRISON VISITING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2007

from persons referred to in the statements already to hand, would have been useful to give a more complete picture of events on the occasion in question.

The Committee believes that clarification of its role and powers in such circumstances would be helpful. Is the Committee, for example, only entitled to consider the same materials considered by the Governor or can it request that further materials be provided to it? If it is entitled to request such further materials, should the parties to the complaint and / or the Governor be requested to obtain the further materials in question or does the Committee have power to source the materials itself through, for example, the Secretary to the Committee?

Video Conferencing

This was due to be piloted in Cloverhill in 2006 and rescheduled for 2007. We are disappointed that to date this has not happened yet. The committee continues to welcome this development.

Health Care

The committee continued to meet regularly with health care professional working in the area. Full time nursing care is provided by qualified Nurse Officers and 2 prisons Doctors, along with locums were necessary. We welcome the action being taken to appoint a Nurse Manager and believe one will be appointed shortly. Healthcare also includes Dental care provided by Dublin Dental hospital, a visiting optician and chiropodist as required.

During the year the committee met with the Prison Psychologist Mr Roy Bardsley who was appointed at the end of last year. He works generally more short term supportive than therapeutically care here with clients, one of the drawbacks is a lack of group therapy sessions, which is difficult with the logistic problems that would be involved. However, we strongly recommend that the prison authorities look at the feasibility of this.

A number of Health care services have expanded during the year. The committee welcomes the commencement during 2007 of an STD Clinic provided by a specialist Doctor from St. James Hospital. This should have a positive impact on Prisoners healthcare. There are on average daily around 80 prisoners on methadone treatment, this figure can rise to as high as 100 prisoners. This is approximately 20% of the prison population. The addiction consultant has expanded to three clinics a week.

There is an In Reach service provided by the Central Mental Hospital in Cloverhill. Staff from the Central Mental Hospital are normally in the prison five days a week. They provide a valuable court diversion service, along with being on site to deal with mental health issues. This has had a significant impact on the Psychiatric services provided to prisoners. There were no significant incidents of self harm in 2007. Addressing prisoner mental health issues is being positively addressed in Cloverhill. However, we feel that may still be a significant number of prisoners in custody who should be in the CMH or other secure facilities.

CLOVERHILL PRISON VISITING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2007

Library

This is an excellent facility available in the prison and when open is utilized by a large proportion of the prison population. Unfortunately, the Library is one of the first areas closed if there are staff shortages. The committee have received complaints during the year about closures of the library, we consider the library a very important area in the prison. It is now time to address the problems causing library closures for the benefit of prisoners, service provider and prison staff.

Education

The Committee welcome the appointment of the Head teacher Ms Joan O'Shea to the School. Education has had a significant impact on the daily routine of Prisoners and is an important safety lever in alleviating boredom. The Educational unit opened in September 2006.

Classes are held in Art, Chess, Craft, ECDL and ESOL. Fetac courses in Computer Literacy, Computer Applications, Communications, English, Maths, History, Philosophy, Personal and Interpersonal Skills, Health and Fitness. Also music classes in Grade 1 Music Theory, Guitar and Keyboard. Students have taken and are pursuing Mous computer exams, Junior certificate and leaving certificate subjects. Classes are also held in improvers English, Literacy and numeracy. A few prisoners are enrolled in Open University courses. During the year the committee were very happy to attend the first presentation ceremony. A prisoner preformed a song he had composed and had done a demo disc on and another prisoner had written a story it is hoped to enter into a competition.

These are still only formulative steps in the development of an Educational Unit something we as a committee see as a basic necessity. Feedback from prisoners, the committee have spoken to who are attending the school is positive. Huge improvements have been made in the school in the last twelve months. Numbers of prisoners using the school are continually increasing. However, because of segregation some prisoners do not have the same access to the school. We strongly suggest that all avenues be explored to find a system that gives all prisoners access to the school and that allows students who wish to study full time to be able to do so.

We are aware that there is a problem with internet access for the teachers. We strongly recommend that this be resolved in the short term. It is impossible to register students for courses without internet access (FETAC, ECDL, Open University) and Teachers need the access to download course materials and examinations.

Previous committees have placed education as a primary priority; this committee wishes to reiterate that sentiment. It is of paramount importance to the committee that prisoners can maximise their educational opportunities. It is therefore crucial that now it is open that it should be kept open at all times. Further to this given that some prisoners are in prison for a short time, the feasibility of a one to one ethos of education should be explored where deemed appropriate by the head teacher. This would ensure that schooling in the prison can have maximum impact and benefit to prisoners.

CLOVERHILL PRISON VISITING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2007

Gymnasium

The Gymnasiums in the prison continue to be well run and are well equipped. It provides quality Physical Education, Recreation, Sport and much needed physical activity. The Gymnasium is available to all prisoners. There are 2 PE Teachers and a number of NECF trained prison officers who work together as a team to provide excellent professional programs and service. They have trained a number of inmates up to FETAC standard in fitness. At the moment the overseeing committee is developing a yearly strategy outlining a program of events for the year.

Kitchen

Good nutritious food continues to be prepared by the professionally qualified officers, and prisoners who work together as part of a team to achieve the highest standards. The Kitchen provides up to 1500 food covers a day more than comparable to any Hotel Kitchen. The quality of food provided and the hygiene standard is excellent. This has been recognised by the fact that the Kitchen has been awarded the National Quality and Excellence Award Q Mark EIQA, the Emerald award is its highest award and this is Cloverhills 4th year to achieve this.

The Kitchen caters to and meets the dietary needs of a very diverse prison population. A 28 day rotating menu is used, rice is routinely offered as an alternative to potatoes. At present a number of prisoners are undertaking the elementary cooking course which replaced the 'Leonardo' Training course under the auspices of Fáilte Ireland and Fetac. The committee would like to commend the staff on the standard maintained in the kitchen.

Work and Training Work Shops

During the year the committee visited Wheatfield Prison and Cork Prison. The Committee were impressed with the workshop and work and training facilities available in these two prisons. These fact finding visits were very important as the majority of the committee here had never seen another prison and it is important to be able to compare regimes and procedures. We suggest the possibility of setting up a work shop in Cloverhill be explored and work and training opportunities such as short courses such as safe pass be accessed for possibility of delivery.

Pastoral Care

A new priest Fr. John O'Sullivan was appointed as Chaplain of Cloverhill in October. There had been no chaplain here since October 2006. This meant that every week a priest had to be organised to say masses. Given the shortage in the community, this was very difficult at times. Helping the new chaplain in providing Pastoral care are Sister Carmel, Sister Margaret and Sister Anne who Minister to the needs of the whole Prison, prisoners, prisoners families and Prison Officers. We wish to acknowledge the tremendous work done by the sisters whilst there was no Chaplain attached to Cloverhill. Other denominations are served by respective visiting chaplains and we are grateful for their services to the prison community.

Listeners Scheme

The Listeners scheme which was set up in 2002 by the suicide awareness committee continues to be a success. To date 64 prisoners have completed the listeners training course and 50 have been invited to join the Listeners team. However, due to the large

CLOVERHILL PRISON VISITING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2007

turnover in Cloverhill of prisoners there is now only one listener in Cloverhill. Interviews and Training for new Listeners will begin in January 2008. If Prisoners who are Listeners move after training, they may, subject to Prison authority permission and their own wish to, join a Listener scheme in the new prison they transfer to, if there is one. A good number of those who were trained in Cloverhill are Listeners in Wheatfield and one is part of the steering committee to set up the Listener Scheme in Mountjoy. One former Cloverhill Listener is now a Listener in the UK, following repatriation. The committee wish to praise the Samaritans, prison staff and the prisoners who take part in this scheme, which we see as being very important in helping other prisoners with difficulties they may have.

Chairman's Meetings

The Chairman of Cloverhill Prison attended four meetings in 2007. Two of these meetings took place in the Midlands Prison, one in Wheatfield Prison and one in Castlerea Prison. These meetings are very important as they allowed the chairman to gain an insight into how other prisons are managed, to view the prison and see different prison procedures in practice.

He also had had the opportunity to meet the Director General of the Irish Prison Service Mr Brian Purcell in Wheatfield and heard his views on how he sees the future of the prison service and the role to be carried out by the Visiting Committees in all prisons.

Whilst visiting Castlerea Prison the Chairman met with Siobhan & Jerry, who are responsible for a Mentoring Programme called "You're Equal Ltd". This is a fantastic opportunity to allow the clients to engage a project preparing them for their release back into the community and workforce. The committee feels that such programmes should be explored as a means of reintegrating prisoners back into the community.

New Committee Members

We wish to draw attention to the lack of training and, information available when new members take up a position on a visiting committee. The provision of a handbook would be of immense assistance. Whilst the prison is very helpful and organises a tour and anything new members seek. There is no formal procedure in place, for any prisons visiting committee, the Irish Prison service needs to address this issue. There should be an induction process for new members.

Conclusion

The committee has exercised its duties diligently and as always have continued to enjoy an excellent relationship with the Governor and his staff. We were sad to see the retirement of the Prison Chief Officer 1 Dan Fanning, who had been the Chief Officer Class 1 of the prison since it was opened. We wish him well in his retirement. We also wish both Governor Liam Dowling every success in his new location of Arbour Hill Prison and Governor Martin Mullen in his new posting to the Irish Prison Service Operations Directorate in Longford.

We would like to thank Governor Tom Somers, Deputy Governor Ronan Maher, Deputy Governor Charles Smith Assistant Governor Gerry Bracken, the committee's

CLOVERHILL PRISON VISITING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2007

secretary Ms Maria Connolly, and all the staff for their help and co- operation during the year.

We would like to thank and acknowledge the contribution of all the different agencies who give their time and services on a daily/ weekly basis to the benefit of the service, we continue to commend them.

We the committee finally wish to thank you Minister and trust we have been of service during the year.

Signed on behalf of the committee

David Delaney (Chairman)

Gerry O'Dea (Vice- Chairperson)

Peggy Downey

Fintan Hudson

Eddie Martin

Fergus O'Tuama

Tony Williams

Michael Coyle

Christine Ryan

John O'Mahony

Mary O'Neill

Colin Campbell

Dated _____