

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 detail and comprehensive tours of the prison, visiting workshop, education. The 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 reduced again over the year, this is due to retirements and transfers not being replaced. All current staffing shortfalls needs to be filled in order to ensure prisoners have access to Work & Training, Education, and in reach facilities on a daily basis. A total of 211 staff is required of which currently there are 190.

Retirement of Staff:

This year we had 8 retirements. We wish the best of luck to all staff on their retirement.

Retirement of Members of Visiting Committee:

We had no retirements from the Visiting Committee this year.

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 Castlereagh is second to none. All services are available to persons in custody i.e. dentist etc. The prison now has the services of a Psychiatrist one day a week (every Thursday), while this is welcomed it is not sufficient to meet the needs of the prison's capacity. A full time service is required in this area due to the demand of a high number of offenders suffering with Mental Health issues.

Chaplaincy:

The great work carried out by lay chaplain Margaret Connaughton continues in Castlereagh 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 been 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 advanced 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 visited Cork Prison this year. The visit took place 3rd May, 2016. We were welcomed by Governor Dawson. We were brought on a very informative tour of the prison. After our tour we were treated to a lovely hot lunch. Compliments were paid to the staff.

Facilities

There is a high standard of education, work and training provided for all prisoners. Timetables in the school allows 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 is 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 2016

MR M. DALY

MR J. KEAVNEY

MR M. LEONARD

MR T. GARVEY

MS. P. MCDONAGH
