

Visiting Committee

Annual Report

For

Castlerea Prison 2018

Members

Mr M. Daly

Mr M. Leonard

Mr T. Garvey

Mr J. O'Malley

Mr P. Greaney

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 are still below the agreed numbers. 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 215 staff is required of which currently there are 198.

Retirement of Staff:

There were five retirements throughout 2018 in Castlereagh. We wish the best of luck to all staff on their retirement.

New Members To The Visiting Committee:

Two members rejoined our Committee this year. Edward Brady and Patrick Greaney.

Retirement of Members of Visiting Committee:

We had no retirements from the Visiting Committee this year. It is great sadness that we let you know of the passing of Edward Brady one of our valuable and dedicated members. Eddie passed away on the 17th of January, 2019. May He Rest In Peace.

Attempted Suicides:

The number of attempted non serious suicides have reduced. This is mainly due to the facilities on CI 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:

There is no General Practice Doctor assigned to Castlerea. Cover is provided by a locum service. This lack of clinical governance and oversight of prisoner care with this level of service provision presents potential problems.

There was no psychiatric consultant cover in place in 2018. This meant that the contingency plan of transporting prisoners for psychiatric assessment/review to other prisons with in-reach psychiatric services had to be implemented. This plan has many risks, both operational and clinical. The provision of in-reach psychiatric services to Castlerea is an urgent need. This has been highlighted to both the Minister and Director General Of Prison Service and Inspector Of Prisons. Letters to relevant departments have been acknowledged.

Chaplaincy:

There is great work carried out by lay chaplain Margaret Connaughton in Castlerea. She coordinates 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 them for doing this very difficult task so professionally. Additionally the committee welcome the news that further chaplaincy resources are being made available to Castlerea for 2019.

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. Initiatives like — Red Cross, Conflict Resolution, Mediation, Drama — all are proving a huge success in maintaining peace and harmony among prisoners.

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. Increased budgets are actively being sought 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 300 prisoners looking for the tuck shop on a weekly basis.

Parole Board:

The work of the Parole Board has greatly suffered because of the reduction of Probation Officer in Castlerea Prison. We have been informed that recruitment is taking place.

Booking Of Prison Visits:

There is an issue with the booking of visits at Castlerea Prison. Visits is unattended due to the lack of staff. This causes a delay in booking visits.

Comparative Visit:

The Committee visited Loughan House this year. We were welcomed by Governor Keely. The Committee were brought on a very informative tour of the prison. The Committee were very impressed with all the good work and projects underway in Loughan. 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. 2018 saw the completion of a number of structural building projects, new builds included a Prison Stores, Visits and Reception Facility. In addition a significant upgrades were made to one of the landings resulting in refurbishment of 63 prison spaces.#

Visiting Committee Administration

A PCO does the administration for the Visiting Committee.

Harristown House

Harristown House continues to be a huge success, with 5 prisoners living in the house on full time basis. Access to courses in Athlone I. T. and local projects are being attended through the guidance of the Parole Board. The upkeep of the external grounds to the prison, including the visitors waiting room and Family Resource Centre are maintained by the prisoners in Harristown House.

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 Castlereia 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.