

Portlaoise Prison Visiting Committee

Annual Report 2018

Mr Charles Flanagan,
Minister for Justice & Equality,
94 St Stephen's Green,
Dublin 2.

Portlaoise Prison Visiting Committee Annual Report 2018

We, the members of the Visiting Committee at Portlaoise Prison are pleased to present our Annual Report for the year ending 31st December, 2018.

The Committee met once a month throughout the year and two members of the Committee visited the Prison once a month.

We met many of the prisoners who are housed in A block during the year and dealt with various concerns and issues raised by the prisoners housed in that area of the Prison. The Committee welcome the proposed new regime to commence in the A Block shortly with the introduction of Education and classes on a daily basis and also more access to the psychology services. There will also be a Library available to the Prisoners in this block.

We welcome the opening of the new VDP Unit in the Midlands Prison in December 2018 and the availability of this unit to prisoners from Portlaoise Prison.

The Committee wish to report that the E Block which houses subversive prisoners is in a very poor state of repair and many areas needing urgent attention. We are disappointed to report that prisoners are still slopping out in this area of the Prison.

We welcome and acknowledge the progress of the no Smoking Policy on the landings and in all communal prisoner areas in Portlaoise Prison.

We are pleased to report that the International Red Cross visited Portlaoise Prison this year and we had a very informative meeting with them.

We are disappointed to report that the availability of workshops and work training areas for prisoners was severely curtailed during the year due to lack of resources and going forward we would very much like to see an increased capacity in the number of workshops available in Portlaoise Prison.

We would like to acknowledge the success of the Horticulture Workshop and the many beautiful hanging baskets on display around the Prison which certainly bring colour and brightness to the walls of the Prison.

We would also like to acknowledge the wide range of classes and subjects offered by the Education Centre. The Centre holds examinations accredited by a large number of bodies. The Open University Distance Learning and the Royal Irish Academy of Music are two very popular choices.

A large number of Visiting Speakers attended at the Prison during the year and prisoners participated in a number of extra educational projects and activities throughout the year.

The Committee are pleased to report that all prisoners have access to a good health care system and excellent care is provided by a dedicated medical team.

The spiritual needs of the prisoners are cared for by the Chaplain and other visiting clergy as required.

We would like to express a wish that the Garden of Remembrance be further progressed and developed.

In conclusion, we would like to thank the Governor of the Prison and the management team and the staff for the courtesy and assistance provided to us on our visits to the Prison at all times during the year.

Anne Turley (Chairperson)

Michael Hough

Brendan O Dowd

Martin Moroney

Collette Fennelly