

Minutes of Joint Policing Committee Meeting held in the Council Chamber on Monday 30th May 2022 at 10.30am.

In attendance:- Cllr. John Crowe, Chairperson

Cllrs. Mary Howard, P.J. Ryan, Gabriel Keating, Michael Begley, Pat Daly, Paul Murphy

Deputy Cathal Crowe

Gardaí:

Chief Supt. Sean Colleran

Supt. John Ryan

Insp. Adrian Queeney

Insp. Eleanor O'Halloran

Det. Insp. Pdraig Frawley

Det. Insp. Alan Cullinan

Officials:

Leonard Cleary, Director of Service,

Karen Fennessy, Administrative Officer

Mary Mather Leahy, Clare Older People's Council

Madeline McAleer, Public Participation Network

Brian McManus, Clare Youth Service

Bill Slattery, Lahinch Community Development

Apologies:

Cllr. I. Lynch

Cllr. P. McMahon

Cllr. A. Norton

Deputy J. Carey

Welcome:

The Chairperson Cllr. J. Crowe welcomed everyone to the meeting. He also welcomed Chief Supt. Sean Colleran and all the members of An Garda Síochána.

1. Draft Minutes of JPC meeting held on 21st February 2022:-

Proposed by: Cllr. P.J. Ryan

Seconded by: Cllr. P. Murphy and agreed.

As there was no matters arising or correspondence Cllr. Crowe invited Chief Supt. Sean Colleran to brief the members.

4. Update by An Garda Síochána

Chief Superintendent Sean Colleran welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced members of the Divisional Management Team as follows:-

- Superintendent John Ryan
- Inspector Aidan Queeney (for Superintendent John Galvin who is on leave)
- Inspector Eleanor O'Halloran
- Detective Inspector Padraig Frawley
- Detective Inspector Alan Cullinan.

Chief Supt. Colleran provided the latest statistics to the JPC comparing figures from January 2021 to the end of April 2021 against figures from January 2022 to the end of April 2022. He also provided a snapshot of Community Engagement Initiatives.

Cllr. John Crowe thanked Chief Supt. Colleran for his presentation and invited comments from the members.

5. Questions from JPC Members

Questions from Cllr. P.J. Ryan:

Cllr. P.J. Ryan thanked the Chief Superintendent for his presentation and stated that as always it is very informative and obvious that Clare Gardai are doing an excellent job. He stated that in recent times Ennis hosted a couple of very big games of hurling and football and the Gardai looked after the visitors and traffic situation very well. He spoke to a number of visitors who did not know where to park and found the Gardai excellent and very helpful. He stated that the burglary figures are quite concerning and requested an update from the Chief Supt. as to why this is happening. He enquired if it is economic reasons or is it opportunists.

Chief Supt. thanked Cllr. PJ Ryan for his kind words and invited Supt. Ryan to address the comments. Supt. Ryan advised that he was very impressed with the crowds in Ennis. In terms of big events the events passed off without incident. He acknowledged all the volunteers and visitors. Many visitors attending needed guidance in relation to parking and the volunteers provided a lot of additional support. He stated that any event that draws a crowd can have incidents and it really showcases Clare that the events passed off without any major incidents.

In relation to burglary/theft Chief Supt. Sean Colleran stated that in terms of comparing 29 burglaries last year to 55 this year, there were more restrictions in place and more people at home in 2021. He stated that 55 is less than the average and a lot of theft is from houses under construction or garages. He advised that people are now more conscious in relation to alarms and sensors. He stated that there has been good detection rates in the last number of months and gangs are targeted. He advised that Det. Insp. Padraig Frawley takes a proactive approach in dealing with and identifying gangs. Chief Supt. Colleran stated that there is a lot of low level incidences in the 55 cases. He recommended that people do not leave valuables or cash in the house and if they do so they should catalogue and

photograph them. In relation to stolen items, if they can be traced it would be a huge tool. He referred to the increase in thefts from shops and advised that the figures are similar or less and is due to the opening up of the economy. In terms of detections rates he stated that he would have the figures available for the next JPC meeting, comparing the last 6 years. The wearing of masks was slightly more challenging in relation to detection but the Gardai are taking a proactive approach.

Questions from Cllr. M. Begley:

Cllr. Begley thanked Chief Supt. Sean Colleran for his very comprehensive report. He enquired what the follow up procedure was for driving with no insurance. Is the person detected allowed to drive the following day? He referred to financial fraud and the curious nature of people. He recommended that a message gets out to the public to warn them to delete any suspicious emails/texts. There may be genuine texts messages or emails and if they get deleted they can be resent. He stated that there is a need to condition people to delete and not get sucked into replying.

Supt. Ryan advised that the law allows for 10 days to produce an insurance certificate and if a cert is not produced then a summons to court will issue. He referred to the mobility project which gives first-hand information in relation to disqualified drivers. Along with this, the pulse system is referred to and cars can be detained. Chief Supt. Colleran stated that the Gardai are very proactive in relation to non-insured vehicles and stated that he would provide figures at the next JPC meeting.

In relation to fraud, Chief Supt. Colleran referred to people's change in behaviour and that they are more careful. Using forums like the JPC and the weekly crime slots on Clare FM have prompted changes in behaviour and is a good forum for advising people on how to deal with fraud. He advised that there is a downward trend on people getting caught out.

Question from Cllr. G. Keating:

Cllr. Keating thanked Chief Supt. Sean Colleran for his presentation and acknowledged the work of Supt. Ryan. He stated that Kilrush has had a lot of visitors in recent times and there has been no incidents. He stated that this was a great reflection on the Gardai and that Clare are well looked after. He enquired if there will be an increase in the Garda presence over the Summer months. He stated that it was good to receive feedback every quarter and good to see a decrease in some crimes.

Supt. Ryan thanked Cllr. Keating for his positive comments. He stated that over the next couple of months there will be a huge demand on Gardai and other agencies for the provision of services. He assured the members that there is a plan in place at key locations where crowds are visiting. The Gardaí will ensure that Clare is a safe place to visit.

Questions from Bill Slattery:

Bill thanked Chief Supt. for his report. He referred to traffic management and the influx of refugees in Lisdoonvarna. He stated that residents are concerned about the number of children on the roads and the speed limit from White's Cross to Bill's

Cross. He recommended that speed checks be carried out. The speed limit in that area is 80km and Bill stated that he was involved in the speed limit review in 2019. The area where a lot of refugee families are walking is from Doolin Cross to the Wild Honey Inn and up to the square. The children are cycling and do not have hi-vis vests. Residents are afraid that children will get hurt or killed. Bill recommended that speed checks be carried out on those two stretches of roads.

Supt. Ryan stated that the Gardai are very conscious of this and advised that Garda Deirdre Scanlan met a number of groups and hi-vis vests were provided. He stated that there are no footpaths, only street lights and he fully appreciates the issues at these locations. In relation to reviewing speed limits a proposal can be sent to the National Traffic Bureau in terms of reducing the 80km speed limit. He advised that a multi-agency approach is needed regarding footpaths and lighting as it is quite dark in the area. He stated that the Gardaí will conduct speed checks and recommended an educational programme to limit people going out in the dark without hi-vis vests.

Bill Slattery stated that there are concerns about people during the day also. He recommended that the Director of Service liaise with the Senior Engineer with a view to talking to TII to decrease the speed limit from White's Castle into Lisdoonvarna and to consider the provision of footpaths. He recommended that this be given immediate priority.

Questions from Cllr. P. Murphy:

Cllr. Murphy said he wanted to highlight the issue of traffic at the roundabout near Clareabbey. Cllr. Murphy also referred to vandalism of the old graveyard within the Abbey. There are very old graves there and they are being desecrated. He advised that the Gardaí have been supportive and squad cars have been present but the vandalism may be happening at night time. He recommended reverse psychology and requested the assistance of the media to raise a positive campaign to respect these graves as they are national monuments. He stated that people have family members buried there and it is very upsetting for them.

Chief. Supt. Sean Colleran advised that there is reconstruction taking place in the area of Clareabbey at the moment. He referred to the vandalism of the graves and stated that it is a hugely emotive subject for anybody that has relatives buried there. He stated that the area is well maintained and the Gardaí address any of the policing aspects of it.

Question from Madeline McAleer:

Madeline thanked the Chief Supt. for his report and referred to the figures for domestic abuse and the level of interagency support in Clare. She stated that people are stretched and there is not much opportunity to meet agencies. She advised that the work being done in Clare is an example to everyone. She stated that Longford/Westmeath have established a Local Area Network based on what is happening in Clare and she facilitated this. They have taken the template of Clare's two documents and put their own one together and Clare deserves the credit for this. Madeline stressed the importance of multi-agency support.

Chief Supt. Colleran took the opportunity to thank the team and stakeholders. He thanked the inter-agencies in Clare and stated that it is a benchmark that people can aspire to regarding sharing of services. He advised that it is a win-win for victims to have this in place.

Comment from Chairperson Cllr. J. Crowe:-

Cllr. Crowe stated that 105 thefts from shops is alarming and speeding is a problem in the vicinity of villages and towns.

Questions from Deputy Cathal Crowe:-

Deputy Crowe thanked Chief Supt. Colleran for his presentation and acknowledged the great work being carried out by the Gardaí. He stated that it is devastating to note that 34% of domestic incidents are not following through and they are going back into the horror unsupported. He stated that the Gardaí have a special unit and recommended that they keep a close eye on the perpetrators. The cases may not be progressing to prosecutions but the Gardaí can closely monitor them. He stated that everyone should feel safe in their homes.

Deputy Crowe stated that bogus tradesmen are very much an issue in the County. He stated that there is a gang from North Kerry operating in Clare. He advised that a statement has been made against this gang and is being handled. He advised that they do not operate that covertly and they criss-cross the areas. They are travelling in the same van delivering bogus information/leaflets. Deputy Crowe stated that this crime is hard to detect but it is concerning as it is not the most covert and they are cleaning out older people. The gangs are not working out of Clare. Deputy Crowe enquired what successes the Gardaí are having in Clare to identify these gangs. There is €1m gone to Britain in relation to tarmacadam and roofs.

Chief Supt. Colleran stated that in relation to no offences disclosed there is support available and if somebody comes to the Gardaí there is a call back service available. The Gardaí are very conscious of people making the complaints and the stress that they are enduring when they first report it. It may have happened many times before and they have the bravery now to report it. Chief Supt. Colleran stated that the Gardaí have a risk assessment tool that they utilise.

Det. Sgt. Pádraig Frawley stated that victims of bogus tradesmen are the most vulnerable. He stated that the number of cases reported since January 2019 is less than 10. The figures are lower as Covid restricted people's movements. He advised that the creation of public awareness is very important. He stated that Clare FM, the print media and online platforms get the message out there. He advised that it is a very grey area e.g. the Gardaí can pursue burglaries but this particular type of crime borders into civil territory. People employ these tradesmen without checking credentials first. There has to be proof that deception is involved e.g. if work is not carried out. People need to be discouraged from engaging with them. Det. Sgt. Frawley referred to Operation Thor which targets transient criminals. Members of this group meet regularly to discuss the issues. He stated that there is a lot more public awareness at the moment. He advised that there is a certain amount of under

reporting as people can be embarrassed if they are conned. He encouraged people to report it and it will be dealt with confidentially. It is very much seasonal especially at this time of year e.g. individuals offering to do power washing etc. Det. Sgt. Frawley recommended that people question credentials if someone calls to the door. Once credentials are questioned they will depart.

Deputy Crowe stated that one family is specialising in this and there are prosecutions pending. Gangs are coming into the County and leaving with bags of cash. He enquired if the Gardaí can look for an exclusion order when they get prosecuted.

Det. Sgt. Frawley stated that this is another area that the Gardaí have looked at. The organised crime element of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 introduced legislation making it an offence for organised crime gangs. He stated that they have had successes in the Clare Division and regionally where they have targeted an entire operation of these gangs. He advised that the Clare Division as an entity are very active and that is the approach they are taking.

Deputy Crowe enquired about how many hours Garda Stations are opened for. He referred to Lisdoonvarna and the fact that the population has increased since Spring with very vulnerable people coming into the town. He stated that Sixmilebridge, which is a very large town has one Sergeant and 2 Gardaí. He recommended an increase in Garda presence in Shannon as it is the second largest town in the County. He stated that this is no criticism of anyone but there seems to be a lack of resources. Some stations are well resourced, some peripheral ones are not. Deputy Crowe enquired if Shannon Airport is drawing resources out of stations. He had received an email during the weekend about an incident in Shannon and there was only one car available. If Shannon is the second largest town in the County it needs to be policed in terms of population.

Chief Supt. Colleran stated that he would forward a list of stations with opening hours to Karen for circulation to the members. He advised that in terms of 24/7 openings Clare have 3 stations with full time opening hours; Ennis, Kilrush and Shannon. In terms of other stations; Killaloe and Ennistymon have the longest opening hours. Chief Supt. Colleran stated that apart from those stations the opening of other stations is very much resource dependent. He stated that there is an Immigration Unit attached to Shannon Airport and this unit is a separate part of policing. The Gardaí do support policing of the Airport and there are Gardaí attached to the Immigration Unit. They are conscious of the resource demands as there is a resource issue at national and regional level. Chief Supt. Colleran stated that the issues raised today will be examined.

Deputy Crowe referred to the 163 Garda personnel suspended and stated that it is not possible to have functioning Garda Stations and no personnel to staff them. Deputy Crowe stated that the suspensions are a disservice to the force. He advised that the number of members suspended in Limerick would cover Sixmilebridge alone.

Deputy Crowe enquired whether Speed Camera Vans could be moved to community areas where the public are seeing fatalities.

Chief Supt. Colleran stated that Go Safe manage the locations of the Speed Camera Vans. Incidents of fatalities determine the location of the vans. The vans have resulted in a decrease in accidents in those areas. All locations are risk-assessed and data supports the choice of the locations. The Garda website has the location of the Go Safe vans.

Any other business:

Cllr. P. Daly took the opportunity to compliment the Gardaí and the GAA during the recent GAA matches. He stated that over 30,000 people were in Ennis and there was great excitement which reminded him of the Fleadh. Chief Supt. Colleran thanked Cllr. Daly for his comments.

Cllr. G. Keating took the opportunity to thank Karen, Meetings Administrator for the way she looks after all the members in relation to notifications, reports etc.

Ms. M. McAleer enquired if the JPC was requested to do a 6 Year Plan instead of a 1 Year Plan. Karen advised that they got national direction to prepare a 6 Year Plan and this was adopted. Ms. McAleer stated that she is not aware how the plan was put together and that there is a need to go back and look at the objectives of the previous plan and include objectives regarding victims of domestic abuse in this plan as it is a huge safety issue. She requested that these objectives be included.

Karen/Leonard stated that they will circulate the plan seeking comments on the objectives and if there is an area to be refocused on it can be brought back to the Steering Committee for approval.

B. Slattery stated that in 2019 he had asked Sean's predecessor for one or two Gardaí to be present in Lahinch. Since Covid 19 there is a different element of young drinkers coming out and there are a lot of incidences of anti-social behaviour. In relation to stag parties Bill advised that a lot of publicans are refusing admission. He recommended that two Gardaí be on duty from 7pm until 3am and advised that people are afraid to drive through the town late at night. He stated that the closure of the Garda Station is a cause for concern and the station in Ennistymon is closed in the evenings.

Next JPC Meeting:

The next JPC meeting will take place on Monday 26th September 2022.

Cllr. J. Crowe took the opportunity to thanks the Chief Superintendent, his colleagues from An Garda Síochána, members of the press and all the JPC members for their attendance. With no other business Cllr. J. Crowe declared the meeting closed.

The meeting concluded.


Chairperson: Cllr. John Crowe

Date: 26th September 2022