

Minutes of Joint Policing Committee Meeting held in the Council Chamber and online on Monday 21st February 2022 at 10.30am.

In attendance:- Cllr. John Crowe, Chairperson

Cllrs. Ann Norton, Alan O’Callaghan, Ian Lynch, Mary Howard, P.J. Ryan, Gabriel Keating, Michael Begley, Pat Daly

Deputy Cathal Crowe, Deputy Joe Carey

Gardaí:

Chief Supt. Sean Colleran

Supt. John Galvin

Supt. John Ryan

Insp. Helen Costello

Insp. David Finnerty

Officials:

Leonard Cleary, Director of Service,

Karen Fennessy, Administrative Officer

Mary Mather Leahy, Clare Older People’s Council

Madeline McAleer, Public Participation Network

Bill Slattery, Lahinch Community Development

Dermot Hayes, Community Activist in Disability

Apologies:

Cllr. Joe Killeen

Cllr. Pat McMahan

Brian McManus, Clare Youth Service

Welcome:

The Chairperson Cllr. J. Crowe welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated that it was great to be back in the Chamber after the last two years. He also welcomed Chief Supt. Sean Colleran, Inspector Helen Costello and all members of An Garda Síochána.

1. Draft Minutes of JPC meeting held 6th September 2021 and 18th October 2021

Proposed by: Cllr. Gabriel Keating

Seconded by: Cllr. Mary Howard and agreed.

2. Matters arising from the Minutes

Deputy Cathal Crowe referred to the suspensions in the Limerick Garda Division and advised that no progress has been made since the last meeting. He advised that he has concerns about the suspensions and how they impact on the service. He stated that progress needs to be made.

3. Correspondence

Karen Fennessy outlined correspondence received from Mary Leahy who is a member of the Clare Older People's Council in relation to scam phone calls and texts, which are causing stress to older people and members of the OPC. Mary enquired if there was anything that the Gardaí can do to check on the source of the calls or provide advice on same. Supt. John Galvin stated the problem is wide spread and they are looking into it. Generally speaking the main advice is to not open text messages from anyone that is unfamiliar. He stated that it is a national and international problem and a lot of the scams are stemming from overseas.

4. Update by An Garda Síochána

Chief Supt. Colleran provided the latest statistics to the JPC comparing figures from November 2020 to the end of January 2021 against figures from November 2021 to the end of January 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. Michael Begley:-

Cllr. Michael Begley thanked Chief Supt. Sean Colleran for his presentation and referred to a scam email he received recently offering him €4.3m and all they needed was his bank account details. He stated that some people may be curious when they receive similar emails. In relation to drug offences, Cllr. Begley referred to the successes over the last year or two and in particular to the success of CAB in the Shannon area. He enquired if there was any evidence that the successes had reduced the activities and also if there is someone to step up to fill the vacuum. He enquired how the figures in South East Clare compares with the figures today. It is an area that is densely populated but the figures are not available for that area.

Chief Supt. Sean Colleran referred to the significant targeting of top level criminality and stated that there is always someone to replace them. The force are working closely with Limerick and Tipperary and they have reduced the capacity of the high level criminality but it is not eradicated. Because of this targeted approach there has been a reduction which is replicated in the statistics. He referred to the reduction in West Clare. Chief Supt. Colleran stated that the figures in East Clare would be quite similar and advised that the Gardaí do not just target higher level criminality, they are ensuring there is a planned approach as to how they are investigating these crimes. The Gardaí's proactive response makes it difficult for criminals.

Chief Supt. Colleran advised that fraud is a common problem and is being discussed at Divisional Management Team meetings and the Gardaí work closely with national units including the Economic Fraud Investigation Unit. He advised that there are so many aspects to fraud and it is a complex minefield where people have lost money. He advised that it is at the top of their agenda and they will need to set aside resources. They are looking at putting a unit together and he emphasised the importance of media awareness. He stated that people have been brought before the Courts and that all complaints are dealt with.

Questions from Deputy Cathal Crowe:-

Deputy Cathal Crowe advised that there is a group of farmers in the Liscannor area and people are hunting on their lands. The farmers try to clear them but the people involved terrorise them. Deputy Crowe stated that he has 6 reg. numbers that he will forward to An Garda Síochána and some of these have no tax or insurance and could be at least reigned in for these offences. Deputy Crowe referred to rogue traders and advised that they are advertising their services in the print media. He referred to the new regulations on building works which will contain stores of professional traders. This list should be used as a reference list when accepting adverts from traders. He referred to the Supreme Court ruling on traveller accommodation. He recommended that a separate review take place on traveller accommodation and that it would be adopted in its entirety. Deputy Crowe referred to incidents in Shannon Town Centre and stated that Sgt. Seamus Mulligan organised patrols there. He advised that it is a policing matter and a parental matter. Parents are dropping children into Shannon thinking that they are meeting friends but they are terrorising people. In one instance a trolley was pushed down an escalator and narrowly missed a pensioner.

Deputy Crowe congratulated an Garda Síochána on the recent Commemoration. He thanked the Gardaí for their support during Covid and especially for calling to older people.

Chief Supt. Colleran recommended that people contact An Garda Síochána so that they are made fully aware of these incidents. He advised that Inspector Finnerty is

pulling together the pattern of behaviour and is in touch with stakeholders. If members of the public are in doubt and they have information on registration numbers he recommended that they contact the Gardaí. In relation to traveller accommodation, Chief Supt. Colleran stated that he could not comment on this and advised that a multi-agency approach is required.

In relation to the Town Centre in Shannon Chief Supt. stated that he appreciates the challenges as the nighttime economy has opened up and it is happening in many places. The Gardaí are fully aware of Shannon in terms of public order offences and gatherings of young people and they are taking a proactive approach to ensure they have resources deployed at the time. He stated that there are a number of meetings due to take place around the County and the Gardaí will provide the necessary supports.

Question from Dermot Hayes:-

Dermot Hayes referred to the breakdown in mental health and enquired what powers the Gardaí have to support people being admitted to the Acute Unit and how the Gardaí can interact in this situation.

Chief Supt. Colleran advised that Inspector Costello works with the HSE in terms of mental health. He advised that mental health is a huge issue and is putting stress and strain on the HSE resources. He advised that the Gardaí do not make arrests but can detain people under mental health. It was far too easy to commit people years ago and it does not happen now. People have to meet certain criteria. After patients have seen their own GP they may volunteer to seek further help. He stated that mental health is stressful for everyone concerned and the Gardaí try and manage those situations as best they can. He advised that Insp. Costelloe is on the working group with the HSE and they in turn work with local GPs. He stated that the Gardaí do not publish those figures but will look at reporting on it at the next JPC meeting.

Question from Cllr. Pat Daly:-

Cllr. Pat Daly thanked the Chief Supt. for his presentation. He referred to the increase in thefts in shops which was up by 69%. He stated that some shop owners can not afford CCTV and some are robbed every week. He enquired if funding could be made available for CCTV for shops and small businesses. He referred to ongoing scams and fraud and stated that a lot of people are getting texts every day. He recommended that An Garda Síochána seek legal advice on this. Cllr. Daly referred to the Supreme Court ruling and enquired how people can overrule the High Court and be in a position to pay for it. He stated that this is a very serious situation and needs to be looked at.

Chief Supt. Colleran agreed that CCTV supports should be provided for businesses. He advised that the detection rates were quite high and advised that the crime investigations are very robust. In terms of economic fraud the Gardai have the capacity to stop monies coming out of accounts and they will progress other scams. In relation to the Supreme Court Chief Supt. Colleran advised that he could not comment on this.

Questions from Cllr. P.J. Ryan:-

Cllr. P.J. Ryan thanked the Chief Supt. for his excellent presentation. He stated that the people of Clare have come through a serious period during Covid and as first citizen he stated that it is his duty to thank the Gardaí for the work that they carried out during Covid. He stated that the force were extremely flexible, caring and helpful to many. On several occasions in relation to travel the Garda helped people and were well looked after. He referred to economic crime and stated that a business owner was expecting a parcel and received a phone call from a logistics company regarding a shortfall in payment and they were looking for credit card details to release the package for delivery. He stated that 9 times out of 10 this is a scam but it is something to be aware of. They will take whatever they can and genuine people will not do that. Cllr. Ryan advised people to take a phone number off them first and check it out.

Cllr. Ryan also enquired about an update on the court case and situation at the Railway Station in Sixmilebridge.

Chief Supt. Colleran thanked Cllr. Ryan for his comments on the Gardaí's Covid response. The Gardaí appreciated all state agency and volunteers' support. He stated that their job was made so much easier as everyone appreciated the regulations. They found great support across all levels even from those who did not agree with the regulations. He advised that he could not comment on the situation in Sixmilebridge and stated that there were a number of cases ongoing and before the courts. He stated that if anybody had any concerns that they should contact An Garda Síochána as if it is not written down there is no record. Once complaints are received they will be actioned appropriately. He referred to complaints from vulnerable people living alone coming in contact with rogue tradesman and advised that the Gardai will deal with these complaints.

Question from Cllr. John Crowe:-

Cllr. John Crowe thanked the Chief Supt. for his presentation. He referred to the thefts from shops and expressed disappointment with the increase in numbers. He stated that he has been in business for years and can understand the pressure the shop owners are under who are doing their best for the communities. He stressed the importance of CCTV for all shop owners.

Chief Supt. stated that he fully supports the provision of CCTV for businesses and the Gardaí are conscious of thefts from shops and the impact it has on them. He stated that in other Counties certain shops take a less proactive approach and suffer the losses. This does not happen in Clare as the detection rates are quite high.

Question from Deputy Joe Carey:-

Deputy Joe Carey thanked Chief Supt. Colleran and complimented An Garda Síochána for their interaction with stakeholders and the public. He stated that the issue of trespassing of lands is very disturbing and requested an appointment with Insp. Finnerty in this regard. He referred to a number of incidents circulating on social media where violence is being portrayed. He stated that it is a matter of concern in the community and would like to reassure the public that these people are being brought to justice.

Chief Supt. Colleran thanked Deputy Carey for his very positive comments and stated that the Gardaí are fully aware about the escalation of feuds. He assured the members that An Garda Síochána are very proactive in investigating those incidents. He advised that the investigations are at an advanced stage before they come to light on social media and the Gardaí have addressed them. By the time it reaches social media a lot of people are identified and are before the Courts.

Chief Supt. Sean Colleran stated that he wanted to collectively thank everyone for their positive comments and they are very much appreciated. He referred to the great working relationship between the JPC and An Garda Síochána. He stated that he fully appreciates that policing is very much local and the Gardaí are fully committed. He stated that a lot of Garda have served in different locations and if they do transfer they become less aware. He acknowledged the gaps in efficiencies and these will be addressed. He advised that the Gardaí will support the JPC in any way they can.

Cllr. J. Crowe thanked Chief Supt. Colleran for his input.

6. Presentation by Bernadette Dunne – Task Community Care

Cllr. John Crowe introduced Bernadette Dunne, Task Community Care to the members. Bernadette thanked the members for inviting her to the meeting and gave details of her background and outlined the following:-

- There is funding from Pobal available through the Senior Alerts Scheme for anyone over the age of 65 for social alarms. The alarms come with a pendant and works through the landline or mobile using different SIMs and works through Broadband.

- If the power goes it will last for three days using a standby battery.
- Community groups can register with Pobal online.
- Task Community Care can give talks to groups and provide assistance with registration and grant applications. They also go out to TY students.
- Funding of up to €280 is available and pendants can be added for spouses.
- The first-year monitoring contract is free.
- Mobile users will receive a SIM but this is not funded and users will be charged €6 per month.
- Charges in relation to landlines are costly so most homes use their broadband service.
- The pendants are waterproof and can be worn around the neck or on the wrist.
- Once the pendant is pressed a call goes through the monitoring company in Dublin with all the details e.g. name, mobile number, Eircode, GP. The company stores key holders details and if somebody does not have key holders, a safe can be provided with a code in the event that someone needs to get into the property.
- In relation to domestic violence cases these are referred on to the Crime Prevention Office. Units are installed that can be silenced when the button is pressed. The monitoring company are then aware that it is a domestic violence incident.
- The Bogus Caller Button can be used in situations where someone has suffered from domestic violence and can be used for bogus callers at the door. This costs €50 per unit.
- County Councils provide carbon monoxide alarms and these can be monitored by the social alarm company for €120. If someone is asleep they do not get a sense of smoke or smell. This is not funded and seems like a lot of money but is very beneficial.
- “Who lives on your street” initiative took place in Birr whereby young people were asked do they know what is going on in their community and the people who may be vulnerable in their society. A booklet was put together raising awareness.
- Alarms are not funded to those under 65. They would need to pay the monitoring fee and this could be a lot of money for them. Task work closely with social workers to try and get funding for vulnerable people in this age bracket through different charitable organisations.
- More funding is needed for tracking devices for people working with machinery and for those with Alzheimers.

Cllr. Gabriel Keating thanked Bernadette for her very informative presentation and requested that the Dáil members present raise the issue in the Dáil to provide extra allowances/funding for these schemes as some people do not have this kind of money. He thanked Chief Supt. Sean Colleran for his presentation and for all the

hard work that An Garda Síochána do. He stated that the JPC is a great forum to show this appreciation.

Dermot Hayes thanked Bernadette and asked for clarification if there was any study done on the service providers and the effectiveness of these alarms.

Bernadette advised that research had been carried out by Alone and Age Friendly Ireland. She referred to recent storms and the media encouraged people to test their alarms at least once a month. It was discussed on the Ray Darcy Show and following this, Task received up to 1,000 calls by people checking their pendants in rural areas.

Cllr. PJ Ryan thanked Bernadette for her presentation and advised that usually a son or daughter will make the first contact in relation to providing an alarm for their parents. He stated that it is useful to have somebody local and it is a very valuable service for everyone. He gave an example of an older person who fell in Sixmilebridge and broke her leg. The daughter was working until 4/5 but that person had an alarm and a Doctor arrived within 20 minutes. He enquired if the phone can still be answered if the person is in the bathroom of a house. He stated that the key safe was an excellent idea as there is a little bit of anxiety amongst older people giving out keys. He stated that all the advice needs to be publicised so that more and more information is out there.

Bernadette advised that the phone will be answered when the pendant is pressed within a 300m range. It works outside and inside and the range is checked at installation stage. Bernadette advised that sometimes stone walls can block the system and this is also tested when installing the alarms.

Deputy Crowe enquired what range the alarms have and referred to Tom Niland's case in Sligo which put this in sharp focus. He enquired if farms will be covered and if there is any product available in light of the tragic case in Tullamore.

Bernadette advised that they will be doing a range of trackers and stated that the most important thing is that people wear the pendant.

Cllr. John Crowe thanked Bernadette for her presentation. He stated that the products were very important in light of the many break-ins lately.

7. Draft JPC Six Year Plan 2022 – 2027

Cllr. Ian Lynch addressed the members and stated that every year similar questions are asked. There are seven topics in the plan with three major stakeholders i.e. An Garda Síochána, the Council and the HSE but An Garda Síochána is the only agency that presents at the JPC meetings. Cllr. Lynch recommended that actions are also presented by the Council and the HSE. He advised that West Clare does not have

enough resources and as Kilrush is a Deis town he recommended that a master plan be established. In relation to domestic violence incidents in the Council's properties, An Garda Síochána have removed the perpetrators but the Council cannot remove them from the lease and this needs to be addressed. He advised that there are a lot of issues with speeding and recommended that the Gardaí work collectively to make the roads safer. In relation to the Aisling Murphy tragedy Cllr. Lynch recommended an increase in patrols and visual Gardaí on the streets. In relation to walking routes he recommended that the Council make an application under the Active Travel Funding to improve walking areas. He recommended the retention of the outdoor dining. He stated that the Gardaí are doing great work but the Council needs to show what work they are doing. He advised that the Drug/Alcohol unit is doing phenomenal work and there is a huge amount of work carried out by stakeholders. He recommended that the structure of the meetings be looked at. He paid tribute to the work of An Garda Síochána as they are the first people on the scene and paid tribute to Sgt. Edel Bourke and Garda Eoghan Daly in the Kilrush Division.

Leonard Cleary thanked Cllr. Lynch and advised that he would bring the comments to the next Steering Committee meeting and examine all the issues and the structure of the agenda and see if they can take some of them on board at national level. There is a review of administration of the JPC taking place and this is at a draft stage. Outside of the JPC meetings Leonard advised that Clare County Council and An Garda Síochána work very closely with volunteers on a number of initiatives.

8. Election of Chair & Vice Chair

Cllr. John Crowe referred to the election of Chair and Vice Chair and advised that the County Council's term is 5 years and 2.5 years have passed and it needs to be regularised for the next 2.5 years. He stated that Cllr. Alan O'Callaghan is not standing as Vice Chair for the next term and invited proposals from the members.

Cllr. PJ Ryan proposed that Cllr. John Crowe remain on as Chair. This was seconded by Cllr. Gabriel Keating and agreed. Cllr. Alan O'Callaghan proposed Cllr. Pat Daly for Vice Chair. This was seconded by Cllr. Gabriel Keating and agreed.

9. Any other business

Bill Slattery addressed the members and thanked Chief Supt. Sean Colleran for his presentation and his very honest responses to the queries from the floor. He took the opportunity to pass on his condolences to the Fitzpatrick family in Lisdoonvarna on the tragic passing of their daughter Stephanie, who was the youngest of 10. He thanked An Garda Síochána and the first responders who attended the scene and did everything right.

Madeline McAteer thanked the Chief Supt. for his presentation and referred to the work carried out by the Clare Local Area Network. She referred to a document that was launched by the subgroups, An Garda Síochána and Tusla etc. on domestic and sexual abuse. She stated that it was a missed item on the 6 Year Plan and recommended that there should be a separate item on gender-based abuse as it is coming into a lot of areas in terms of security. She stated that she would like to put this motion forward as there were a number of points included into the previous plan and a focus is needed on the work carried out in Clare. She advised that it is referenced in other counties.

Cllr. Pat Daly welcomed Supt. John Galvin and referred to the anti-social behaviour situation in Ennis. The situation reached international news recently and is not good for the town of Ennis. Cllr. Daly stated that he hoped to have the discussion at an upcoming meeting. Supt. John Galvin stated that he would attend the meeting and address any issues or concerns.

Chief Supt. Sean Colleran offered his sympathy to the family involved following the recent fatal accident. He advised that the situation impacts on many people.

Cllr. John Crowe thanked Chief Supt. Colleran and his colleagues for attending the meeting and thanked the media for their attendance during the last 2.5 years and stated that they have always given a very fair analysis of the meetings.

Next JPC Meeting:

The next JPC meeting will take place on Monday 30th May 2022.

With no other business the meeting concluded.


Chairperson: Cllr. John Crowe

Date: 30th May 2022