

Draft Minutes of Joint Policing Committee Meeting held in the Council Chamber on Tuesday 12th September at 3pm

In attendance:- Cllr. John Crowe, Chairperson
Cllrs. P. Daly, M. Howard, G. Keating, J. Killeen, I. Lynch, P. McMahon, P. Murphy, A. O'Callaghan, PJ Ryan
Deputy Cathal Crowe
Deputy Violet-Anne Wynne
Chief Superintendent, Colm O'Sullivan
Insp. Morgan O'Donoghue
Supt. John Ryan
Supt. Ollie Baker
Jason Murphy, Director of Service
Brendan Boyce, Meetings Administrator
Padraig McCormack, Administrative Officer
Brian McManus, Clare Youth Service
Mary Mather Leahy, Clare Older People's Council

Apologies:

Cllr. P. Burke
Cllr. B. Chambers
Cllr. A. Norton
Dermot Hayes, Community Activist in Disability
Madeline McAleer, Public Participation Network

Welcome:

The Chairperson Cllr. J. Crowe welcomed the members to the meeting.

1. Draft Minutes of JPC meeting held on 9th May 2023:-

Proposed by: Cllr. M. Howard
Seconded by: Cllr. A. O'Callaghan and agreed.

2. Matters arising from minutes:

There were no matters arising.

3. Correspondence

No correspondence was received.

4. Update by An Garda Síochána

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan provided the latest statistics to the JPC comparing figures from January to September 2022 against figures from January to September 2023.

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

5. Questions from JPC Members

Brendan Boyce read out the question received from Cllr. Alan O'Callaghan:-

Implications of Clare/Tipp been merged as one Garda division.

- 1. Are there 6 superintendents appointed to the new Clare tipp division?**
- 2. If yes, out of the 6 is it correct that 5 are currently based in Tipperary and 1 in Clare?**
- 3. If this is true what is the reason behind the geological spread of the superintendents?**
- 4. Where Kilrush and Ennistymon had each a superintendent, are these offices now been covered by just 1 inspector based in Kilrush?**
- 5. With Killaloe now under the governance of the superintendent in Nenagh what are the implications of policing resources for Killaloe, Scarriff, Tulla, Kilkishen, Broadford and the surrounding areas?**
- 6. What were the Garda numbers in Shannon District pre Covid and what are the current numbers today?**
- 7. In the divisional drugs unit, what were the numbers pre Covid and what are the current numbers today ?**
- 8. Are there drugs units in Kilrush/Killaloe/Shannon and Ennistymon areas?**

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan outlined the new Operating Model to the members as follows:-

- The amalgamation is a result of government policy which was taken a number of years ago. The model is moving from a district model to a functional area model.
- There will be no change in delivery of service and members of the public can attend at any Garda Station if they have issues.
- The Superintendent is now in charge of a larger functional area.
- High volume crime is being dealt with in the Thurles/Tipperary area whereas frequently occurring crimes (e.g. shop lifting, minor assaults) are being dealt with by the uninformed team under the Superintendent but all crime will still be investigated.

- There is one Detective Superintendent in the Garda Division and there are 4 Detective Inspectors in Clare.
- The Superintendents will be monitoring governance and policy. Each Superintendent will have 3 Inspectors, 2 Sergeants and clerical support. This allows them more time to deal with matters including community engagement. Their key performance indicators tell where the Gardaí are at in terms of crime trends and they will monitor governance policy and compliance with policy.
- The newly amalgamated Division is comprised of 6 Superintendents and one of these will be based in Co. Clare. There is a reduction in Superintendents but there are more Inspectors. The way the Gardaí are conducting their business is changing and the service has improved. There is a dedicated team of inspectors so the Superintendent will have more time for community engagement.
- There has been a reduction of 33 Gardaí in Co. Clare since 2019. However, some of those were promoted into the rank of Superintendent and remained within the Clare Division or if they were transferred out they were replaced by Sergeants, therefore overall they lost 23.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan outlined the areas that have already been amalgamated and details of the Community Engagement Officers and their areas.

Brendan read out the questions received from Deputy Cathal Crowe:-

- 1) Illegal encampments and, specifically, the application of Section 24 of the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002.**
- 2) The use of scrambler bikes by youths not wearing helmets.**
- 3) The enforcement by An Garda Síochána of routes, designated by the National Transport Authority, for coach tours to travel along in the scenic parts of our county.**

In relation to Deputy Cathal Crowe's question on illegal encampments Chief Supt. O'Sullivan stated that it is not in the remit of the JPC and he outlined the functions of the JPC. Deputy Crowe advised that the question is very relevant to policy and there is no reason why it should be excluded. Chief Supt. O'Sullivan stated that the issue is before the Courts and he is precluded from discussing same.

Padraig McCormac advised that the Council cannot go into individual cases. The Council works very closely with the Gardaí and there is great collaboration with the Gardaí to reach resolutions.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan stated that the use of scramblers come under the Road Traffic legislation and the law will be enforced.

Cllr. O'Callaghan expressed his concern that the connection is lost between An Garda Síochána and the general public on the ground and that this needs to be addressed as soon as possible as the population is growing. He advised that it was good to see the increase in drug detection.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan stated that the Gardai have not lost connection with the communities. They have a very unique policing force and will often visit people in their homes. The service that the Gardaí provide is fantastic and the service is provided 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year. He stated that all serious crime will be investigated by a dedicated, highly skilled and highly trained team and the force did not have this before. Services to victims have increased dramatically and the Superintendents will now have more time to deal with community engagement issues. There are more demands on their time than 10 years ago and they are dealing with reduced numbers. They are hopeful for increased numbers over the next couple of years and they should be back to where they were pre Covid.

Questions from Deputy Violet-Anne Wynne:-

Deputy Wynne stated that the figure for no offence identified under domestic violence is very important. She referred to Anti-Social Behaviour and enquired about the numbers. She stated that having the speeding stats in red is very confusing as it is in the minus. She noted that speeding offences is down 24%. Deputy Wynne enquired if this was a result of a reduction in monitoring of speeding. She welcomed the reduction in simple possession and enquired if this was a result of the adult cautioning scheme. She referred to the redistribution of roles and enquired about who is responsible for complaints about Gardaí. She expressed concern about the allocation of resources and distribution of Gardaí especially in West Clare where concerns are justified. She advised that during the holiday period there were only 2 Gardaí in Kilkee who were expected to deal with an influx of visitors.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan stated that under the Public Order Act they record all breaches of public order offences and it is captured on the one slide. He advised that there is an increase in enforcement of speed limits e.g. National Slow Down Day and people are becoming more compliant and more aware. There has been no reduction in monitoring. Penalty points can add up in the one journey and that message is getting out there. The reduction in simple possession is not as a result of the adult cautioning scheme. In relation to complaints, GSOC deals with performance complaints. In relation to the new Policing Model Chief Supt. O'Sullivan advised that this model is already in place in various counties and cities in the Country and is working very well. In relation to West Clare he advised that while 2 Garda are allocated to Kilkee there are 9 Gardaí available in Kilrush and Kilkee, therefore another 7 could be available to respond to incidents.

Deputy Wynne referred to the increase nationally of 4% in Domestic Violence cases. She enquired if this is being reflected in Clare and enquired if the calls could be included in the presentation.

Chief Supt. Colm O'Sullivan stated that there is an increase in relation to the breach of barring orders. He advised that all domestic violence incidents are recorded.

Question from Cllr. I. Lynch:-

Cllr. Lynch referred to online fraud whereby accounts are cloned and thousands of euros have been lost. This needs to be tackled as it cannot be reported to

Facebook. Cllr. Lynch concurred with Cllr. O'Callaghan in relation to the loss of a Superintendent in Clare. He stated that morale is poor locally and that some members of the force want to leave.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan advised that they can only measure what is reported in relation to fraud and that many people are too embarrassed to report it. He stated that they have a great team and that there is a large amount of unseen work done which is invaluable. He referred to the CAD System and advised that calls are now transferred to Angelsea Street and a series of questions will be asked and entered on to the system. At the same time the call is being dispatched. It is the same response time if the call comes in to Ennis.

Question from Cllr. P. Daly:-

Cllr. Daly thanked the Chief Supt. for his presentation and wished Supt. Ollie Baker all the best in his new role. Cllr. Daly expressed concern about the decrease in the numbers of Gardaí, especially when burglary incidences etc. are rising. He expressed serious concern about cars being damaged at the Railway Station in Ennis. He advised that there are a lot of drug problems in Ennis and took the opportunity to invite Supt. John Ryan to the next Ennis Municipal District meeting in October as it is a worrying time for residents.

Question from Cllr. M. Howard:-

Cllr. Howard expressed concern about Garda resources and referred to the increase in theft, driving under the influence and speeding. She stated that stats are up and that this is alarming. She advised that anti-social behaviour has increased during the day and referred to videos circulating on social media. She enquired about resources used for court duty.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan advised that crime level dropped over the Covid period of lockdown and the increase should level out over the next 12 to 18 months. He stated that the Gardaí have a proactive policy in relation to antisocial behaviour. The decrease in Garda recruits is as a result of society being more transient and there will be another recruitment campaign next year.

Question from Cllr. P.J. Ryan:-

Cllr. Ryan commended the Gardaí on their recent involvement with the KPMG Women's Irish Open Event and on the tremendous service and help that the Gardaí provided. He received an enquiry on why the Gardaí that are rostered in Sixmilebridge work in Shannon and why the Sixmilebridge Station is closed. Cllr. Ryan stated that people are frustrated as they may need forms signed and they may not have transport.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan acknowledged Cllr. Ryan's comments and advised that the rostering situation is due to annual leave, sick leave, court days and training. In time resources will increase but the service is still being provided and the Gardaí are still

available in Sixmilebridge. In relation to completion of forms Chief Supt. O'Sullivan stated that they can look into this.

Question from Cllr. P. McMahon:-

Cllr. P. McMahon referred to recent statistics that stated that Ireland is the 3rd safest country in the world behind Iceland and New Zealand and it has the lowest fatal road accident statistics in the world. He stated that young people are challenging the Gardaí. He advised that there is a problem with speeding and outlined problems in the Newmarket-on-Fergus area and advised that the Gardaí have been informed and have taken action. Cllr. McMahon concurred with Cllr. Ryan and stated residents find it frustrating that stations are closed.

In relation to road safety, Chief Supt. O'Sullivan stated that everyone needs to look at their environment and while Ireland is the 3rd safest in the world one road death is one too many.

Question from Cllr. J. Killeen:-

Cllr. Killeen complimented the Community Garda in North Clare who goes above and beyond her line of work. He referred to the Garda Stations in Ennistymon and Kilrush and stated that there is a need to win the confidence of the public and explain the new system to them. He referred to the fatal accident that occurred in Ballyvaughan and referred to the Traffic Management Strategy in this Municipal District Area and enquired if the Gardaí will feed into this strategy to make North Clare safer for residents and tourists.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan thanked Cllr. Killeen for his comments. He stated that local issues are dealt with by local Gardaí and the new operational model will not change how the Gardaí do business on the ground and there will be no change in process. In relation to the Traffic Management Strategy the Gardaí will work closely with Clare County Council on those issues and will take in the RSA Strategy and the local strategy.

6. Any other business:

Brian McManus advised that Inspector David Finnerty had spoken to youth workers and advised that issues with scramblers are isolated issues and are not major issues. He stated that if something has changed they can work with the Gardaí.

Brian paid tribute to Garda Maggie Purcell, who is retiring from her role as Juvenile Liaison Officer in Ennis. He stated that he worked with her since her appointment and she worked closely with them in Kilrush and North Clare. She approached her job with humanity, was hugely practical and a lovely person to work with. Cllr. M. Howard joined in wishing her well in her retirement.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan advised that Garda Deirdre Scanlan is now the Junior Liaison Officer in Ennis. Mary Leahy commended Garda Deirdre Scanlan, who she met at last year's National Age Friendly Awards.

Cllr. John Crowe welcomed Supt. Ollie Baker and stated that he will look forward to working with him. He welcomed Jason Murphy, who took over from Leonard Cleary and Brendan Boyce who has taken over from Karen Fennessy. He thanked all the members for their contribution.

With no other business he drew the meeting to a close.