

**Minutes of Joint Policing Committee Meeting held in the Council Chamber on
Monday 28th November 2022 at 10.30am.**

In attendance:- Cllr. John Crowe, Chairperson

Cllrs. Gabriel Keating, Pat Daly, Paul Murphy, Joe Killeen, Pat McMahon, Ann Norton, Tony O'Brien, Pat Burke, Mary Howard, Ian Lynch, Alan O'Callaghan, P.J. Ryan

Deputy Cathal Crowe
Deputy Violet-Anne Wynne

Gardaí:

Supt. John Galvin
Insp. Helen Costello

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

Apologies:

Cllr. Michael Begley
Chief Supt. Colm O'Sullivan
Brian McManus, Clare Youth Service

Welcome:

The Chairperson Cllr. J. Crowe welcomed everyone to the meeting. He stated that in order to ensure that all members get an opportunity to speak he proposed to confine the member's deliberations to two minutes to give everybody a chance. He advised that this had commenced at the Council meetings two months ago and is working very well. This proposal was agreed.

1. Draft Minutes of JPC meeting held on 26th September 2022:-

Proposed by: Cllr. P. Daly
Seconded by: Cllr. A. O'Callaghan and agreed.

2. Matters arising from minutes:

Cllr. Tony O'Brien referred to the emergency contact numbers project and stated that it was intended to roll this out as a pilot in Killaloe Garda Station, headed up by Inspector Moloney. He advised that they will work with Karen and the Design Team in Clare County Council and ensure that the Gardaí, Age Friendly and Clare County

Council logos are used. They are hoping to have the pilot completed before Christmas and will hope to be in a position to make a presentation at the next JPC meeting. Cllr. O'Brien advised that he is seeking the consent of the committee to proceed with the pilot scheme in Killaloe and this was agreed.

Deputy Crowe referred to community policing and stated that a lot of specific roles have disappeared.

3. Correspondence

Karen stated that they received a letter from Housing Residents in Newmarket-on-Fergus in relation to suspicious activity within their estates i.e. cars arriving at all hours of the night and children running riot. Karen stated that they received a response from Supt. John Galvin who advised that Garda members met with the residents of 13 Radharc an Oir and stated that vehicles observed were registered with families of the estate and the Gardaí have not witnessed any anti-social behaviour but will continue to monitor the situation.

4. Presentation by Clare County Council on Ukrainian Community Response

Jason Murphy introduced himself to the members and thanked them for inviting him. He presented on the following:-

- What is the foundation of or basis for Ireland's commitment?
- Beneficiaries
- Temporary Protection Supports
- Housing Response/Ukrainian Crisis Response
- Accommodation in County Clare
- Example of Impact Areas
- Current National Strategy
- Countywide Community Response Forum
- Next Steps

Cllr. John Crowe thanked Jason for his presentation and invited comments from the members.

A number of members raised issues regarding the tourism season and raised concerned that there will be an exodus from the County at the beginning of the season.

Deputy Cathal Crowe thanked Jason and the team for everything they are doing. He referred to the Radisson Hotel and Meelick's refugee centre and stated that in the month of July a number of army tents were being used and it was not possible to get in there. Deputy Crowe enquired if this comes under the Council's remit. He stated that it is inhumane to have people in tents at this time of year and advised that as a County, capacity has been reached and exceeded. He stated that he is aware of one woman who cannot access GP care and will have to go to A&E to have her baby. He enquired how involved all the agencies are with the Council and the

refugees on a day-to-day basis. He stated that IPASS came down on Day 1 but they have not engaged a whole lot since.

Jason advised that management are looking at the structure and international protection is managed by the Department of Justice. The local authority has very little role in this. In relation to capacity, all the agencies at the Community Response Forum have acknowledged this issue. Feedback is submitted to all the agencies i.e. LGMA, Department of Housing, Social Protection and HSE, in relation to capacity. Critical services include GPs, mental health and transport and it is anticipated that more people will be coming in. The message coming through from all agencies is that they will continue to work together recognising that Clare has been to the forefront and was responding back in March.

Cllr. Alan O'Callaghan stated that there are a lot of bodies involved e.g. Local Authority, Government, HSE and JPC and he advised that there is huge back lash starting as a lot of people are struggling and things are being handed out to the Ukrainians. He advised that the situation is starting to get a lot of attention as the Ukrainians are being kept in hotels and there are people homeless and on the streets.

Jason stated that there is no place for racism in the Country. He advised that they are keeping their message strong to stay united across the forum. He stated that there is a sense of togetherness and the level of engagement with Councillors has been excellent. As the situation moves forward, Jason advised that the work can be promoted in the media. He stated that a universal solution is needed.

Cllr. P. Burke complimented the great work being carried out and referred to the situation in Bodyke whereby 111 Ukrainians are staying in the East Clare Golf Club and his observations are that they are in an isolated location and are quite a distance to walk to the nearest village. He stated that this needs to be monitored. While it is a great facility it is hard to compare it to urban centres.

Jason advised that in relation to Bodyke the Department of Children contacted the Council and enquired about transport. Following this, Local Link adjusted the service running between Scariff and Ennis. He stated that he has been in touch with Active Travel in relation to hi-vis vests and raising awareness. Many parts of the County are rural and some areas do not have footpaths. He advised that they can work with the Municipal Districts regarding the provision of infrastructure.

Cllr. Ian Lynch stated that it is a difficult task to manage but good to see multi service collaboration e.g. increasing bus routes. He stated that the GP services is an issue and the housing crisis will also be an issue as a lot of people will be displaced due to issues with mica. He advised that there has been a notable shift in social media e.g. facebook pages speaking on behalf of the Council and comments are very negative. He stated that this needs to be tackled. He recommended that a grant be made available to those who may have derelict properties as millions are being paid to hotels and this should be raised at government level.

Jason stated that the Council recognises that it will not be a one size fits all solution and there will be an opportunity to build modular houses. He advised that whilst the

Department of Children are responsible for alternative accommodation the local authority has a role in this and will be looking for alternative accommodation. Pressure points include North Clare and Jason advised that it is a whole of government approach. There are also impacts on schools. Modular, vacant or pledged accommodation needs to be looked at. Jason advised that they are looking at the Hotels that need to get back their accommodation in time for the tourism season but the situation is changing on a weekly basis.

Cllr. Killeen commended the work being done and the co-operation between the agencies. He stated that changes have come about in relation to transport and there is now a bus service from Ballyvaughan and Ennistymon to Ennis. He raised concerns about schools and stated that they have stepped up to the mark and have made great efforts but there is additional cost of supplies. He stated that in relation to accommodation of Ukrainians, contracts of 12 months duration should be looked at.

Cllr. Pat Daly stated that it is a sad situation that people have to leave their homes in Ukraine but Ireland has answered the call. He referred to the issue with accommodating visitors to the Lisdoonvarna Festival.

Cllr. P.J. Ryan thanked Jason and stated that people are running away from war torn countries and the local authorities and agencies have to try and do their best for them. He stated that the Ukrainians in the Radisson do not have a lot to do. They do have a walking track around the hotel but they are walking on public roads and they have no hi-vis vests and do not wear very bright clothes. Cllr. Ryan recommended that they should be issued with hi-vis jackets for the winter for their own protection and the protection of the public.

Jason advised that there is a bus stop at the Radisson which was recently delivered from Active Travel funding. He stated that he will target some of the health and safety and road safety issues for all Ukrainians living in the countryside.

Bill Slattery stated that a lot of the Ukrainians are eligible for work and there is a shortage of workers in the retail sector. Bill enquired if there was someone involved in the Social Welfare side as some want to work.

Jason advised that CLDC received SICAP funding and now have a team of 6 people including an integration person on employment. The Department of Social Welfare work with people to move them around the social welfare system. This was brought up at a county wide meeting. There are 13,000 Ukrainians in employment and are contributing to the economy. There are also some of them volunteering. He stated that this is critical from an integration side of things.

Cllr. Mary Howard stated that great credit is due to those working on the coal face and a lot of people have been there from the get-go in a voluntary capacity. She attended a meeting last week and there were Ukrainians on the committee. She acknowledged the work that the local authority is doing. She commended the people of Lisdoonvarna who welcomed these people and recommended that the volunteers be recognised. She stated that racism is intolerable in any shape or form and images on social media are very insensitive and women feel very vulnerable. She

advised that she has met Ukrainians and they are very honorable. She advised that there is a representative of TII on the committee and they have been very proactive.

In relation to vulnerable families, Supt. John Galvin stated that he would speak to Mary about this.

Cllr. Crowe thanked Jason for his informative presentation.

5. Revival of “Ask For Angela” Campaign

Karen referred to the revival of the “Ask For Angela” Campaign and acknowledged Cllr. Mary Howard for spearheading this campaign before. She stated that it was discussed at a recent Steering Group meeting and due to Covid and staff changes it is timely to revive and revamp the campaign. This campaign is aimed at people who feel that they are in an unsafe situation and can approach a member of staff in pubs or hospitality and “Ask for Angela”. The staff member will then know that the person needs help. The campaign was discussed with the Chair of the Vintners Association with the support of An Garda Síochána and Ennis Chamber, as part of the purple flag initiative. There will be training on all aspects of the campaign and there is a meeting on 29th November in Lucas Bar, Ennis. Karen advised that she is looking to do a press release with the support of the JPC.

Cllr. Mary Howard stated that she is delighted that this initiative is to be revived as it is very effective. She mentioned previous incidences whereby 2 girls had availed of the initiative and were held in a safe place. It shows commitment to the safety of Ennis and Mary advised that she would provide any assistance in reviving the campaign.

A number of members showed their support to this initiative. Karen advised that posters will be available at the meeting, training will be delivered to their own staff and a press release will issue the following week. She will request that the Communications Officer put the press release through social media next week.

6. Update by An Garda Síochána

Supt. John Galvin passed on the apologies of Chief Supt. Colm O’Sullivan.

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

Cllr. John Crowe thanked Supt. Galvin for his presentation and stated that two questions had been submitted by Deputy Cathal Crowe as follows:-

- 1) Details of retirements, resignations and suspensions **Vs** new recruitment and how this has impacted on overall Garda numbers in Clare in recent years.

Supt. Galvin stated that he cannot comment on suspensions as they are subject to internal disciplinary action. In general he stated that An Garda Síochána’s aim is to have 15,000 recruits, the figure is 14,000 at the moment. It has slowed up quite

significantly and this is mainly due to Covid and lack of movement in the public services. Retirements have continued during this time. He stated that there is a deficit which is having an impact on their front-line policy but they are no better or worse than anywhere else and they just have to manage it. Deputy Crowe stated that there are 110 members currently suspended on full pay and would like to see them back and a political push can be put on this. He enquired what the net figure for Clare is. Supt. Galvin stated that he is not going into specific figures but there is a deficit and with the advent of specialised units this takes members from the front line.

- 1) Details of how the Clare Garda Division manage a county-level register of known sex offenders and how this register is practically used in situations such as vetting applicants for social housing etc.

Supt. Galvin stated that when somebody is convicted of a sexual offence they are put on the sexual offence register for a specific time. It could be life or a number of years and this depends on the risk and associated risk to society. They are monitored by An Garda Síochána in line with the national policy standard. Supt. Galvin stated that the allocation of accommodation is a matter for the Local Authority. Leonard advised that the Local Authority engage in the vetting procedure and they have a good working relationship with the Gardaí. He stated that there is a strict protocol in relation to social housing.

Deputy Crowe stated that garda vetting is generally looking for people involved in drugs. He stated that he was asked recently if the same rigorous background checks apply to sex offenders. He stated that the people in housing allocations need to know if the applicants have a record of sexual offences. He enquired if it is an item of disclosure when the Local Authority sends out the application for garda vetting and if a history of sexual offences come back it should be a black mark for social housing.

7. Questions from JPC Members

Question from Cllr. Ian Lynch:

Cllr. Ian Lynch congratulated An Garda Síochána and stated that there is a feeling of safety out there and all credit is due to the force. All the achievements are carried out while under resourced and Cllr. Lynch enquired what the update is on resources and vehicles. He referred to incidences of abuse on social media and enquired if this is the reason why people are not joining An Garda Síochána. He stated that people do not know their local Garda and there is not a presence on the streets. He advised that West Clare is very well served and the Gardaí provide phenomenal service.

Supt. John Galvin stated that abuse of Gardaí on social media is appalling and shocking but thankfully the people involved are before the courts.

Questions from Deputy Violet Anne-Wynne:

Deputy Wynne thanked Supt. Galvin for the presentation. She stated that it is her first JPC meeting since maternity leave. She referred to the six additional Gardaí for Clare last year and enquired if the number has increased in the last 12 months. She advised that the CAD System is being replaced in the Dublin area and this will be rolled out nationally. She stated that it was great to see better recording. She referred to the decrease in drugs sale and supply and enquired if that was a result of the Adult Cautionary Scheme that was introduced in December 2020. Deputy Wynne referred to the Misuse of Drugs Bill which legalises 7g and enquired if there was figures available of those who have been caught with less than 7g, for comparative information between Clare and around the Country.

Supt. Galvin welcomed back Deputy Wynne and congratulated her. He stated that CAD is in place in Co. Clare and Adult Caution is included. He stated that he does not have the figures for minor possession.

Question from Cllr. P. Daly:

Cllr. Daly commended the Drugs Squad in Clare for the decrease of 53%. He stated that there are people in the town that know where the drugs are hidden and he enquired if there was a confidential line that can be used to report this.

Supt. Galvin stated that the confidential line is 1800 666 111.

Question from Cllr. P. J. Ryan:-

Cllr. Ryan thanked Supt. Galvin for the update and referred to the 24% increase in those driving without insurance. He stated that some people are only on the minimum wage and most insurance companies want payment up front and will not accept monthly payments and they then refer them on to lending agencies. It is a problem and the message needs to go out to insurance companies as they need to give back to the community.

Supt. Galvin stated that the issue with insurance is a matter for another forum.

Question from Bill Slattery:-

Bill referred to theft from farmers whereby the culprits are syphoning diesel from tanks and windows are being damaged. He raised concern about the opening hours of the Ennistymon Garda Station and the fact that people have to ring Kilrush. He referred to an incident whereby a member of the public rang the Gardaí and were told to take down the number plate. He stated that farmers are being bullied and intimidated.

Bill advised that Sgt. Triona Brooks was on Clare FM last week and advised that two members had been seriously injured in Ennis. As things have worsened Bill enquired if the Gardaí should carry a taser.

Supt. Galvin stated that there are members of An Garda Síochána on duty in Ennistymon 24/7. There are specific opening times but the Gardaí are always on duty. He advised that he would speak to Bill after the meeting with regard to the

specific incidences. Supt. Galvin stated that it was unfortunate that the Gardaí were injured and missed time off work. It is an occupational hazard and on occasion people become violent but he would be reluctant to have Gardaí armed, even with tasers as there is a need to be aware of human rights.

Questions from Cllr. G. Keating:-

Cllr. Keating thanked Supt. Galvin for his presentation and wished Chief Supt. Seán Colleran the very best of luck. He enquired if the Gardaí have had success in apprehending individuals in relation to theft from shops.

Supt. Galvin stated that he would pass on Gabriel's well wishes to Seán. He advised that in relation to thefts from shops, quite a lot of individuals are apprehended at the scene but there are a lot of professional shoplifters that are apprehended through CCTV and intelligence. He stated that some individuals are juveniles and will only do it once. These individuals go through the Juvenile Liaison System.

Questions from Cllr. P. Burke:-

Cllr. Burke referred to the lack of Gardaí and the general public do not know their local Garda. He stated that he knows of farmers who have a shot gun loaded and will take the law into their own hands. He referred to an aggravated burglary that took place recently in Whitegate. He stated that the Gardaí in Shannon investigated the crime and enquired why the Gardaí in Killaloe were not on the scene. Shannon is 35 miles from Whitegate.

Supt. Galvin stated that this would be normal practice to call on the Gardaí in Shannon when a serious incident occurs. The Gardaí mobilise colleagues from around the division and Gardaí from other stations supplement the local resources. For Gardaí who may not know the area, this is dealt with at the briefings.

Question from Cllr. Mary Howard:-

Cllr. Howard took the opportunity to congratulate the Gardaí and in particular, the Gardaí in Ennistymon on the recent Age Friendly Awards initiative. She stated that it was a special event and the Gardaí were recognised on the night.

Supt. Galvin thanked Cllr. Howard and stated that it was a very proud night for all. It was a great initiative by Garda Scanlon and the Gardaí in Ennistymon who put manhours into it.

8. Draft Annual Work Plan 2022 - 2023

Madeline McAleer advised that she would like to see a line added to the plan regarding interagency training on domestic abuse, coercive control and enhancing services. Cllr. Lynch stated that KPI's need to be brought into the plan. He stated that the Local Authority needs to be presenting to the JPC on what they are doing as the plan does not capture it. He advised that the plan needs to integrate youth, scams, supports available and needs to be updated on what the various agencies can do together. He stated that there is a need to work collectively. Leonard

thanked the members for their feedback. He stated that he would bring the comments back to the Steering Group. Leonard advised that the Local Authority is heavily involved in working with the youth and other areas.

9. Any other business:

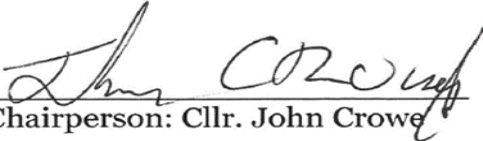
Cllr. J. Crowe wished Chief Supt. Seán Colleran the best of luck in Monaghan and stated that he guided the JPC well and looks forward to working with Chief Supt. Colm O'Sullivan.

Madeline McAleer stated that she received an email regarding a Webinar which included details of a new structure for the JPC. She recommended that this be included in the February Agenda and stated that a lot more participation should be coming through the PPN. She recommended that JPC Members attend this meeting. She enquired about the 6 year plan which is now a one year plan. Leonard advised that the Webinar is a brief of the three pilots done on the model. He stated that it is at pilot stage and there is a lot of key learning points. He advised that the roll out is some time off and guidelines will issue but at the moment the JPC will remain in situ. He stated that there are some positives and some challenges but the JPC will learn from the pilots. He advised that if there is a national change, a briefing will be arranged for the members. Leonard stated that the webinar is particularly relevant to reflect on key learnings. He advised that any roll out will require resources and a lot of engagement with the Department of Justice. Karen agreed to email details of the webinar to members.

Meeting dates 2023:

- 16th February
- 9th May
- 12th September
- 27th November

With no other business Cllr. Crowe drew the meeting to a close.


Chairperson: Cllr. John Crowe

Date: 16th February 2023