

Minutes of Joint Policing Committee meeting held on Monday, 29 March 2021 in Via Ms Teams at 11.00 am.

In attendance:

Councillor Enda McGloin (Cathaoirleach)

Garda Commissioner Drew Harris

Inspector Carla Curry

Sergeant Paul Minogue

Councillor Brendan Barry

Councillor Sean McDermott

Councillor Mary Bohan

Councillor Sean McGowan

Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire

Councillor Thomas Mulligan

Councillor Felim Gurn

Councillor Enda Stenson

Councillor Pdraig Fallon

Councillor Justin Warnock

Councillor Paddy Farrell

Martin Kenny TD

Marc McSharry TD

Bernie McGauran

Kenny Murtagh

Kathleen Flanagan

Breege Grimes

Janice Raine Conick

Osazuwa Peter-Olabiyi

Chief Supt Aidan Glacken

Frank Feighan TD

Lar Power, Chief Executive

Mary Quinn, Director of Services, Housing, Corporate Services, Community and Cultural Services

Joseph Gilhooly, Director of Services, Economic Development, Planning & Infrastructural Services

Samantha Healy, Senior Executive Officer Corporate Services and Housing

Johanna Daly, Senior Executive Officer

Nicola McManus, Administrative Officer

Kieran Brett, Meetings Administrator

Kathleen Ellis, Assistant Staff Officer

John O'Riordan, J & N Security

Apologies:

Councillor Gerry Dolan

At the outset of the meeting Councillor Enda McGloin welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Adoption of Minutes 10th December 2020

On the **PROPOSAL** of Cllr Enda Stenson
SECONDED by Cllr Sean McDermott

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Minutes of the Joint Policing Committee Meeting of 10th December 2020.

2. Receive presentation from Garda Commissioner Drew Harris

Receive Presentation from Garda Commissioner Drew Harris

Councillor Enda McGloin welcomed Garda Commissioner Drew Harris to the meeting and extended an invitation to him to visit Leitrim when the current Covid restrictions are lifted.

Commissioner Drew Harris thanked Cllr Enda McGloin for his warm welcome. He delivered a presentation as set out in **Appendix 1** to the Minutes of this meeting on the new operating model being introduced by An Garda Síochána as part of the transformation programme for a better policing service. Commissioner Harris said this model is based on internal and external input to An Garda Síochána and it is a community focused local police service to keep people safe and to protect the vulnerable.

Councillor Enda McGloin thanked Commissioner Drew Harris for his presentation and invited questions from the Members.

Janice Raine Conick asked what the rationale was in choosing the Donegal/Sligo/Leitrim Divisional Headquarters in Letterkenny and how are the new Garda divisions going to work together and co-ordinate their policing work and will there be sufficient resources available in each division.

It was agreed Councillor Sean McGowan's question as submitted under item 4(viii) on the agenda would be taken at this point.

Would the Garda Commissioner reconsider the decision to locate the Garda Divisional Headquarters in Letterkenny? Manorhamilton would be a more central location for the Headquarters for the division that covers the counties of Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal as it is situated right in the heart of the region.

In response to Janice Raine Conick and Cllr Sean McGowan's questions Garda Commissioner Drew Harris outlined that the Divisional Headquarters in Letterkenny will have a focus on the entire division and its location will not impact local policing matters. Having the divisional headquarters located in Letterkenny does not mean that all personnel will be centralised in the headquarters. He stated that large office accommodation, such as is currently available in Letterkenny is required for the divisional headquarters and this space is not currently available in Manorhamilton and

would require significant investment to locate it there.

Superintendents, Inspectors, Sergeants and their teams will be geographically dispersed throughout the Regions and Divisions. 4 functional areas will be at separate locations with a Divisional Officer based in Letterkenny providing oversight & governance.

Garda Commissioner Drew Harris said there will be sufficient Garda resource available in the Region, the new structure will facilitate specialised garda resources which can be moved throughout the Region as the need arises.

Commissioner Harris said every effort will be made to minimise disruption to Garda members and staff throughout the implementation process. The new operating model will have a reduction in administrative activities and paper-based processes and increased capacity of divisional members and staff, enabling them to focus on frontline and operational policing. Commissioner Harris said the Operating Model places a renewed emphasis on proactive community policing at a local level.

Councillor Enda Stenson paid tribute to the work of the Gardaí and added that there is a real need for extra Gardai presence on the ground in our local towns to combat drug abuse and it is important the Gardai have a local knowledge of towns.

Councillor Justin Warnock queried how many Gardai, on an annual basis, need to be recruited to fill vacancies arising from retirements etc and to maintain staffing levels. Councillor Warnock said the problem of drugs wasn't just seen in parts of South Leitrim and they can be found everywhere and sought confirmation as to when we can get this problem under control.

Deputy Martin Kenny said Community Policing is very important. He added that it is very important for the sale of drugs is combated and he highlighted the regions' large geographical area and a sparse population and added that gardai need to be assigned to local communities and understand local issues. He added that any recruitment or additional resources is welcome and should be targeted at rural areas.

It was agreed Councillor Sean McGowan's question as submitted under agenda item 4(vii) would be taken at this point.

What is the possibility of re-opening the Garda Stations in the towns of Mohill, Ballinamore and Drumshanbo on a 24-hour basis so as the Gardai can deal with law and other matters, anti-social behaviour and drug related situations that arise? Doing so would give reassurance to the public that the Gardai are able to respond quickly when they are needed.

In response to these questions Garda Commissioner Drew Harris said the Sligo/Leitrim/ Donegal Division has been approved for a Community Engagement Superintendent which are responsible for proactive community engagement, volume crime, victim support and general operational policing. Commissioner Harris said

there is a need to recruit an additional between 750-800 gardai into the service and he acknowledged that there is a high training overhead. He acknowledged that the Covid pandemic has had an impact on Garda Resources and there has been 6 months without any training and it is hoped to catch up on student training this year. Garda Commissioner Harris informed the JPC that €40 million worth of illegal drugs has been seized already this year with €22 million seized in cash from organised crimes groups. This seized money goes back into the community to provide community services.

Garda Commissioner Harris acknowledged and recognised the problems associated with drugs and noted the pandemic has seen an increase in drugs use. Garda Commissioner Harris said An Garda Síochána can't bring drugs under control through enforcement alone and the public has to play their part by knowing the impact of drugs, by being aware of the violence and intimidation that comes as a result of drug production including the trafficking of workers for drug houses and also being aware of the ecological impacts of drugs in other countries like Columbia. Garda Commissioner Harris said the drugs trade is tied into organised criminal behaviours and has moral and ecological impacts for society. He continued that no group or class in our society is immune from its affects and the efforts of the gardai must be right across the country and in this regard, resources are being allocated to combat the problem.

Chief Superintendent Glacken gave an update on the drug searches, amounts of drugs and money seized and grow houses found in Leitrim. He informed the members that five criminal gangs have been identified in profiling criminals and their assets in the Sligo/Leitrim area. He appealed to the public to come forward with information that they may have in relation to this crime and not to be intimidated.

Chief Superintendent Glacken outlined that Mohill Garda Station is a 24-hour station with 24 hour patrols carried out and he advised that 2 new gardai have been assigned to Mohill Garda station giving greater visibility in the area. The Community Engagement Unit is available in Drumshanbo and both Drumshanbo and Ballinamore gardai are supported by units from Carrick-on-Shannon and 24-hour patrols are carried out in both areas. The Garda response is provided 24/7 and has a strong focus on the vulnerable in our society.

Minister Frank Feighan said that as part of the National Drug Strategy a Health Screening Pilot scheme is developed, giving Gardai discretion to divert first time offenders found in possession of drugs into alternate programmes rather just solely through the courts.

Councillor Thomas Mulligan welcomed the additional resources to Mohill Garda Station and sought an opportunity for local groups meet with the Sergeant regularly to keep up to date and improve service generally from a Garda point of view.

Chief Superintendent Glacken thanked Councillor Thomas Mulligan for his comments in regard to information sharing and said A/Superintendent Curley will be inviting local groups to information sharing events which will take place over the next 2 to 3

months.

It was agreed Bernie McGuaran's question as submitted under agenda item 4(vii) would be taken at this point.

Would the Garda Commissioner consider making a recommendation to the Department of Justice to have all border crossings covered by Community CCTV systems? This would greatly assist in the solving of many crimes in the border region. A pilot scheme was presented to the previous Minister for Justice by Manorhamilton Enterprise Forum but did not come under any particular funding scheme.

Garda Commissioner Harris noted the proximity to the border, and he said Digital Recording Bill which is currently being developed will address this issue. He acknowledged that high quality CCTV is currently available and this new legislation when implemented will enable that An Garda Síochána pick up information from privately held CCTV as well as give a legislative basis for the use of Automated Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) and Body Worn Cameras (BWC).

Councillor Enda McGloin thanked Garda Commissioner Drew Harris for his attendance at the meeting.

3. Report from an Garda Síochána

Chief Superintendent Aidan Glacken gave a presentation on crime statistics for County Leitrim for 2021 up to 17th March compared with 2020.

Chief Superintendent Glacken said the lack of a night time economy and the fact that criminals were restricted in their movements around the country due to the public health restrictions and the increased visible presence of An Garda Síochána at checkpoints and patrols has resulted in a drop in recorded crimes in particular those associated with the night time economy, theft and criminal damage.

Chief Superintendent Glacken said there is an increase in people driving under the influence of drugs and he appealed to the public to consider the potential harm and the hurt and pain they can inflict on families because of this behaviour.

Chief Superintendent Glacken noted there has been an increase in reported domestic violence incidents in the county and in the notification of child welfare concerns to Tusla. Gardai remain very aware of the sensitivities of such cases and have achieved a 90% call back rate on all domestic violence reports in Leitrim within 7 days of the initial contact.

Chief Superintendent Glacken paid tribute to the community efforts in assisting older and vulnerable people, supported by the COVID Community Response Forum, Leitrim County Council, the GAA and numerous other groups.

The presentation appears in **Appendix 2** to minute Item 3.

Councillor Mary Bohan thanked Chief Superintendent Glacken for his report and paid tribute to An Garda Siochana for all their work.

Deputy Martin Kenny said the use of CCTV has had a significant benefit to policing. Deputy Kenny said he would encourage further adaptation of technology. He acknowledged that finance received from drug seizures should be put into more community services and he said it is important that we don't become too reliant on this mechanism, the mechanism has merit, but it should be considered cautiously.

Councillor Felim Gurn said CCTV has been significant in the deterrent of crime and the system is relied upon for convictions. Councillor Gurn queried the possibility of funding for the upkeep of CCTV system in Manorhamilton and queried if crime will increase when COVID-19 is over.

In response to Councillor Felim Gurn, Chief Superintendent Glacken said the Crime Prevention Officer is working with local Community Groups in Manorhamilton and it is in all our interests that CCTV systems are working and providing reassurance.

Chief Superintendent Glacken said COVID-19 has had a substantial impact on reducing crime and stated that no one wants to see an increase in crime, He advised that there is a lot more drug detection and this will give rise in an increase in prosecutions.

4. Questions submitted by JPC Members

4(i) Question from Councillor Felim Gurn

What powers do An Garda Siochana have when they are repeatedly called to a housing estate where anti-social behaviour is occurring and continuously using up Garda resources on a weekly basis? As anti-social behaviour also causes stress to other neighbours who live close by, is additional legislation required to give the Gardai additional powers to deal with this problem?

A/Superintendent Curley advised that under Section 114 of the Criminal Justice Act, An Garda Siochana can serve an Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) on people who are the cause of this behaviour. If three ASBOs are served on a person, they will then proceed to court. High visibility controls will be put in place if complaints continue to come in. To date, two ASBOs have been issued to date.

4(ii) Question from Councillor Sean McDermott:

In light of the bank closures and the possibility of Credit Unions and Post Offices taking on extra business and handling extra cash, is there now an increased security risk to these institutions?

A/Superintendent Curley advised the Crime Prevention Officer has visited and advised a number of the financial institutions in the county. The feedback has been very positive and further training will be provided by the Crime Prevention Officer. A/Superintendent Curley advised An Garda Siochana patrols will be increased in areas where these institutions are located.

4(iii) Question from Councillor Sean McDermott:

Is there a cell available in the Garda station in Manorhamilton?

A/Superintendent Curley advised there is a cell in Manorhamilton but unfortunately it has been condemned and it is listed for remedial works to bring it up to the necessary standard. This will be monitored, and an update will be provided at the next JPC meeting in this regard.

As question 4(v) and question 4(vi) were similar in nature it was agreed to take both questions simultaneously. Chairperson, Councillor Enda McGloin advised members to note that these questions relate to ongoing police investigations.

4(v) Question from Mr. Kenny Murtagh (Carrick-on-Shannon Town Team)

Why were the 300 people who attended an organised funeral party that lasted 3 days (Thursday, March 11- Sunday March 14) in a marquee in the halting site in Carrick on Shannon, in clear breach of regulations, not directed by the Gardai to stop the gathering, although Gardai were clearly supervising the party?

What measures have been put in place to ensure this does not happen again?

4(vi) Question from Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire

What steps were taken by the Gardai to prevent the use of, or remove the marquee, erected to facilitate a large gathering at a recent funeral here in Carrick within a community setting; how were a large number of mourners allowed travel to Carrick by car from England and Northern Ireland breaking the 5k travel restriction without being immediately turned for home; what steps will be taken to ensure no repeat of anything similar to the organised gathering of March 10th- 14th takes place in our country again while public health guidelines and restrictions at Level 3, 4 and 5 are in place?

Chief Superintendent Glacken stated that he is limited in responding to these two questions as they concern ongoing policing matters. He acknowledged the grief, upset and anger that was caused because of the actions of some people who congregated in large gatherings and chose to ignore the public health advice, as well as ignoring

advice on the wearing of face coverings in public places. This behaviour was frustrating and hugely disappointing, showing little regard for public health and little regard for the huge efforts made by the community of Leitrim and across this country over the past 12 months in containing this virus. He said policing of gatherings such as the ones referred to in the questions are very sensitive and An Garda Síochána engaged in discussions with several groups and engaged a mediator with specific experience in these situations. Many assurances by those organising the proceedings were provided but unfortunately, some of these assurances were not kept.

Chief Superintendent Glacken advised that under current regulations, travel for the purpose of attending a funeral is deemed an essential journey and is not subject to the 5km limit restriction.

Chief Superintendent Glacken said the policing plan utilised 950 garda hours, and resulted in five permanent garda checkpoints as well as 177 fixed penalty charges notices being issued as well as fines worth a total of €19,400 being imposed and several cars being seized as well as 3 arrests.

Referring to the marquee, Chief Superintendent Glacken said An Garda Síochána have no lawful right to take down a temporary structure.

Chief Superintendent Glacken expressed his disappointment regarding some commentary around the events which was unhelpful.

He said another funeral occurred last weekend in Carrick-on-Shannon and it was managed in the same way but resulted in more respect and regard for COVID guidance.

Chief Superintendent Glacken acknowledged that a lot of the encounters the Gardai experienced was from those attending from the UK. In policing the first funeral, Garda personnel had been subject to personal provocations, to abuse, threats and insults in the course of carrying out their duty and he paid tribute to the Gardai for their professionalism in such difficult circumstances.

Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire noted that many local representatives had become a target for anger and abuse over the situation. Councillor Armstrong McGuire thanked and paid tribute to An Garda Síochána for their efforts and acknowledged that this was a very difficult situation for them.

Mr Kenny Murtagh thanked An Garda Síochána and acknowledged that this was a difficult predicament to be in.

5 Correspondence

1. Circular RW 18 of 2020 dated 21st December 2020 from the Department of Transport in regard to LA16 Collision Reporting and Evaluation Procedure.

2. Email of the 3rd February 2021 from the Minister for Justice in regard to the Community Alert Rebates scheme.

Ms Mary Quinn advised that a meeting will take place with the Department of Justice on the Community Text Alert System and an update will be available for the next meeting of the JPC.

3. Email of 25th January 2021 from the Minister for Justice regarding the rebate towards Local Text Alert Scheme.
4. Letter from An Garda Síochána dated 23rd March 2021 requesting submissions to be submitted by 7th April 2021 on the An Garda Síochána Strategy Statement 2022-2024.

6 LA16 Collision reporting and evaluation

A/Superintendent Carla Curry said this is a new system introduced in January 2021. The LA 16 Collision report and evaluation procedure form is completed by An Garda Síochána with the purpose of collecting data at road traffic collision sites where a fatality has occurred or that are likely to become fatal. A/Superintendent Curry said thankfully no incidents have occurred to date.

7 Consider Progress Report on JPC Strategic Plan 2015-2020 & Annual Report for Council

Ms Mary Quinn, Director of Services, gave an overview on the progress report of the Joint Policing Committee Strategic Plan 2015-2020 as set out in **Appendix 3** to minute Item 7.

Ms Mary Quinn, Director of Services, gave an overview of the Annual Report which outlined the activities of the Joint Policing Committee in 2020 as set out in **Appendix 4** to minute Item 7. Ms Quinn advised that this Annual Report was circulated to the Members and adopted at 1st March 2021 Council meeting.

The reports were noted by the Members.

8 Consider JPC Draft Work Programme for 2021

Ms Mary Quinn provided an over-view of the Joint Policing Committee Draft Work Programme for 2021 as set out in **Appendix 5** to minute Item 8.

On the **Proposal** of Justin Warnock
Seconded by Jancie Raine Conick

It was **AGREED** to adopt the Joint Policing Committee Work Programme for 2021

9 Presentation - Phase 2 Design proposal for Carrick on Shannon CCTV System

Councillor Enda McGloin welcomed Nicola McManus, Economic Development Section, Leitrim County Council and John O’Riordan from J&N Security to give a presentation to the meeting on the Phase 2 Design proposal for the Carrick-on-Shannon CCTV system. The Chairperson also welcomed Mr Joe Dolan on behalf of Carrick-on-Shannon CCTV Company to the meeting.

A copy of the presentation presented to the meeting appears as **Appendix 6** to minute Item 9.

Mr John O’Riordan complimented Leitrim County Council and Joe Dolan from Carrick CCTV Company for the high quality CCTV system that has been installed in Carrick and he also paid tribute to Chief Superintendent Glacken and former Superintendent Kevin English for all their help in this regard.

In responding to a question from Councillor Enda McGloin, Ms Nicola McManus confirmed there is no closing date for the submission of the application to the Department.

Mr Joe Dolan said the CCTV initiative is a community-based scheme and it had to be community led and this is achieved through the Carrick CCTV company. Mr Dolan said Phase 1 has been very successful and it now requires some additions, and this has led to Phase 2.

Mr Joe Dolan paid tribute to Ms Nicola McManus and An Garda Siochana for all their help and assistance in this regard and he said it is a ‘win-win’ situation” for all parties.

Councillor Enda McGloin paid tribute to Mr Joe Dolan the other members of the Carrick CCTV company for their efforts in implementing the system.

Councillor Felim Gurn queried if the installation costs of the CCTV system are 100% or 60% funded by the Department.

Ms McManus advised that it is 60% funded by the Department to a maximum of €40,000.

Councillor Felim Gurn said it is difficult for Community Groups to source the funding gap of 40% themselves.

On the **Proposal** of Councillor Finola Armstrong McGuire
Seconded by Sean Mc Gowan

It was **AGREED** to support the proposed extension to the existing Community CCTV system, which included the installation of additional cameras at 10 different locations throughout Carrick-on-Shannon.

Chief Superintendent Aidan Glacken paid tribute to Phase 1 of the project and endorsed the Phase 2 design proposal for Carrick-on-Shannon CCTV System and he outlined how beneficial this is to the community and how useful the system is for An Garda Siochana.

10 Consider schedule of JPC meetings for 2021

It was agreed that the Joint Policing Committee would meet on the following dates at 11:00 am during 2021.

- Monday 31st May 2021
- Monday 4th October 2021

A date for the Public meeting is to be confirmed for the 3rd quarter of the year.

Councillor Enda McGloin thanked everyone for their attendance and participation.

The business of the meeting concluded at 13.14 pm.

Signed:

Councillor Enda McGloin
Chairperson

Mary Quinn
Director of Services
Housing, Corporate,
Community & Emergency
Services

Monday, 31 May 2021