

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AT MEETING OF THE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF ADARE-RATHKEALE JPC SUBCOMMITTEE HELD IN ÁRAS SEÁN FINN, NEW LINE ROAD, RATHKEALE, CO. LIMERICK ON THURSDAY, 9TH NOVEMBER, 2017 AT 9.00 A.M.

PRESENT IN THE CHAIR: Councillor R. O'Donoghue, An Cathaoirleach.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors Keary, McMahon, O'Brien, Sheahan and Teskey.

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Director, Regional Services (Ms. C. Curley), A/Senior Executive Engineer, Service Operations West Division (Mr. K. Murphy), Meetings Administrator (Mr. T. O'Callaghan), Administrative Officer, Rathkeale Office (Ms. K. Butler), Assistant Staff Officer (Ms. E. Buckley).

Superintendent E. O'Neill, Inspector A. Cullen, Sergeant N. Flood and Garda L. McCarthy.

1. Christmas in Rathkeale

At the outset the Cathaoirleach and Members wished Superintendent O'Neill well in his new role in the District and welcomed him and his colleagues to the Meeting.

Superintendent O'Neill noted that, in relation to Christmas in Rathkeale, he had already engaged with stakeholders and outlined the Garda commitment and what would be required of others, to ensure that the period passed safely and in accordance with the law. He noted that Divisional Units would be used to supplement local garda resources and that Sergeant Flood would be returning to operate in Rathkeale.

Members stressed the importance of having the proposed CCTV cameras in place by Christmas and discussed the proposals to place speed ramps in Rathkeale and the Garda involvement in this process. Members also discussed the economic benefits that accrue to Rathkeale over the Christmas period, the need to welcome visitors and the potential to put a team of community officers in place in this regard. Members also noted that many locals did not shop in Rathkeale over the Christmas period and that business was being lost as a result. Instances of unlicensed trading, in competition with local rate payers, were also highlighted. Members noted that, given the duration and numbers of visitors involved, there were no similar events in Ireland that this could be compared with and stressed the need for action to be taken to ensure that the events of previous years were not repeated.

In response to queries from Members, Superintendent O'Neill noted that he would be in dialogue with the various state agencies, as appropriate, as issues arose. With regard to

issues that might arise from unsupervised children on the street in Rathkeale, the Gardaí would engage with the families involved and any instance of neglect would be brought to the attention of Túsla.

2. Policing Issues in the District.

Members expressed concern at the size of the Garda District, under the control of Superintendent O'Neill, following the amalgamation of the Newcastle West and Askeaton Districts and the perception that ordinary citizens did not have a personal connection with the Gardaí and crime was going unreported. Members noted that crime was becoming transient, in response to lack of Garda resources and, in view of the presence of Foynes Port and other significant businesses in that area, a request was made that consideration be given to assigning a District Inspector to the Askeaton area.

Members discussed the prevalence of youths, in their teens and younger, on the streets in Askeaton at all hours and also the prevalence of drugs in Askeaton and it was noted that a deputation from Askeaton had met recently with the Gardaí, in this regard. It was suggested that low crime rates in Askeaton had supported the merger with Newcastle West but that a percentage of crime went unreported. Members requested an increased Garda presence on the beat in Askeaton and a focus on illegal drug use there, and throughout the District.

Members raised the issue of incidents during Halloween and noted that large groups of youths were being transported into certain locations by their parents and that some communities had organised street marshals in response.

Superintendent O'Neill acknowledge the issues raised by Members and noted that he would take the appropriate action in response to same and would revert to the Askeaton Community Council in relation to their concerns.

Superintendent O'Neill reviewed the crime statistics arising at Halloween which showed a decrease of 50% in 2017, compared to 2016 and noted that there had been an increased Garda presence, on street, and checks on the sale of alcohol to youths. He pointed out that operation Thor continued to operate to detect travelling gangs of criminals and stressed the importance of the Gardaí maintaining informal contacts with the communities and the importance of people reporting crime. With regard to resources, Superintendent O'Neill reassured the Members that he would seek to fill any gaps that might exist in same in his District.

On the proposal of Councillor Keary, seconded by Councillor Sheahan the following Motion was agreed by Members.

“That this District calls on the Minister for Justice and Equality to arrange for an advertising campaign on national television, targeted in particular at the elderly,

warning of the risks of engaging with rogue traders and builders who pressurise the customer into paying exorbitant rates for their services”

Superintendent O’Neill noted that his staff could organise an advertisement in this regard on local radio and pointed out that banks were vigilant of elderly customers making significant withdrawals.

Members discussed the potential for the Gardaí to have access to electronic tracking and driver monitoring, used by some insurance companies in conjunction with the customer, to potentially further reduce the cost of insurance and as a tool for the Gardaí.

Superintendent O’Neill noted that, under current arrangements, the contract existed between the insurance company and the customer and there would be Data Protection issues concerning Garda involvement in same. It was noted that an Oireachtas Committee was reviewing the issue of insurance.

This concluded the Meeting.

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach

Dated: _____