

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AT VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE HELD ON 4TH DECEMBER, 2020, AT 10.00 A.M.

IN THE CHAIR :	Councillor A. Teskey
MEMBERS :	Councillors B. Collins, J. Collins, J. Costelloe, S. Hartigan, S. Keary, S. Kiely, M Murphy, M. Ryan, C. Sheehan and A. Talukder
OIREACHTAS MEMBERS :	M. Quinlivan, T.D., N. Collins, T.D., K. O'Donnell, T.D., and R. O'Donoghue, T.D.
PPN SECTORAL NOMINEES :	Ms. D. Dunne, Dr. B. Hayes and Ms. S. Johnston
GARDA NOMINATIONS :	Chief Superintendent (Mr. G. Roche), Superintendent (Mr. B. Sugrue), Superintendent (Ms. A. Magner), Assistant Principal (Ms. L. Breen), Senior Analyst (Ms. L. Collins)
OFFICIALS :	Chief Executive (Mr. P. Daly), A/Senior Executive Officer (Mr. J. Clune), Staff Officer (Ms. L. Creamer)
APOLOGIES :	Councillors E. O'Brien, J. O'Donoghue and K. Sheahan, Brian Leddin, T.D. and C. Flynn, Limerick Public Participation Network

The Chairman welcomed the new Limerick Public Participation Network nominees onto the Joint Policing Committee.

1. Minutes

Circulated, copy of Minutes of Joint Policing Committee Meeting held on 2nd October, 2020 :

Proposed by Councillor M. Ryan
Seconded by Councillor S. Keary

2. Update from Chief Superintendent

The Chief Superintendent stated that Covid 19 still remains a high risk issue in Limerick despite the restrictions. Also, despite a reduction in the volume of traffic, drug and drink driving detection is still very high. Since Covid Gardaí have more time to give on thorough investigations and has been very successful this year on drug detection with a lot of cases before the courts. He added that court cases are back logged for months despite seven court sittings in Limerick most of the time. He stated that a lot of the crime has been pushed out the county because a lot of people are now working from home in the city which has resulted in reduced house burglaries in the city.

3. Overview on Crime Statistics from Senior Analyst

Ms. L. Collins gave a brief statistical overview of current crime statistics.

The Chief Superintendent stated that the Gardaí in Limerick launched an initiative a few years ago in relation to domestic violence. Procedures are in place nationally, however, this initiative is the only one in Ireland. Gardaí in plain clothes meet abuse victims in a safe place away from Garda stations in a confidential manner and every effort is made to encourage abuse victims to lodge a complaint against their abuser. The Gardaí work closely with Tusla and Adapt House. He said it will be monitored over the next three years and expressed hope that it opens pathways and give all relevant information to people who needs it. He added that there has been a huge increase in domestic violence since the commencement of Covid 19 pandemic.

He stated that Adapt contacts the Gardaí when necessary. The Gardaí monitor the more serious domestic violence cases and said the most effective thing is to bring these cases before the courts. He said the Gardaí encourage people to engage with the Services, however, most are living in fear. A lot of the court services are particularly backed up at present and special courts are being convened to deal with this back log. He added that additional Garda resources are needed to deal with these cases. He pointed out that the backing up of trials can have legal implications which is worrying, however, there is a procedure in place to monitor those people on bail and extremely serious cases are prioritized.

Members welcomed this initiative and commended all involved. They particularly welcomed the fact that Gardaí follow up with victims of domestic abuse to encourage them to proceed with prosecution and to seek help. However, he stated that more awareness is required.

The Chief Superintendent replied to Members queries as follows :

The extra testing machines account for the increase in drug detections adding that there are now seven drug testing machines in Limerick. If additional machines are required they can be applied for. A lot of people are trained in the use of these machines including traffic corps. He pointed out that drugs can remain in your system for up to two weeks and drug detection can result in serious implications. He stated that 205 drug dealers have been arrested, however, a lot of cases are awaiting trial so dealers are back out on the streets. He commended the drugs squad adding that additional resources will be sought.

The issue of sulky racing is a continuing problem with people attending and participating in sulky racing from all over the country. However, resources are a constant issue but the Gardaí manage the situation as best as possible. Control of horses in the metropolitan area is an ongoing problem and in particular horses which were recently in Mt. St. Oliver graveyard. He said he would support strong legislation and fully support the Council in addressing this issue. However, there is a significant cost to remove horses and then in most cases the horses are never claimed. The welfare of horses is also an issue.

4. Question submitted by Niall Collins, T.D.

"I will ask at the next Meeting for confirmation that a dedicated Policing Plan for Rathkeale will be implemented during the Christmas and New Year period and if a broad outline of this plan can be made available to inform the public".

Superintendent Magner stated that last year the Plan for the Christmas and New Year period was in operation from 6th December 2019 to 5th January, 2020. This year it has been extended and covers the period 24th November, 2020 to 10th January, 2021 which is an increase of two weeks. An additional budget was applied for and granted. The Gardaí have an extensive engagement with key stakeholders in Rathkeale and the main aim is to identify any breach of legislation. Loitering on the

street is an issue so Gardai are on the streets to address this problem and are also targeting illegal parking. There has been a significant increase in the number of people coming into Rathkeale for the Christmas period, however, there is a high visibility of Gardaí in the town and increased checkpoints. There are also additional personnel from the Garda training centre and support from divisional roads policing personnel. She stated that she could not disclose the operational order for operational reasons.

5. Question submitted by Niall Collins, T.D.

“I will ask at the next Meeting for the number of fines issued, the number of files referred to the DPP and the number of prosecutions initiated and/or before the courts in Limerick arising from breaches of Covid 19 Regulations”.

In reply, the Chief Superintendent stated that divisionally no fines were issued, there were 28 breaches, 13 to prosecute, 3 not to prosecute, 5 awaiting directions and 7 files prepared for the DPP.

6. Question submitted by Niall Collins, T.D.

“I will ask at the next Meeting for the number of (1) bars and pubs in which An Garda Síochána carried out test purchasing to detect the sale of alcohol to underage persons and (2) the number of off licence premises in which An Garda Síochána carried out test purchasing to detect the sale of alcohol to underage persons in Limerick during 2018, 2019 and 2020 to date and, arising from this, the number of fines issued and/or prosecutions initiated/taken before the courts”.

The Chief Superintendent replied as follows :

	2018	2019	2020
Bars and Pubs	24	12	13
Off Licence Premises	22	27	42
Sale to Under 18 for the period	20		

7. Question submitted by Niall Collins, T.D.

“I will ask at the next Meeting for the number of vehicles seized under Section 41 of the Road Traffic Act for (a) no insurance (b) no NCT (c) no tax (d) unaccompanied driver (e) no drivers licence (f) dangerous / defective vehicle, in Limerick in each of the years 2018, 2019 and 2020 to date”.

The Chief Superintendent stated that this information cannot be obtained from the Pulse system. However, stated that the statistics for the number of vehicles seized under Section 41 of the Road Traffic Act were as follows :

2018 : 1943
 2019 : 1893
 2020 : 1510 (up to 30th Nov 2020)

8. Question submitted by Maurice Quinlivan, T.D.

“I will ask at the next Meeting how many illegal scramblers and quad bikes have been seized in the Limerick policing district in 2019 and 2020 to date”.

The Chief Superintendent replied as follows :

2018 : 12
2019 : 22
2020 : 31 (up to 30th Nov 2020)

9. Question submitted by Maurice Quinlivan, T.D.

"I will ask at the next Meeting, where there has been drug seizures and subsequent criminal charges, how many of these cases remains to be heard before the courts, specifically charges regarding the alleged possession of controlled drugs for unlawful sale or supply (S. 15A of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1977 as amended), that were seized in Limerick".

In reply the Chief Superintendent stated that there are presently 26 people before Limerick Circuit Criminal Court charged under Section 15A of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1977/84 who are either awaiting a trial date or sentencing hearing. The date of the offences are between May 2016 to May 2020 which is due to the large volume of cases presently before the Limerick Circuit Court awaiting trial.

From January 2020 to 30th November, 2020, 22 people were detected, 6 of whom are before Limerick Circuit Criminal Courts awaiting trial and files being prepared/directions awaited on the remaining 16 people detected.

10. Question submitted by Maurice Quinlivan, T.D.

"I will ask at the next Meeting for an update on the policing operation in the Garryowen area".

In reply, the Chief Superintendent stated that an Operation did run in the Garryowen Area in August 2020 to tackle anti social behavior and a further operation is now being conducted which started on 30th November 2020 and will run for a three week period. This will entail dedicated high visibility patrols and checkpoints at high risk times and will cover Garryowen and Johnsgate areas. He added that a new member has been allocated to Community Policing with responsibility for the Garryowen area to assist with the policing needs of the community. He added that the Gardaí have a close working relationship with the Garryowen Residents Association and the Garryowen Community Development Project and stated he would support CCTV going into the Garryowen and Johnsgate areas.

11. Question submitted by Councillor Martin Ryan

"I will ask at the next Meeting will Garda Management review the staffing levels with the view to increasing same for the Cappamore / Kilmallock area and especially Murroe / Cappamore / Doon / Pallasgreen / Oola".

The Chief Superintendent replied saying there is one sergeant and five garda members covering this area who are supported by divisional resources from traffic and local crime unit to manage and assist with all investigations and policing matters. Garda Edel Moloney operates between Oola and Pallasgreen Garda Stations providing policing to both areas.

12. Question submitted by Councillor Martin Ryan

"I will ask at the next Meeting will Garda Management increase it's operation in Johnsgate Village estate as it has been highlighted that there is a great problem with anti social behavior there causing great distress and difficulty for residents and landlords. Anti social behavior is rampant in this area".

The Chief Superintendent stated that Gardaí are aware of the issue of anti social behavior in Johnsgate Village and have been liaising with the Council in relation to decisions surrounding housing allocations there. An Operational Order has been created to ensure additional policing in the area and community Policing Unit supported by Operation Disruption have been tasked to perform this duty in conjunction with a similar operation in Garryowen.

13. Question submitted by Kieran O'Donnell, T.D.

"I will ask at the next Meeting for an update on incidents of Covid 19 related vandalism and graffiti in Limerick and an update on Garda investigations underway here".

In reply, the Chief Superintendent stated that there has been no Covid 19 related MO recorded for criminal damage. However, there was one incident of criminal damage which had an overt link to Covid 19 reported during November 2020 and a comprehensive investigation is continuing by detectives at Henry Street Crime Office.

14. Notice of Motion (referred from Meeting of the Metropolitan District of Limerick held on 19th October, 2020)

"I will ask An Garda Síochána for an update on incidents of anti social behavior around the former Limerick Racecourse site and for plans to deal with anti social behaviour in the area".

The Motion was proposed by Councillor C. Sheehan, seconded by Councillor S. Kiely and agreed.

The Chief Superintendent stated that this site continues to receive regular Garda attention with minimal complaints received and added that community policing personnel are liaising with local residents in the area.

15. Notice of Motion submitted by Dr. Breda Hayes

"I will move at the next Meeting that the Joint Policing Committee write to the Minister for Justice and to the Minister for Children seeking legislative intervention to remove the prohibition in Section 252 of the Children Act 2001 against naming child victims in appropriate circumstances".

The Chairman stated that the Joint Policing Committee addresses issues in relation to policing matters and crime and would not be the correct forum for this Notice of Motion. This Motion is a matter for the judicial system.

16. Any other Business

In reply to Members concerns regarding the non wearing of face masks by some members of the public in Rathkeale, the Chief Superintendent stated that it is not mandatory to wear face coverings out in public but are required to be worn on all public transport, shops, shopping centres, libraries etc. He added that it is the responsibility of the retailers to ensure compliance by people entering

their premises. From 7th December members of the public can be subject to on the spot fines for not wearing a face covering in mandated areas.

The Chief Executive stated that the problem of wandering horses is a constant issue. At present the Council's horse controller is coming from Cork which can take a long time and does not solve an immediate problem. He stated that he has asked the Director to look at this and stated that legislative change is required to address this problem and said that a recommendation would be going to the Government from Limerick City and County Council in the new year.

He acknowledged that there was ongoing anti social behaviour issues in Johnsgate and Garryowen areas and said he will continue to look at the installation of CCTV in these areas and said the Council will continue to work with the Gardaí adding that there is a strong dialogue between the Council and the Gardaí and thanked them for their efforts in addressing this problem.

The Chief Executive referred to the Community Response Unit which has 1700 volunteers and which has worked very well and which was critical during the pandemic especially at weekends. All issues were dealt with in an effective way and said he was delighted with the level of support from the Gardaí.

In reply to Members query, he stated that if a wandering horse damages a vehicle it is a private matter between the horse owner and the vehicle owner but stated that the Council will be looking at this as part of the review.

Members asked that they be circulated with a copy of the letter to the Minister in relation to the issue of wandering horses following on from the November Metropolitan District Meeting.

Members also requested that they be circulated with the number of Exclusion Orders.

The Chairman stated that the draft JPC Standing Orders would be circulated to all Members and anybody wishing to make an amendment to same to revert to James Clune.

The Chief Superintendent asked that the dates for the JPC Meetings for 2021 be circulated to all.

It was agreed that the next JPC Meeting would be held on Friday, 5th March, 2021.

This concluded the Meeting.

Signed : _____
Councillor Adam Teskey, Chairman

Date : _____