

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AT MEETING OF THE MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF NEWCASTLE WEST JOINT POLICING SUB COMMITTEE HELD IN ÁRAS WILLIAM SMITH OBRIEN, NEWCASTLE WEST, ON WEDNESDAY, 20TH OCTOBER, 2021, AT 11.30 A.M.

PRESENT IN THE CHAIR: Councillor L. Galvin, Cathaoirleach.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councillors Collins, Foley, Ruddle and Scanlan.

APOLOGIES:

Councillor J. Sheahan.

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Director, Community Development Directorate (Mr. G. Daly), Senior Executive Engineer, West Division (Mr. J. Sheehan), Meetings Administrator, Newcastle West (Ms. M. Corbett), Clerical Officer, Newcastle West (Ms. A. Lenihan)

Chief Superintendent G. Roche, Superintendent A. Magner, Inspector A. Lacey, Inspector J. Flanagan, Detective Sergeant M. Reidy, Sergeant N. Barry, Sergeant R. O'Connor, Y. O'Keeffe C.O.

At the outset, Councillor Galvin welcomed the Chief Superintendent, Superintendent and everyone in attendance to the October Meeting of the Newcastle West Joint Policing Sub Committee.

The Cathaoirleach then proceeded with the Meeting by confirming all the Attendees present.

1. Adoption of Minutes

Circulated, copy of draft Minutes of Online Meeting of the Joint Policing Sub Committee Meeting of the Municipal District of Newcastle West held on 3rd March, 2021.

Proposed by: Councillor Scanlan

Seconded by: Councillor Foley

And Resolved:

“That, the draft Minutes, as circulated, be taken as read and adopted and signed”.

2. Policing Issues in the District

Chief Superintendent Roche commenced by thanking the Council for the invitation to attend the Newcastle West Joint Policing Sub Committee Meeting. He also noted that the JPC structure was based on a problem solving approach by both the Gardai and the Council working together.

The Chief Superintendent referred to the very strong challenges, which the Gardaí faced over the last eighteen months due to the Covid19 pandemic. He referred to the Limerick Covid19 Community Response Team, which was one of the first in the country to be set up and involved various organisations including the Gardaí and Limerick City and County Council operating a coordinated response to provide assistance to the vulnerable and elderly across Limerick City and County during the pandemic. The Chief Superintendent thanked all the organisations and members of the public for making Limerick a safer place to live.

He referred to the severe restrictions which were in place during the pandemic and to the crime rates during this time. He made reference to the post pandemic policing, people returning to the workplace and to the strategies in place to deal with seasonal rise in burglaries. Reference was also made to the dangers of drunk or drug driving and speeding on our roads and he stated that a number of operations are in place to deal with these matters. He referred to Operation Thor which is designed to tackle the anticipated increase in the number of burglaries associated with criminal activity. The Chief Superintendent acknowledged the excellent work carried out by the Gardaí in the Newcastle West District where good strategies are in place to deal with these matters.

Superintendent Magner gave an update to the Members on policing issues in the District. She noted the cases which the Gardai have dealt with including burglaries, property crime, thefts, criminal damage, assaults, public order offences, drink and drugs.

She referred to the decrease in the incidents of burglaries, property crime, theft from vehicles, crime against person, assault causing harm and minor assaults, public order offences, possession of offensive weapons, but stated there was an increase in theft from shop, criminal damage and domestic violence incidents. She noted the number of drug detections in the District and to the newly established District Drugs Unit. She stated that it is intended to continue to have this Unit resourced. The Superintendent stated that no fatal accidents had taken place to date this year in the Newcastle West District. She made reference to fraud related crimes and emphasized the necessity of the public in being cautious with regard to this matter.

She also stressed the importance of the assistance of members of the public in the reporting of crime.

Superintendent Magner gave an overview of the joint initiatives which have taken place in the District which included the Limerick Greenway, Community Bus, Dog Chip Scanners, Property Marketing Initiative and the Schools Programme and acknowledged the success of these projects. She also referred to a new initiative to be rolled out to all towns in the District in the New Year with regard to the holding of clinics in community centres.

Detective Sergeant Reidy referred to the investigation of all serious crime in the District. He referred to the decrease in burglaries in the District but stated that an increase is expected when more activity returns in the darker evenings. He also referred to Operation Thor and to the number of cases before the Courts.

He stated that the theft of catalytic converters is ongoing and that the Gardai are working with metal companies with regard to this matter. He also referred to the theft of copper cylinders from derelict and unoccupied premises.

Sergeant Reidy noted the significant increase in fraud crimes in the District and made reference to telephone calls being received by individuals where personal and bank details are being sought and to commercial businesses being targeted by email. He stated that the Gardaí are dependent on the public to report any suspicious activity but that overall a good success rate against this type crime has been achieved.

Superintendent Magner referred to a number of Questions raised by the Members including anti social behaviour in Abbeyfeale, garda patrol in Abbeyfeale, phone lines at Newcastle West Garda Station, responsibility for CCTV cameras, the opening hours and cost of Abbeyfeale Garda Station, attendance at schools, Garda resources and the building of new Garda Station in Newcastle West.

In replying, the Superintendent outlined to the Members the current situation with regard to the above matters. She referred to the low statistics with regard to anti social behavior in Abbeyfeale based on the reports received by the Gardaí and outlined the measures which are in place to deal with anti social behavior including patrolling the town park, patrolling at school times and a motor bike patrol of the town. She also stated that the Gardaí engage closely with a number of organisations on a continuous basis in Abbeyfeale. She, however, stressed the importance of reporting any incidents to the Gardaí.

She stated that the issue with regard to children leaving school early is a matter for the Department of Education but noted that the Gardaí work closely with schools in the District on various matters.

She noted that the telephone lines at Newcastle West Garda Station are diverted to Henry Street Garda Station from 9 p.m. to 7 a.m. daily, to a dedicated telephone line where calls are entered and the nearest patrol car is dispatched to incidents when necessary. She stated that the use of the 999 telephone number is effective in emergencies. She referred to CCTV which is the responsibility of Limerick City and County Council which offers great assistance to the Gardaí and that the contact person with regard to any queries on CCTV is Garda Alan Doody.

She outlined to the Members the opening hours of the Garda Station in Abbeyfeale. She stated that a response with regard to the cost of the Garda Station in Abbeyfeale is awaited and a reply will be given in due course. She referred to the assignment of Garda Tommy Cummane to Abbeyfeale Garda Station. She noted that the old Newcastle West Garda Station had to be closed due to a number of health and safety issues for both Gardai, the public and those taken into custody. She noted that the Probation office in Newcastle West is being used as one of the temporary offices by the Gardai until a new station is available.

The Chief Superintendent gave an update on the current situation with regard to the building of the new Garda Station in Newcastle West and stated that recognition from Government has been received for the building of the new Garda Station and that plans are due to be signed off shortly.

He stated that the next step in the process is to go to tender and it is hoped that building of the Garda Station would commence in early 2023 with an approximate building time of twelve to eighteen months. He also acknowledged the assistance of the Office of Public Works, staff and public in this matter. The Superintendent stated that the closure of Newcastle West Garda Station was a necessity as it was not fit for purpose and that the Abbeyfeale Garda Station is not a dedicated station for the suitable treatment of persons in custody.

The Chief Superintendent referred to the Drugs Unit in the District and stated that the intention is to increase these numbers in this Unit over the next twelve months. He also made reference to over three hundred mobility devices which are being used by the Gardaí and it is hoped to increase this figure to 590 by the end of next month.

The Cathaoirleach and Members complimented the Chief Superintendent, Superintendent and the Gardaí on the comprehensive overview of the current situation within the District.

The Director, on behalf of Management and Staff of the Council acknowledged the assistance and ongoing support of the Gardaí in the District.

This concluded the Meeting.

Signed: _____
Cathaoirleach

Dated: _____