

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE HELD ON 17<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2021 AT 10.00 A.M.**

<b>IN THE CHAIR :</b>	Councillor A. Teskey
<b>MEMBERS :</b>	Councillors B. Collins, J. Collins, J. Costelloe, S. Hartigan, S. Keary, S. Kiely, M. Murphy, E. O'Brien, J. O'Donoghue, K. Sheahan, C. Sheehan and A. Talukder
<b>OIREACHTAS MEMBERS :</b>	M. Quinlivan, T.D., N. Collins, T.D. and K. O'Donnell, T.D.
<b>PPN SECTORAL NOMINEES :</b>	S. Johnson, J. Slattery, J. Nugent and F. Dennison
<b>GARDA NOMINATIONS :</b>	Chief Superintendent (Mr. G. Roche), Superintendent (Mr. B. Sugrue), Superintendent (Mr. D. O'Connor), Superintendent (Ms. A. Magner), Inspector (Mr. P. Sutton), Sergeant (Mr. M. Dunne), Senior Intelligence Analyst (Ms. L. Collins)
<b>OFFICIALS :</b>	Chief Executive (Dr. P. Daly), Senior Executive Officer (Ms. L. Flannery), Administrative Officer (Mr. S Hayes), Administrative Officer (Mr. M. Leahy), Staff Officer (Ms. L. Creamer)
<b>OTHERS :</b>	Councillor D. Butler, Mayor and Councillor E. Secas
<b>APOLOGIES :</b>	Councillors M. Ryan, R. O'Donoghue, T.D. and D. Dunne, ADAPT

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**1. MINUTES**

Circulated, copy of Minutes of Joint Policing Committee Meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2021 :

Proposed by Councillor S. Kiely  
Seconded by Councillor J. Collins

**2. Update from Chief Superintendent**

The Chief Superintendent welcomed the reopening of businesses and said the Gardaí support the businesses in line with Government guidelines. There are presently no Garda Covid checkpoints taking place. Crime statistics is still artificial due to covid and there is reduced burglaries due to a lot of people now working from home. He stated that there are numerous crime operations taking place which have been very successful and has resulted in the imprisonment of a number of criminals.

He stated that Limerick Courts are very busy with six courts running with the support of the Gardaí. 39,000 cases have been dealt with already and it is expected that up to 50,000 cases will be dealt with in the courts by the end of the year which is double the number of cases in Cork. The amount of work done in this area is incredible, however, due to the volume trial days become backed up.

The Chief Superintendent confirmed that a lot of work is being done in community policing. There are a high number of drunk driving and drug driving offences and domestic abuse is still a major concern nationally with an increase of 21%. This is reflective of covid. There is 80% call backs on domestic abuse. €1m more worth of drugs seized this year compared to last year and which has resulted in the imprisonment of a large number of individuals involved in the sale and distribution of drugs. He pointed out that Gardaí alone cannot solve the drugs crisis and that society needed to accept responsibility for fueling the drugs business and realise the dangers of drug using to themselves and the wider public.

He stated that Limerick Garda division is, at times, fighting crime with significantly reduced resources due to covid with 70 out of 400 frontline staff out sick last week. This puts added pressure on all of the working units.

### **3. Overview on Crime Statistics from Senior Crime and Policing Analyst**

Ms. L. Collins, Senior Crime and Policing Analyst gave a brief statistical overview of current crime statistics.

Copy of Presentation would be circulated to all Members after the meeting.

### **4. FILL VACANCY ON THE JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE CAUSED BY THE RESIGNATION OF COUNCILLOR LIAM GALVIN**

The Chairman thanked Councillor Liam Galvin for his contribution to the Joint Policing Committee.

It was proposed by Councillor S. Kiely, seconded by Councillor S. Keary and unanimously agreed to appoint Councillor J. Sheahan to the Joint Policing Committee.

### **5. PRESENTATION BY SERGEANT MARTIN MCCARTHY, DIVISIONAL DRUGS UNIT**

Sergeant M. Dunne gave presentation on drugs as Sergeant McCarthy was unavailable to attend this meeting.

He stated that in 2021 Gardaí from the Divisional Drugs Squad continued with investigations targeting the proceeds of crime and in particular cash accumulated by persons involved in the sale/supply of controlled drugs. In the year 2021, Gardaí seized €334,202 worth of drugs and €4,390 in cash. This cash has been seized as exhibits in relation to ongoing investigations.. There was 206 cases where persons were apprehended for offences of possession of drugs for the purpose of sale and/or supply. It is widely accepted that the cultivation of cannabis is on the increase throughout the country with a total of 11 cases in in Limerick in 2021. This is an area where Gardaí will focus further attention in efforts to increase detections in 2022.

The Chief Superintendent stated that Operation COPOG has been working very well. There has been extra community policing and the gardaí and the Regeneration Unit work closely together in addressing drugs crime and anti social behaviour. He said this good work will be continued and added that there are numerous cases before the courts. He pointed out that privately owned houses are causing issues, however, every effort will be made to continue to address the problem of sale and supply of drugs.

Deputy Quinlivan commended the Gardaí and all concerned in addressing this problem and welcomed the increase in community policing in the city centre. He commended all involved in Operation Copog, however, he voiced residents concerns regarding a property in the city that operates a '24 hour drugs supermarket' despite Gardaí raiding the property several times this year. He said the front door of the house has been blocked off with cement with a small gap left to allow for drugs transactions.

Councillor Keary said that drugs were also at epidemic levels in rural parts of the country. He referred to individuals in his area with exceptionally high standards of living with very high powered vehicles and no evidence of any form of employment other than social welfare.

Councillor Talukder referred to the targeting of the migrant community by criminals who felt safer in their own country than Ireland and asked the Chief Superintendent to help these people.

In reply, the Chief Superintendent stated he cannot comment on individual cases, however, he assured Members that any house selling drugs would be targeted by Gardaí and people prosecuted where necessary. He said that Gardaí and Limerick City and County Council are liaising to see if they could take enforcement action in relation to this particular house as it is a privately owned house and that causes more issues as regards what the Council can do. Assistance has been sought from CAB and from the National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau. He pointed out that, under Operation Copog, nine search operations were conducted under warrant in St. Mary's Park since 3<sup>rd</sup> September. He added that all burglary cases are followed up on and he assured Councillor Talukder that the cases of migrant community are investigated the very same way as all other cases.

Councillor Kiely referred to businesses in the southside of the city who are being targeted by underage and well known individuals who are terrorising and destroying property and was informed by Superintendent O'Connor that he would take this on board and would monitor on an ongoing bases. He would also assign community policing presence in the area.

## **6. PRESENTATION BY INSPECTOR PADRAIG SUTTON ON ROAD SAFETY**

Inspector Sutton stated that on average every one in one hundred and thirty road side breath tests returns positive for alcohol and every one in seven road side oral fluid swabs returns positive for drugs. He added that drug driving offences are beginning to overtake drink driving offences. There has been 4,721 breath tests so far this year with 36 drivers returning positive for alcohol and there were 509 oral fluid drug tests with 78 drivers returning positive for drugs. He stated that there were four fatal collisions in 2021. The Gardaí work with a lot of agencies in addressing road safety.

In reply to Members queries, Inspector Sutton stated that all Inspectors can sign off on alcohol and drug testing at checkpoints. If someone fails either test they are arrested and then a further detailed test is done. You are then taken to the Garda station where a doctor takes a blood sample. A car can be stopped for a variety of reasons including showing signs of being incapable of driving a vehicle adding that there are now reduced levels of alcohol before you fail a test. Prescription drugs are also found when people are stopped and drug tested. However, the overall figures for drug and alcohol testing is down on previous years due to covid.'

Superintendent Sugrue stated that there is an increase in anti social behaviour in the city centre and because of this there is increased manpower for patrolling the city. He added that there is a new operation in place since 1<sup>st</sup> December. Parking in taxi ranks and in disabled persons spaces is a regular focus for Gardaí.

Councillor Costelloe expressed concern at the increase in domestic abuse adding that the services available to domestic abuse victims is stretched and they need extra resources throughout the year. He referred to the great work being done by these services and he referred specifically to the North Star Project who do an excellent job in their community. He stated that all funds seized from the sale / supply of drugs should stay in the area and used to fund these services.

The Chief Superintendent stated that he too was very concerned at the increase in domestic abuse, however, said this is part of the national rise and a lot of it is due to covid restrictions. He added that there are ongoing operations taking place to address this issue. He stated that the allocation of cash ceased from the sale of drugs is a matter for the Oireachtas Members and not the Gardaí.

In reply to Councillor Keary, Inspector Sutton confirmed that Gardaí can test for both alcohol and drugs at the side of the road. If there is a smell of cannabis in a car then that vehicle can be examined. If somebody is tested for alcohol they are automatically tested for drugs, however, drug testing takes longer than drink testing. If somebody is over the drinks limit they are deemed intoxicated. People also need to read the boxes of prescribed medication. Some medications quite clearly states not to drive while taking that medicine. He added that there is significant updating of legislation taking place. A huge amount of resources is involved in this area and a lot of assets have been seized. However, members of the public need to help Gardaí in this matter and need to realise the harm drugs can have on people.

#### **7. LA 16 Collision Reporting and Evaluation Procedure – All outstanding LA 16 submitted and returned to the Department of Transport**

Noted.

#### **8. Correspondence**

Submitted letter of acknowledgement from University of Limerick regarding the Council's Resolution in relation to establishing an off campus Code of Conduct for it's students in the coming academic year.

#### **9. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Elena Secas (referred from Meeting of the Metropolitan District of Limerick held on 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2021) :**

*"I will move at the next Meeting that Limerick City and County Council call on the Government and Garda Commissioner to provide additional garda resources for Limerick and especially for the Castletroy area to tackle ongoing anti social behaviour especially in the housing estates around University of Limerick".*

Difference in totals of Garda Members including Community Policing Gardai in each District, Limerick Division from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020 to 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021

District	2020	2021	Diff
Henry Street	327	323	-4
Roxboro Road	141	140	-1
Newcastlewest	82	80	-2
Bruff	51	53	2

Divisional Total	<b>601</b>	<b>596</b>	<b>-5</b>
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Difference in totals of Garda Community Policing members in Henry Street & Roxboro Road District from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020 to 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021

District	2020	2021	Diff
Henry Street	22	24	<b>+2</b>
Roxboro Road	9	10	<b>+1</b>
Total	31	34	<b>+3</b>

While every Garda District would welcome the allocation of additional resources, the Chief Superintendent confirmed that substantial numbers of additional Gardai are provided to police Castletroy area when student numbers surge, and during specific times throughout the year where anti-social behaviour is anticipated. University of Limerick have supported An Garda Síochána to provide additional Gardai to police the Castletroy area during these key times. Gardai continue to work closely with the University of Limerick and residents groups in Castletroy.

The Chairman proposed that the Notice of Motion be amended as follows :

*"I will move at the next Meeting that Limerick City and County Council call on the Chief Superintendent to provide additional garda resources especially for the Castletroy area to tackle ongoing anti social behaviour especially in the housing estates around University of Limerick".*

This was seconded by Councillor Secas and unanimously agreed.

The Chief Superintendent stated that 800 Probationers will be trained in the Garda College and he would welcome as many as possible of these in Limerick. A number of gardai in the Limerick division are due to retire next year and it is a constant battle to keep the figures up. He said he would welcome Members requests to Government for increased resources in Limerick.

#### **10. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Sarah Kiely :**

*"I will move at the next Meeting of the Joint Policing Committee that An Garda Síochána provide additional resources for foot and cycle patrols and that this be made a priority, as a matter of urgency, for the city centre over the Christmas / New year period to tackle the increased criminal activity on streets which is having a detrimental impact on traders".*

Councillor Kiely stated that traders feel that crime has escalated above any other year due to covid pandemic. She stated that a lot of crime goes unreported because of no action by the Gardaí. There is open drug dealing taking place in the city and anti social behaviour is witnessed on an ongoing basis.

The Chief Superintendent stated that this reply will primarily address the Parnell Street and surrounding city centre area which can at times be prone to anti-social behaviour and criminal activity. Uniform and plain clothes resources from Roxboro Road Garda Station are being deployed in the afore-mentioned area on a constant basis to perform proactive patrols. These arrangements will continue throughout the Christmas and New Year period in order to ensure that a high visibility

policing presence is being maintained in this area daily. Additionally, dedicated Community Gardaí at Roxboro Road will continue to liaise with businesses and residents in the Parnell Street area and any policing issues reported will be dealt with appropriately. All proactive patrols will be recorded on PULSE and the deployment of resources at this location will be the subject of daily monitoring through the Garda District Performance and Accountability process.

Additional resources have already been allocated to police Limerick City Centre since the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021 with staff redeployed and supplemented by additional resources that are provided on overtime. This operation will continue throughout December and will be reviewed in January. This operation is targeting anti-social behaviour and drug related crimes and involves additional Gardaí on the beat and on mobile patrol in the City Centre during both day tours and night tours of duty. There is an ongoing engagement with representatives of traders and vintners groups. The priority will be on maximising Garda visibility so people see that Limerick City is a safe place to work and to visit.

**11. Question submitted by Ms. Shirley Johnston, Limerick Suicide Watch :**

*"I will ask at the next meeting for An Garda Síochána to outline :*

- (a) their current initiatives to combat bike theft in Limerick*
- (b) their current success rate of bike recovery*

*Recent data gathered in the noteworthy.ie investigation identified Limerick as the area with the second highest incidence of bike theft following Dublin. The fear of bike theft is a major discouragement from everyday cycling and can have very traumatic effects on victims, especially on younger cyclists. An Garda Síochána play an essential role in addressing theft that has occurred, empowering theft prevention and supporting victims.*

*Can An Garda Síochána commit to :*

- (a) developing a new strategy in consultation with stakeholders such as cycling advocacy groups and the Council's newly formed Active Travel Office to reduce the current rate of theft. This strategy should develop clear KPI's and annual reporting to stakeholders and the Joint Policing Committee*
- (b) a programme of supports to prevent theft (including identifying theft blackspots and risk factors) that could be rolled out to schools and community groups through Community Gardaí.*
- (c) identifying where the lack of bike parking in visible, well lit areas is a contributory factor in theft to enable the local authority to target specific areas for delivery of parking improvements".*

In reply, the Chief Superintendent stated that at present Gardaí are conducting a number of ongoing operations to target bike theft in the city centre and the University of Limerick and its environs. While he could not go into specific details of these operations He stated that it involves covert and overt operations involving members from Crime and Community Policing Units.

As a result of these ongoing operations in the past four weeks there had been a number of persons arrested for offences relating to bike thefts and a number of prosecutions have commenced as well as Juvenile Liaison referrals. Searches under warrant have also been conducted which resulted in stolen bikes being recovered.

A significant crime prevention initiative was instigated in recent weeks with the University of Limerick to promote bike safety and security and this will be ongoing throughout the academic year.

Community Policing Gardai supported by Limerick City and County Council also held a crime prevention stand in the city centre aimed at providing information to members of the public in relation to securing their bikes and preventing thefts. (September 2021)

Recently a number of Gardai and volunteers from Community associations have been trained on property marking which was as a result of a collaboration with Limerick City and County Council and Gardai where a property marking machine was purchased. In the new year Gardai will be setting up “clinics” at third level colleges and other locations and inviting members of the public to attend to get their bikes marked. This initiative would again be a further crime prevention tool in relation to the theft of bikes.

The Garda Schools Programme, while hampered in the past 18 months due to Covid, will continue to educate the youth with regard to crime prevention with an emphasis on bike safety.

In relation to victims of crime, all victims including those as a result of bike thefts will receive the full support and services of the Garda Victim Service Office in Henry Street Garda Station.

In relation to Collaborations, the Gardai in Limerick have a very good working relationship with Limerick City and County Council and have engaged in numerous initiatives in relation to safe cycling and bike security over the past number of years and will continue to do so in the future. The Gardaí are also very open to engaging with the Council and other stakeholders in relation to positive crime prevention initiatives in the future.

#### **12. Question submitted by Mr. John Nugent, Garryowen Residents Association :**

*“I will ask at the next meeting to be briefed by the Chief Superintendent on the Garda Síochána Older Persons Strategy with a special emphasis on any adaptations made or recommended due to Covid”.*

The Chief Superintendent stated that Covid-19 posed and still poses a great risk to the community, particularly to vulnerable and older persons. It became apparent very early during the pandemic that the advice of the Government, with respect to staying at home and reducing social contacts, would have a detrimental effect on those individuals obtaining necessities in the course of their day. The necessities identified were those who were unable to collect their pension in person and did not have any other trusted persons to do so on their behalf. An Garda Síochána facilitated this aspect whereby two (2) members were dispatched to discreetly collect monies, thus giving peace of mind to the individuals. All guidelines with respect to Covid-19 were adhered to so that all parties involved were safe.

Collecting groceries and prescriptions was also an aspect some individuals required assistance with; this was facilitated whereby a list was obtained from the person, members of An Garda Síochána attended to collect monies and were able to get the groceries and drop them, along with change, back to the individual.

Members of An Garda Síochána Community Policing Units liaised with pharmacies in the city to ensure they had contact details for the Community Policing Co-ordinator’s Office, so pertinent deliveries could be undertaken by An Garda Síochána, where required. This was utilised a number of times whereby pharmacies contacted the office and deliveries were co-ordinated.

The Limerick Covid-19 Community Response group was established to coordinate the volunteer effort to support the elderly and those with underlying conditions. The Limerick initiative was led by Limerick City and County Council in direct partnership with An Garda Síochána and the H.S.E. and backed by Limerick G.A.A., Munster Rugby, I.R.F.U., F.A.I., Liveable Limerick, the Catholic Church and Church of Ireland, Limerick Volunteer Centre and multiple sporting and volunteer groups. The initiative was the first in the country to be established and received national exposure at the start of the Covid-19 crisis. The centre was initially based at the Munster G.A.A. H.Q. – home also of Limerick G.A.A. The initiative was unique in that it was the only centre in the country which maintained a full time Garda presence of two Sergeants permanently attached to the centre. The presence of the Garda Sergeants was paramount to ensuring that parties who contacted the Response Centre, were given clear, accurate information, in line with relevant legislation as led by the Government. After Limerick City and County Council assimilated the centre into the customer care line, An Garda Síochána still maintained strong links and facilitated deliveries and welfare checks where requested.

Going forward the Community Gardai and Crime Prevention Officer will continue to engage pro-actively with all associations and groups representing the elderly in both Limerick City and County. Gardai will continue to offer support and assistance whenever needed to those most vulnerable in society especially during the current pandemic.

It was suggested that formal recognition be given to all the various groups who helped the elderly during Covid 19.

Mr. J. Nugent stated that he would like to see anti social behaviour and the effects of Covid included in the Older Persons Strategy.

### **13. Question submitted by Maurice Quinlivan, T.D. :**

*“I will ask at the next meeting for an update on the ongoing An Garda Síochána and Limerick City and County Council’s operation ‘Operation Copóg’ in the St. Mary’s Park area and if there have been any targeted raids in the period since the last meeting of the Joint Policing Committee”.*

The Chief Superintendent confirmed that Operation Copóg, which is essentially an increase in the Community Policing staff that are dedicated to St Mary’s Park, is continuing.

There have been nine (9) search operations conducted under warrant in St Mary’s Park since the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 2021. One particular house has been searched on more than one occasion. Gardai will continue to target drug dealing across Limerick, including St Mary’s Park.

The crack cocaine problem in Limerick City is continuing and spreading. International experience suggests that searches and prosecutions will not fix this issue as the drug trade have a ready supply of vulnerable people who are suffering from addiction.

The sale of crack cocaine from one particular house in St Mary’s Park is an ongoing problem, despite frequent Garda searches and prosecutions. The house in question has been reinforced and some structural changes have been made to make entry to the house more difficult. Gardai are engaging with Limerick City & County Council to establish if they can take any enforcement action against the individuals who are in control of this house.



The Chief Executive supported the Chief Superintendent in relation to St. Mary's Park. The Council is very committed to resolving the issue of drugs here and said he would ensure further action would be taken in the New Year. Limerick City and County Council have a very strong partnership with An Garda Síochána. He thanked the Chief Superintendent, Members of An Garda Síochána and Elected Members for their help and support during Covid.

**14. Question submitted by Maurice Quinlivan, T.D. :**

*"I will ask at the next meeting for an update regarding the proposed pilot 24/7 Multi Agency mental Health De-Escalation Team in Limerick, due to commence in 2022, outlining the proposed commencement date and the number of Gardaí that are being trained to partake in the pilot".*

The CAST project is still at the consultation phase with our partners the HSE. There is NO commencement date as of yet and the number of Gardai to be trained is yet to be determined

**15. Question submitted by Kieran O'Donnell, T.D. :**

*"I will ask at the next meeting for an update on Garda patrols/on the beat over the Christmas and New Year periods in the city centre"*

This item was covered under Question 10.

**16. Question submitted by Kieran O'Donnell, T.D. :**

*"I will ask at the next meeting for an update on :*

- (a) current Garda numbers, including community Gardaí, in Limerick Divisions as compared to this time last year;*
- (b) the upcoming Refurbishment Capital Programme for 2022 and the inclusion of plans for new Garda stations in Castletroy / Annacotty;*
- (c) upgrading of Castleconnell Garda station".*

(a) Covered under 9 above.

(b) In reply, the Chief Superintendent stated that The Garda Commissioner looks at the & Provision of new Garda Stations and a decision on same will be based on population

( c) growth. The priority is to have Castleconnell Garda Station fit for purpose.

No funding has been allocated for a new garda station in Castletroy.

**17. Question submitted by Councillor Conor Sheehan :**

*"I will ask at the next meeting that The Chief Superintendent outline what policing plans will be put in place during the Christmas / New Year period and if there will be additional Garda presence around Limerick City Centre".*

This was covered under Question 10

**18. Question submitted by Councillor Conor Sheehan :**

*"I will ask at the next meeting that The Chief Superintendent give an update on Operation Cópóg".*

This was covered under Question 13

**19. Question submitted by Councillor John Costelloe :**

*"I will ask at the next meeting, following on from a Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Sharon Benson in June, 2021, for a current update in relation to extra Garda resources for Limerick City North".*

Limerick City North District as of June 21 there were 322 Garda Members in the District,  
Limerick City North District as of Dec 21 there were 321 Garda Members in the District.

The Chief Superintendent thanked the Members, Chief Executive and staff for their support during the past year which was a very difficult year with many challenges. He stated that 2022 is the centenary year of An Garda Síochána and a lot of activities will be taking place in 2022 to commemorate this milestone. He agreed to keep Members updated on the commemorations.

**DATES FOR MEETINGS IN 2022**

It was proposed by Councillor S. Keary, seconded by Councillor A. Talukder and unanimously agreed to approve the following dates for Joint Policing Committee Meetings in 2022 :

10.00 a.m., Friday, 4<sup>th</sup> March, 2022  
10.00 a.m., Friday, 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 2022  
10.00 a.m., Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 2022  
10.00 a.m., Friday, 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2022

The Chairman and Chief Executive wished all Members and staff a happy Christmas and every good wish for the new year.

This concluded the Meeting.

Signed : \_\_\_\_\_  
Councillor Adam Teskey, Chairman

Date : \_\_\_\_\_