**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE LIMERICK JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE HELD ON 10th JUNE, 2022**

**IN THE CHAIR:**  Councillor A. Teskey

**MEMBERS:**  Councillors B. Collins, J. Collins, T. Collopy, S. Kiely, M. Murphy,

E. O’Brien, J. O’Donoghue, M. Ryan, C. Sheehan and A. Talukder

**OIREACHTAS MEMBERS:** Niall Collins, T.D.

**PPN SECTORAL NOMINEES**: None

**GARDA NOMINATIONS**: Chief Superintendent (Mr. G. Roche), Assistant Principal

(Ms. T. Davenport), Superintendent (Mr. O. Kennedy),

Superintendent (Ms. A. Magner), Superintendent (Mr. D.

O’Connor), Superintendent (Mr. K. Ruane), Inspector

(Mr. P. Brennan), Senior Intelligence Analyst (Ms. L. Collins)

**OFFICIALS:** Chief Executive (Mr. P. Daly), Administrative Officer

(Mr. M. Leahy), Senior Staff Officer (Ms. A. Foley),

Staff Officer (Ms. L. Creamer)

**APOLOGIES:** M. Quinlivan, T.D., Mr. J. Slattery, Mr. F. Dennison,

and Superintendent (Mr. B. Sugrue)

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1. **MINUTES**

Circulated, copy of Minutes of Joint Policing Committee Meeting held on 4th March, 2022:

Proposed by Councillor S. Kiely

Seconded by Councillor M. Ryan

1. **UPDATE FROM CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT**

The Chief Superintendent stated that society has opened up considerably after over two years of Covid restrictions. However, Covid is still amongst society and everyone still needs to be careful. Crime statistics over the last two years were distorted due to Covid with incidents of burglaries reduced due to people working from home and public order incidents reduced due to pubs and nightclubs being closed. Crime figures have now increased due to society opening up again and the Gardai have responded accordingly.

1. **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.

The Chief Superintendent stated that incidents of domestic abuse had increased by 31% in the last year. Partly the reason for this is that more people are reporting domestic abuse due to Operation Savalta, where the Gardai contact people who have come to the Garda Station and who are at high risk of further domestic abuse. These are monitored with the Victims Office, the homeless services and Tusla, and the Gardaí also link in privately with the individuals concerned. However, he said that there is a lot of domestic abuse, which is still hidden, and it is imperative that any person experiencing domestic abuse should be encouraged to report it, as there are many supports in place to help them. He added that prosecutions for domestic abuse have been low in the past, however, there are better outcomes now.

He stated that property crime is up 69%, 10% higher than last year. Burglaries are down 41% since 2019. Crime against the person is up 54%, which is linked to the increase in the nighttime economy. Pubs and nightclubs are open again now and this has resulted in more crime. In addition, the Gardaí are not getting complaints / follow ups in some cases even in serious instances.

The Chief Superintendent stated that the Gardai have adopted a change in strategy regarding drugs and are now focusing more on the main suppliers of drugs and crime lords. Operation Coronation, which involves working closely with CAB, has resulted in seizures of drugs as well as property obtained from the proceeds of drugs worth over €2m. He added that the Drugs Unit is now well staffed with a total of 24 people. Nationally one out of seven people tested positive for drug driving and one out of 350 tested positive for drink driving.

He stated that a lot of success has been achieved in the Limerick division of An Garda Síochána in tackling crime and he expects the good work to continue.

Councillor Collopy complimented An Garda Síochána for the work done in relation to drug seizures and addressing the illegal sale of drugs. This is due in no small part to the diligence of the officers on the ground.

1. **UPDATE FROM CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT ON DRUG RELATED INTIMIDATION**

At the last JPC Meeting Mr Joe Slattery, Northstar Family Support Project, raised the issue of drug related intimidation and was informed that the Chief Superintendent would give an update at this meeting.

The Chief Superintendent stated that the numbers recorded for drug related intimidation could not be disclosed for data protection reasons.

He acknowledged that there is a reluctance in reporting incidents of drug related intimidation due to the obvious fear they may have of reprisals. For matters that are reported, a Detective Inspector is assigned to deal with the case and give every support and assistance to the person and their family including crime prevention advice and a detailed explanation of the process of the investigation if the person wishes to make a formal complaint in relation to the incident.

He stated that all persons subjected to drug related intimidation are encouraged to contact the Gardai who will deal with their case in a sensitive manner while providing them with the necessary information and support.

1. **JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2021**

It was proposed by Councillor S. Kiely, seconded by Councillor Martin Ryan and unanimously agreed, to approve Joint Policing Committee Annual Report 2021.

1. **FATAL COLLISIONS AND ASSOCIATED LA16S**

Noted that there were two fatal collisions in March 2022 and the associated LA16s were sent to the Department of Transport and that there were no outstanding LA16s.

1. **Correspondence**

There was no correspondence received.

**It was agreed to take Items 8 and 13 together.**

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

*“I will ask at the next meeting for a progress report on operation ‘Operation Copóg’, how it is progressing and if there is an anticipated end date”.*

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

*“I will ask at the next meeting for an update on the ongoing Garda operation in St. Mary’s Park”.*

The Chief Superintendent stated that Operation Copóg is ongoing in the St Marys Park area of the city. Dedicated Community Policing resources continue to be assigned to the area supported by the Divisional Drugs Unit, Regional Support Unit, District Crime and Uniform Units. In recent times, Limerick Gardaí have conducted significant operations as part of Operation Coronation, Operation Copóg and Operation Tara which targeted individuals and families associated with the preparation, distribution and sale of controlled drugs.

The Divisional Drugs Unit supported by other local and regional units have made significant seizures in March, April and May 2022. In March 2022, approx. €700,000 worth of heroin was seized. In April 2022, €500,000 in cash was seized and in May 2022, approx. 1.4 million euros worth of controlled drugs were seized. These operations alone removed over 2 million euros worth of controlled drugs from Limerick City and County, many of which were associated with organised crime gangs connected to the St Marys Park area of the city.

Operations are ongoing and at present there is no end date for Operation Copóg. It should be noted that a Community Policing Sergeant has been appointed to the Mayorstone Park Station and is now actively involved in Operation Copóg and engaging with the local community in St Marys Park. Gardaí also continue to engage with the Local Authority to assist in finding solutions to anti-social behaviours in the St Marys Park area.

**It was agreed to take Items 9 and 12 together.**

1. **Question submitted by Maurice Quinlivan, T.D.**

*‘I will ask at the next meeting for an update regarding what actions are being taken to address the misuse of scrambler motorbikes in urban estates and public green areas’.*

**12. Question 12 submitted by Councillor Conor Sheehan**

*‘I will ask at the next meeting how many scrambler/quad bikes or similar were seized by An Garda Síochána in the last year and how many prosecutions have arisen from incidents involving such vehicles in the last year’.*

**REPLY**

**VEHICLES SEIZED**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Vehicle** | **Date** | **Comment** |
| Scrambler | 22/04/2022 | Arrest made linked to drugs case, file ongoing |
| Scrambler | 06/05/2021 | Vehicle recovered, two youths questioned |
| Scrambler | 18/09/2021 | No suspect apprehended, vehicle destroyed |
| Scrambler | 27/10/2021 | Linked to an RTC |
| Scrambler | 15/12/2021 | Vehicle causing obstruction and seized |
| Scrambler | 27/01/2022 | Involved in rtc, seized |

**PROSECUTIONS**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Vehicle** | **Date** | **Comment** |
| Scrambler | 22/04/2022 | Under investigation |
| Scrambler | 12/07/2021 | Prosecution commenced |
| Scrambler | 12/07/2021 | Prosecution commenced |
| Scrambler | 03/01/2022 | Under the age of criminal responsibility |
| Scrambler | 26/01/2022 | Prosecution commenced |
| Scrambler | 06/05/2022 | Under investigation |

The Chief Superintendent stated that the unlawful use of scramblers is the subject of ongoing review during the District PAF process.  Areas prone to this activity are disseminated to all operational personnel and are subjected to proactive patrolling.

Community Gardaí continue to engage with local residents and community groups to identify activity trends and to identify the individuals involved. This has resulted in numerous visits to houses and warnings been given to both adults and children in respect of it.

It should also be noted that through meetings/talks with youths in Youth Groups, Garda Youth Diversion Projects and through the Garda Schools Programme the use of scramblers in communities is highlighted and advice/warnings given in respect of the dangers involved and the legal implications for the users.

The dangers and legal implications associated with the unlawful use of scramblers are highlighted during various community engagement initiatives operating within the District also.

1. **Question submitted by Councillor Tom Collopy**

*‘I will ask at the next meeting for an update on the establishment of the proposed multi-agency mental health de-escalation unit, outlining what training has commenced and when the proposed unit is due to be operational’.*

**REPLY**

The Chief Superintendent stated that a joint proposal has been submitted by An Garda Siochana and the HSE to Senior Management of both Organisations. Sanction to it is awaited and once received the next phase of designing the implementation plan will begin. The project steering group are continuing to engage in the background and said the Gardaí are fully committed in achieving its objective.

Members were informed by the Chief Superintendent that he sits on the Task Force and Limerick is the first to lead on this new ground-breaking area.

1. **Question submitted by Councillor Tom Collopy**

*‘I will ask at the next meeting to outline, if any, specific steps which are being taken to address the apparent increase in violent muggings and assaults in the city centre’.*

**REPLY**

These figures are representative of the Henry Street and Roxboro Road Sub Districts and not just the city centre due to the limitation of the search the analysts could perform.

The Chief Superintendent stated that these statistics are not for general circulation, however, stated that visible policing is needed at nights as serious assaults take place late at night. Minor assaults are increasing also throughout the city.

The overall trend would suggest that figures are returning to pre pandemic levels in relation to the above categorises of crimes except for “robbery from the person” which is trending well below pre pandemic figures. Minor Assaults would appear to be increasing across the city districts but the increase in reporting and recording of domestic assaults may result for some of this increase.

In relation to the policing of the city centre, Operation Meirle continues to operate and focus on anti- social behaviours and criminal activity in the city through high visibility beat patrols. City centre policing is further supported by dedicated Community Policing members and dedicated public order operations and patrols for periods of high volume in the city centre.

**14.** **Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor John O’Donoghue**

*‘I will move at the next meeting that the Joint Policing Committee write to the Minister for Justice calling on her to enact legislation to ensure that any party that has been granted free legal aid and is found guilty of crime shall be liable to have the costs of the legal aid recouped by whatever means necessary by the State’.*

It was proposed by Councillor O’Donoghue, seconded by Councillor Teskey and unanimously agreed to approve this Notice of Motion.

Councillor O’Donoghue stated that free legal aid is costing the state €50m each year and any monies that is recouped could be channelled back into the Social Welfare system.

In supporting the Motion Councillor O’Brien stated that he put forward a similar motion a few years ago. He said the culture of violence is increasing in Ireland and recreational drugs is becoming more prominent especially in young people. There are many repeat offenders who come before the courts repeatedly and if free legal aid could be recouped from offenders then it could have a positive effect in reducing crime.

**15.** **Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Conor Sheehan**

*‘I will move at the next meeting that Limerick City and County Council write to the Garda Commissioner to request additional Garda resources to police the city centre’.*

It was proposed by Councillor C. Sheehan, seconded by Councillor T. Collopy and unanimously agreed to approve this Notice of Motion.

Councillor Sheehan stated that it is important that people feel safe in the city centre and stated that the issue of scrambler bikes on Cruises Street needs to be addressed. He referred to a previous request for additional Garda resources for the regeneration areas but none was received.

The Chief Superintendent stated that he has 585 members and 100 civilian and court staff and these are to cover the whole division so have to be spread out. He pointed out that he got a lot of new sergeants in the last few months and is awaiting additional Inspectors. The new class of recruits from Templemore will not be available until next year. This will cause a problem throughout the country because vacancies arising due to retirements etc. cannot be filled straight away. However, he said that there are good resources in Limerick but would welcome any additional staff.

It was agreed that the next Joint Policing Committee Meeting would be a blended meeting in the Council Chamber, Dooradoyle at 10.00 a.m. on Friday, 23rd September, 2022.

This concluded the business of the Meeting.

**Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Councillor Adam Teskey, Chairman**

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