

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF MEETING OF LIMERICK JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DOORADOYLE AND ONLINE ON 3RD MARCH, 2023 AT 10.00 A.M.

IN THE CHAIR :	Councillor A. Teskey,
MEMBERS :	B. Collins, T. Collopy, S. Hartigan, S. Keary, E. O'Brien, J. O'Donoghue, M. Ryan, K. Sheahan, C. Sheehan, Azad Talukder and F. Foley, Mayor
OIREACHTAS MEMBERS :	Maurice Quinlivan, T.D., N. Collins, Minister of State
PPN SECTORAL NOMINEES :	Dr. B. Hayes
GARDA NOMINATIONS :	Chief Superintendent (Mr. D. Smart), Superintendent (Ms. A. Magner) Inspector (Mr. P. Sutton), Sergeant (Mr. T. Miniter), Crime Prevention Officer (Ms. B. Leech)
OFFICIALS :	Chief Executive (Dr. P. Daly), Senior Executive Officer (Ms. L. Flannery), Head of Information Systems (Mr. A. Dooley), Senior Staff Officer (Ms. A. Foley), Staff Officer (Ms. L. Creamer)
APOLOGIES :	Councillor J. Collins, Brian Leddin, T.D., Ms. D. Dunne, ADAPT and Administrative Officer (Mr. M. Leahy)

Prior to the business proper of the Meeting, the Chairman, supported by all Members, thanked the Chief Superintendent and members of An Garda Síochána for the police presence in Rathkeale over the Christmas period. He also expressed his thanks to the Special Forces involved and welcomed Operation Silverside. He thanked the Elected Members, T.D.'s and Sectoral Interests for attending the Special Meeting of the JPC on 23rd December.

It was proposed by the Chairman, seconded by Councillor Keary and unanimously agreed that a letter of thanks be sent to Minister Simon Harris for visiting Rathkeale town and an invitation be extended to him to come back and visit the town again.

The Chief Superintendent stated that a structured approach for the area of Rathkeale and Adare was set up for the Christmas period to prevent anti-social activities taking place. He confirmed that Operation Silverside is officially up and running and confirmed that all those who carry out crime will be brought to justice.

Councillor Keary expressed disappointment that there is not a multi-agency meeting to discuss ongoing issues in Rathkeale. He stated that the number of people coming into Rathkeale each Christmas need to be reduced. He indicated that church representatives should also be included in the meetings with regards to the number of weddings that take place over the Christmas period and suggested that no weddings take place during the months of October, November and December as there are usually thirty or more weddings taking place each Christmas. He expressed disappointment that the Members of the Municipal District were not involved in discussions. He stated that all Members of the District, HSE, Tusla, Senior Gardaí, CAB and representatives from the religious orders should be involved in all meetings and pointed out that Rathkeale has the highest number of non-mortgaged properties in the country and people are purchasing property with no apparent form of income.

The Chairman stated that a lot of good work has been done in addressing the issues in Rathkeale and a good structure is now in place. He confirmed that many meetings have taken place with representatives of the organisations Councillor Keary referred to and stressed the importance that the Chairperson of

this group is a non-political person. He also confirmed that a joint collaboration report would be going back to the District Members every three months. He stressed the importance of the Minister coming back again to the town in the near future.

The Chief Superintendent confirmed that a number of meetings with all national units have taken place. However, he stated that he would not discuss the matter at a public meeting, as it is part of Silverside Operation. He assured Members that the matter is being addressed and all individuals involved are dealt with accordingly.

The Chief Executive stated that he will be appointing separate resources to deal with this matter and that there would be plenty of input and structures put in place to address the issue and to ensure that the town grows economically and not be adversely affected by recent or indeed future incidents.

1. MINUTES

Circulated, copy of Minutes of Joint Policing Committee Meeting held on 16th December, 2022 :

Proposed by Councillor S. Keary
Seconded by Councillor J. O'Donoghue

2. MINUTES

Circulated, copy of Minutes of Special Joint Policing Committee Meeting held on 23rd December, 2022 :

Proposed by Councillor S. Keary
Seconded by Councillor J. O'Donoghue

It was agreed to take Item No. 15 at this stage.

15. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR CONOR SHEEHAN

"I will move at the next Meeting of the Joint Policing Committee that An Garda Síochána put in place a targeted operation against the misuse of scrambler bikes on the Canal Bank from Lock Quay to the University of Limerick and on the Shannon Fields"

The Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Conor Sheehan, seconded by Councillor Adam Teskey, Chairman and unanimously agreed.

Superintendent Magner shared Members concerned regarding the issue of scrambler bikes and e scooters. She confirmed that an operation has been organized to address this matter and is due to commence on 6th March and it will target Moyross, Kileely, Canal Bank amongst other places. She added that legislation would hopefully be introduced shortly by the Government that will also help address this issue. She stated that the Gardaí are running an education programme in schools regarding the use of scrambler bikes and e scooters.

Councillor Conor Sheehan suggested that a Task Group be established involving Council Officials, Gardaí and representatives from Youth Groups.

Maurice Quinlivan, T.D., supported by Councillor John O'Donoghue, stated that this matter was also raised at the last meeting. He welcomed the announcement of a focused approach to address this issue. He added that this is also an issue in Southill and pointed out that some people do not use scrambler bikes and e scooters responsibly and participate in anti-social behaviour. The noise from these bikes are

causing a problem for people working from home. He stated that there are children as young as four or five years of age using e scooters which is a major cause of concern.

3. UPDATE FROM CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT

The Chief Superintendent stated that he would answer any queries after the presentation from the Senior Crime and Policing Analyst. He pointed out that the presentation is dealing with the first two months of the year and compares with the same period last year. He stated that the percentages are slightly exaggerated because it covers such a short period of time.

4. 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.

In reply to Members queries, the Chief Superintendent stated that there is a lot of positive work being done across all functional areas. He confirmed that there were 23 incidents of drugs and arrests for the sale and supply of drugs and added that the Gardaí are targeting those people who are making the most money from the sale and supply of drugs. The number of Garda checkpoints has reduced nationally across all divisions adding that these are being measured against the number of checkpoints during covid when Gardaí had more time for checkpoints. He said they are working to increase the number of checkpoints going forward. He shared Members frustration regarding the number of cases pending where people are awaiting trial but are still dealing drugs in the meantime but added that it is the Gardaí's function to bring people before the Courts. The delay in the hearing of cases is a matter for the Courts Service. He welcomed the appointment of a new Judge in Limerick, which hopefully will speed up the hearing of cases. He said he would take on board that people using drugs for personal use should not be targeted and added that the Gardaí work very closely with drug addiction groups in this matter.

5. FILL VACANCY ON JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE CAUSED BY THE RESIGNATION OF COUNCILLOR SARAH KIELY

The Chairman stated the nomination of a replacement to the JPC would be included on the Agenda for March Meeting of Limerick City and County Council. He thanked Councillor Kiely for her work and contribution while a Member of the Joint Policing Committee.

6. PRESENTATION FROM GARDA ROADS POLICING UNIT

A Presentation was given by Sergeant Miniter from the Garda Roads Policing Unit.

All Members thanked Sergeant Miniter for his presentation and complimented him and all members of An Garda Síochána for their work in this area and who have to deal with road accidents some of which are fatal. He referred to another recent victim of a car crash on the N21 and expressed his sympathies to the family of the deceased.

Councillor Keary requested that road signs with designated telephone numbers on them be reinstated on the roads and that a designated person be appointed to answer and deal with all calls to these numbers. He asked if it would be possible to install two speed cameras on the N21 to measure speed.

Councillor O'Donoghue acknowledged the very difficult job that first responders to an accident have and thanked them for their dedicated service. He pointed out that there are a lot of pedestrians walking on rural roads some of whom have dogs so it is important that people are educated about the dangers of

walking the roads and that cyclists be made aware also. He asked that this message go out to rural schools and ensure that young people are made aware of the dangers of our roads.

The Chief Superintendent confirmed that the Garda Roads Policing Unit do liaise with schools in relation to road safety and also with University of Limerick where there are six hundred students on its Marketing course.

Councillor's Ryan and K. Sheahan supported Councillor Keary's request to install two speed cameras on the N21. He also referred to the Mitchelstown to Caherconlish road, which could also do with speed cameras. He added that the public need to be made aware that there is a reduced speed limit coming off motorways.

Councillor Keary stressed the importance of the National Transport Authority liaising with the Council and Gardaí in relation to speed reduction and that their opinions be listened to. In addition, there should be more engagement with the Road Safety Authority.

Mr. J. Slattery asked that the presentation from the Garda Roads Policing Unit be shared with the Members of the JPC so that it can be put up on social media. He pointed out that cyclists get a lot of abuse and aggression from motorists while cycling on the roads and asked if there are any proposals for education around this issue. He added that he does not condone cyclists breaking traffic lights or partaking in any irresponsible behaviour.

In reply to Members queries, Inspector Sutton stated that Gardaí could be at the scene of a fatal road accident for a full day. He stated that the Council engage with the Gardaí in relation to changes to speed limits and added that the Gardaí will co-operate with cycling clubs.

Councillor Hartigan proposed that Members stand for a moments silence in memory of the late Brian Kelleher and Michael Liston who were tragically killed outside village of Foynes and whose anniversaries occur at this time.

All Members stood in silence.

7. PRESENTATION ON SARA MODEL BY SERGEANT BER LEETCH, DIVISIONAL CRIME PREVENTION OFFICER

Sergeant Leetch stated that the SARA Model is part of An Garda Síochána's Crime Prevention and Reduction Strategy and is problem orientated solving. She stated that for many years, the Gardaí have been fighting the symptoms of crime rather than seeking out the root cause. The help of other organisations and communities are required, as the Gardaí cannot do this on their own. The SARA model helps to apply problem-solving ideas and encourages working creatively and collaboratively with partners and communities experiencing problems to implement and assess solutions.

The Chief Superintendent stated that the Gardaí are very focused in bringing this model to the forefront and acknowledged the great work being carried out by Sergeant Ber Leetch.

8. PRESENTATION FROM ALAN DOOLEY, HEAD OF INFORMATION SYSTEMS, ON CCTV

Mr. Alan Dooley, Head of Information Systems gave a presentation and update in relation to CCTV in Limerick City and County. He stated that there are 353 community CCTV cameras across the city and county – 121 in Northside of the city, 122 in the Southside, 22 on Canal and Riverside and 88 in hinterland.

The Chairman thanked Mr. Dooley on his work to date in relation to CCTV and for his detailed presentation. He referred to the recent fine imposed on the Council by the Office of the Data Protection Commission of €110,000 which believed was something that should never have happened. He pointed out that it is okay for people to video things on mobile phones and put it up on social media but it is not possible, due to Government regulations, to put in CCTV cameras in areas. He asked Maurice Quinlivan, T.D., who was present at the meeting, to raise this matter in the Dail to have the regulations amended and to formalise a Question for submission to the next Dail sitting. He stated that due to anti-social behaviour the graveyard in Rathkeale should have CCTV cameras installed.

Maurice Quinlivan, T.D. expressed concern that CCTV cameras cannot be used for litter offences and that many cameras are not turned on in some areas. He referred to the Moyross Community Centre where there are no incidents of anti-social behaviour or criminal damage because there are CCTV cameras there. He agreed to raise the matter in the Dail.

Councillor Keary expressed concern that the CCTV cameras do not record car number plate details.

In reply to Members queries, Mr. Dooley stated that the cameras that are already erected are legal and have approval by the Garda Commissioner under the Garda Síochána Act 2005. The addition of new Community CCTV is an arduous task with a high bar of justification required and can take several months on the assumption that funding is available. There is legislation in place for CCTV in tackling waste management and it is expected that the guidelines are due to be finalised and approved shortly.

There are 26 traffic CCTV cameras turned off at present. Of the 88 CCTV cameras in the hinterland, there are an additional 20 or 30 cameras, which were never erected. The cameras on the Canal Bank and riverbank are in the process of being turned on. He stated that he would like more cameras turned on but it is imperative that all the necessary legal requirements were complied with to ensure that all complied with GDPR.

He stressed that the network of cameras is what is important and said he will objectively look at additional camera needs as they arise. He added that national legislation is catching up with GDPR requirements. He stated that the monitoring centre for the CCTV is in Moyross Community Enterprise Centre. This is a highly controlled room, audits are conducted regularly and there is a Data Protection Officer present. An Inspector must sign for any footage requested by the Gardaí. He said more progress with legislation should be seen this year.

The Chief Executive thanked Mr. Dooley for all his work on this project and assured Members that CCTV would be fit for purpose from here on in. The CCTV system was built as good as possible at the time, however, legislation is now more robust, and the system is now built in the best possible manner.

The Chairman stated that €500,000 was approved at budget time for cameras and they were installed without legislation being properly checked. He stressed that this cannot happen again.

The Chief Superintendent wished to formally acknowledge the work done by Alan Dooley and all involved to date. He confirmed that Gardaí can view footage from CCTV and can see number plates on CCTV but legally cannot search for number plates on the system. He confirmed that there has to be a criminal investigation before Gardaí can request CCTV footage.

9. TO RECEIVE CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence

10. QUESTION SUBMITTED BY MAURICE QUINLIVAN, T.D. :

“I will ask at the next Meeting of the Joint Policing Committee for details of the number of illegal scramblers and quad bikes seized in the Limerick Policing District for the years 2021, 2022 and to date in 2023”

RESPONSE

The following table provides a breakdown of scramblers and quad bikes detained under Section 41 (RTA);

Limerick Division				
Type/District	2021	2022	2023 YTD	Total
Scrambler	11	17	8	36
Henry Street	7	12	3	22
Roxboro Road	1	5	5	11
Newcastle West	3	0	0	3
Quad Bike	0	0	2	2
Roxboro Road	0	0	2	2
Total	11	17	10	38

11. QUESTION SUBMITTED BY MAURICE QUINLIVAN, T.D. :

“I will ask at the next Meeting of the Joint Policing Committee for an update as to what steps are being taken to address the misuse of drugs (crack cocaine and heroin) in the car parks and laneways of Limerick city “.

RESPONSE

Gardaí from the Divisional Drug Unit have successfully targeted numerous persons who are actively involved in the sale and supply of crack cocaine and heroin in Limerick City. The Divisional Drug Unit have also conducted patrols of areas where drug users are known to frequent and as a result of same, a number of persons have been found in possession of drugs for their own personal use.

Community Engagement Limerick City North performs high visibility targeted patrols in the city centre through Operation Meirle, Operation Croí, and other public order and proactive patrols. These patrols aim to target anti-social behaviour, including misuse of drugs, in the city centre, which includes car parks and laneways.

Further to this, covert plain-clothes patrols are performed on a regular basis to assist in identifying and prosecuting offenders.

In addition, Community Gardaí proactively engage with support services including Ana Liffey Drug Project and services provided by the Mid-West Regional Drugs & Alcohol Forum in an effort to divert appropriate persons to the care of healthcare and other professionals. Diverting persons to these services results in the overall reduction in drug use, sale and supply of drugs, and anti-social behaviour.

Community Engagement Limerick City North also provides information to relevant persons via a Drug and Alcohol Services Mid-West Support Card. Cards are issued to persons on release from custody who indicate they regularly misuse drugs and / or alcohol. The card contains a QR code that when scanned will bring the user to the HSE website page containing all relevant services for drug and alcohol treatments and counselling.

12. QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR CONOR SHEEHAN

"I will ask at the next Meeting of the Joint Policing Committee for the number of scrambler bikes seized in the Metropolitan District of Limerick since the beginning of 2023".

See reply to Question 10 above.

13. QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR CONOR SHEEHAN

"I will ask at the next meeting of the Joint Policing Committee what action has been taken to tackle anti-social behaviour outside St. John's Cathedral"

RESPONSE

Following review of this matter, and to ensure an appropriate response to anti-social behaviour in the St. John's Cathedral area, Operation Croí is being expanded to include the environs of St. John's Cathedral. Operation Croí was established to target increasing levels of theft incidents and anti-social behaviour related incidents in Limerick City Centre.

In addition to Operation Croí, Community Policing and other uniform patrols are targeting anti-social behaviour in this area on an on-going basis.

14. QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR TOM COLLOPY

"I will ask at the next Meeting of the Joint Policing Committee for the number of reports to the local Divisional Protective Services Unit following on from the introduction of The Harrassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Act (Coco's Law)"

RESPONSE

We have no investigations currently that relate specifically to this act. We do however have communications between parties that form part of more serious and sinister investigations. These are of course actively pursued and investigated. Any Coco's Law investigations may not necessarily make it as far as ourselves and would be investigated locally. There have been complaints where parties have distributed images of themselves online voluntarily and they have turned up on other forums, however this is absolutely impossible to investigate. Particularly where there is no specific offending party. A cursory glance at PULSE would indicate that there are currently 5 Harmful Communications under investigation in the Division in the last year.

The DPSU recently received charges in respect in respect of an injured party who had received unwanted images. Sgt Mick Lambe will be able to elaborate. Offender was arrested and charged in Court yesterday 1st March.

16. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLORS KIERAN O'HANLON AND CATHERINE SLATTERY
(REFERRED FROM METROPOLITAN DISTRICT OF LIMERICK MEETING HELD ON 20TH FEBRUARY, 2023)

“We will move at the next Meeting that Limerick City and County Council write to An Garda Síochána to request that extra garda patrols are dispatched regularly to St. John’s Square to alleviate anti-social behaviour in the area”

Please see answer to Question 13 above

17. 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 and the Minister for Agriculture for a review and possible change in the laws around an uninvited person or persons entering private lands for any reason, including recreational purposes, without the prior knowledge and consent of the landowner”

The Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor J. O’Donoghue, seconded by Councillor A. Teskey, Chairman and unanimously agreed.

Councillor O’Donoghue, supported by Councillor Keary, stated that the only law there at present relate to trespassing and this is hard to prosecute. Uninvited persons entering private lands can result in the spread of agricultural diseases and poses health and safety issues and legal issues. He added that uninvited people entering private lands are not covered by the landowners insurance and this needs to be resolved as a matter of urgency as it is an ongoing problem for many years.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chief Superintendent stated that Limerick is one of the areas that will pilot the new body worn cameras and added that he will give an update and briefing on this matter at the next meeting.

In reply to Councillor Collopy, the Chief Superintendent stated that there is a confidential line that people can ring to report a crime that does not require you to give your name and address. If members of the public ring a Garda station directly, Gardaí who answer the phone are trained to ask for the caller’s name and address.

This concluded the business of the Meeting

Signed : _____

Councillor Adam Teskey, Chairman

Date : _____