

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AT SPECIAL MEETING OF THE METROPOLITAN DISTRICT OF LIMERICK
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DOORADOYLE AND ONLINE ON THURSDAY, 7TH SEPTEMBER
2023 AT 12 NOON**

PRESENT IN THE CHAIR:

Councillor Azad Talukder, Cathaoirleach

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillors Benson, Butler, Collins, Collopy, Daly, Hartigan, Kiely, Kilcoyne, Leddin, McSweeney, Murphy, Novak Uí Chonchúir, O'Donovan, O'Hanlon, O'Sullivan, Pond, Secas, Sheahan (M), Sheehan (C) and Slattery.

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

A/Director, National and Regional Shared Services Centre (Ms. P. King), Meetings Administrator (Mr. M. Leahy), Senior Staff Officer, Corporate Services, Governance and Customer Services (Ms. A. Foley).

MEMBERS OF AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA

Superintendent Andrew Lacey, Inspector James Ruddle, Inspector Liz Kennedy, Sgt Dave Hannon, Sgt Noel Barry.

The Cathaoirleach welcomed the Elected Members, Officials, members of An Garda Síochána, members of the public and media who were present in the Chamber and Online to the Meeting. He confirmed that he had convened this Special Meeting to discuss the issue as set out in the proposal signed and received from five Elected Members, details as follows:

"I, Cllr Catherine Slattery am requesting a Special Meeting in regards to Anti-Social Behaviour in Limerick City that is currently at an all-time high. We need to discuss this issue and try to come up with a solution to alleviate this very serious problem. We wish to organise a meeting also with the Gardai to discuss this situation with particular reference to a number of flash points. I would appreciate if this meeting can be organised with the Superintendent present within the next 3 weeks please."

Signed

Cllr Catherine Slattery

Cllr Kieran O Hanlon

Cllr Joe Pond

Cllr Azad Talukder

Cllr Frankie Daly

In outlining the reasons for requesting the Special Meeting, Cllr Slattery explained that this was in order to raise some serious concerns with An Garda Síochána regarding issues around anti-social behaviour and crime in the city centre and the Metropolitan District. The Special Meeting was also an opportunity to meet and discuss with An Garda Síochána and explore what measures could be introduced, and what resources were needed, in order to address it.

The Cathaoirleach confirmed that, in advance of the Special Meeting that the Members had been asked to submit issues of concern that they wished to discuss with An Garda Síochána at the Special Meeting. Members thanked An Garda Síochána for their work in the Limerick area but agreed that there were heightened concerns in relation to increased criminality and antisocial behaviour in recent times.

They also noted the recent allocation of additional funding and resources to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour in Dublin City Centre and agreed that similar supports would be important for Limerick as well, to address issues in the city centre.

The issues raised by the Members could be summarised to include issues relating to:

- **Scrambler Bikes**

The misuse of Scrambler Bikes in the City, on the Canal Bank and in other public and green areas. How many arrests were made and scramblers seized in 2023? What is the current update with regard to Scrambler Bikes legislation?

- **Visibility of Garda Patrols**

The visibility of foot and car patrols in the City Centre. Policing of areas not accessible by cars. What plans are in place to introduce more patrols on foot and bicycles, as opposed to car patrols, so that there is more visibility in areas such as the Castletroy Urban Greenway and the Smarter Travel path from Corbally & Lock Quay to UL? Has the unmarked patrol car for the Castletroy/Annacotty commenced patrolling?

- **Youths & Anti-Social Behaviour**

Attacks happening by groups of youths in and around Limerick on other youths, and the attacks being recorded and put on social media? Anti-social behaviour by gangs of young people throughout the city. Issues around drug dealing and drug taking in the city centre. Anti-social behaviour that is occurring in and around the village of Castleconnell and a query as to whether the CCTV camera installed at the entrance to Bruach Na Sionna estate on the Main Street, Castleconnell is functioning.

- **Garda Resources**

What is the number of community Gardai allocated to Limerick City in the last ten years, broken down by year. How are Garda resources managed and what is the ratio of Garda to people in various areas?

- **New Garda Station**

What is the update on the provision of a Garda Station in Castletroy as per their capital programme 2025-2030, and if there are any plans to expedite its delivery, given the increase in the population and in antisocial behaviour?

- **University of Limerick**

With the influx of students coming into the University and surrounding areas for the Autumn period, what are the Garda plans and the resources in place to deal with events such as “Fresher’s Week” to deal with issues surrounding such events, and the impact on housing estates surrounding the University?

- **Text Alert System**

The benefits of this scheme was highlighted by the Members who stressed the importance of An Garda Siochána continuing to support the scheme so as to alert communities of potential issues and also respond to alerts raised.

Superintendent Lacey thanked the Members for the invitation to attend the Special Meeting and noted the concerns raised by the Members in relation to various issues in the city centre and in some Metropolitan District area. He outlined how legislation had been recently enacted to address the issue of scrambler bikes, but that regulations were also awaited which would allow them to fully implement the new legislation. He also noted that a new Garda station was approved for the Castletroy area and that the Office of Public Works had been tasked to progress this, and that additional staffing resources would be needed to support a new station in this area.

He outlined how Garda resources and patrols, etc. were managed by the senior management team within An Garda Siochána, and agreed that additional resources and funding would always be welcomed to support the ongoing efforts of the Gardai in the Limerick area. He referred also to the current dispute within An Garda Siochána in relation to proposed new rosters from November and the possible impact this may have in the way units were set up, etc.

He referred to the Framework that was in place with the University of Limerick and how An Garda Siochána were proactive in dealing with any issues arising in relation to University students. He confirmed that additional Gardaí from the Limerick Division would be doing a bicycle-training course to facilitate access to areas where vehicles could not access and that pilot for E Bikes was being done in the Limerick area.

Members thanked the Superintendent and his team and noted the details of the responses received to the various issues raised at the meeting. They agreed that additional resources were needed to support the efforts of the Gardai in Limerick and also agreed that legislation to deal with the issue of scrambler bikes needed to be enacted urgently so as to give An Garda Siochána the powers to deal with this problem.

The following resolution was agreed by the Elected Members, to be communicated to the Minister of Justice:

“Following on from what was recently announced for An Garda Siochána in Dublin City Centre, that the Minister also allocate a funding package to An Garda Siochána in Limerick City. This funding package is required to pay for overtime for the Gardai and armed response units to increase the presence of uniformed Gardaí and high-visibility patrols, in order to tackle anti-social behaviour in the city.

The Elected Members also request that current proposed legislation and regulations, to deal with the serious issue of scrambler bikes, be signed into law immediately so as to give An Garda Siochána the additional powers needed to tackle this serious problem in Limerick City.”

This concluded the Meeting.

Signed: _____
CATHAOIRLEACH

Dated: _____