

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF MEETING OF LIMERICK JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DOORADOYLE AND ONLINE ON FRIDAY, 22ND SEPTEMBER, 2023 AT 10.00 A.M.

IN THE CHAIR: Councillor A. Teskey

MEMBERS: Councillors B. Collins, T. Collopy, S. Hartigan, S. Keary, G. Mitchell, E. O'Brien, J. O'Donoghue, J. Sheahan, K. Sheahan, C. Sheehan, and A. Talukder

OIREACHTAS MEMBERS: N. Collins, T.D. and K. O'Donnell, T.D.

GARDA NOMINATIONS: Chief Superintendent (Mr. D. Smart), Superintendent (Mr. A. Lacey), Superintendent (Ms. J. O'Brien), Superintendent (Mr. P. Reidy), Superintendent (Mr. O. Kennedy), Senior Crime and Policing Analyst (Ms. L. Collins)

OFFICIALS: Senior Executive Officer (Ms. L. Flannery), Administrative Officer (Mr. M. Leahy), Senior Staff Officer (Ms. A. Foley), A/Staff Officer (Ms. S. Carroll)

APOLOGIES: Dr. P. Daly, Chief Executive

At the commencement of the Meeting, the Chairman referred to the recent media report in relation to the downgrading of the Specialist Drugs and Community Policing Units, and highlighted the importance of retaining these Units. Members supported the Chairman and called for additional resources to tackle the drug situation. In response to the issues raised, the Chief Superintendent stated that the priority is to get resources back on the front line, and with more recruitment of Gardaí coming, the hope would be to get these units back up and running again.

1. MINUTES

Circulated, copy of Minutes of Joint Policing Committee Meeting held on 2nd June, 2023:

Proposed by Councillor K. Sheahan
Seconded by Councillor E. O'Brien

2. UPDATE FROM CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT

The Chief Superintendent stated that he would answer any queries after the presentation from the Senior Crime and Policing Analyst.

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.

The Chairman expressed concern at the increase in figures for the possession of drugs for personal use and for sale / supply and highlighted the need to retain the Specialist Drugs Units going forward.

In relation to the Newcastle West area, Councillor O'Donoghue queried what measures would be taken to combat burglaries going into the Winter months. The Chief Superintendent stated that a number of burglaries have been carried out by organised gangs in the area recently and Gardai are actively working on this.

Deputy N. Collins referred to the National Slow Down Day and highlighted the high percentage of motorists that were compliant and that lowering speed limits was one aspect in reducing road fatalities. The Chief Superintendent agreed and stated the Gardai would continue to work to reduce road fatalities.

Deputy Collins asked *"How many speeding detections were recorded in the Limerick Division during the National Slow Down Day 2023".*

RESPONSE:

National Slow Down Day took place from 07:00hrs on the 21st April to 07:00hrs on the 22nd April 2023. There were 830 speed detections on National Slow Down Day – 35 of them were in Limerick Division.

In relation to Proactive Policing Measures and the increase in drugs related searches, Councillor Bridie Collins queried if searches were proving more positive.

The Chief Superintendent said that Members are being pro-active in relation to drugs issues and that every effort would be made to re-build the Specialist Units in the coming months.

Councillor Sheahan (K) highlighted the issue of unemployed people who seem to have unlimited resources and who should be investigated. The Chief Superintendent stated that the Head of CAB could be invited to attend the next Joint Policing Committee Meeting.

Councillor Keary referred to proposed changes to the Garda roster and if additional finances were being provided for overtime. The Chief Superintendent stated that additional finances had not been provided as yet but where policing was needed it would be put in place.

Councillor Collopy queried the current status of the Garda Reserve Unit. The Chief Superintendent stated that the Reserve Unit was a huge support, particularly during Covid, and was currently being reviewed at a national level.

Members also held a discussion in relation to the adequate resourcing of Gardai.

4. CORRESPONDENCE

Submitted email from the Office of the Minister for Justice and the Office of the Minister for Transport acknowledging receipt of correspondence dated 8th June, 2023 in relation to an alternative to penalty points for driver misbehaviour.

Submitted emails from the Office of the Minister for Justice and the Office of the Garda Commissioner acknowledging receipt of correspondence dated 8th June, 2023 in relation to the prosecution of Garda Members.

Submitted email from the Office of the Garda Commissioner acknowledging receipt of correspondence dated 8th June, 2023 in relation to legislation on the introduction of body worn cameras.

5. Question submitted by Councillor Sean Hartigan

I will ask at the next Meeting of the Joint Policing Committee, what action has been taken to address antisocial activity such as intimidation, use of scramblers and sulkies on the walkway from Lock Quay to University of Limerick since the last JPC, including the number of patrols undertaken by Gardai.

RESPONSE:

On the 31st of July Operation Croí commenced a targeted operation into use of scramblers and associated anti-social behaviour across Limerick City. This operation includes 21 priority policing hotspots in the City 16 or which are within Limerick City North. This operation places emphasis on CCTV monitoring and is ongoing with no further information available for operational reasons.

This includes the walkway from Lock Quay to University of Limerick which since the last JPC meeting has had a number of proactive patrols carried out. These patrols are subject to the availability of resources as this area requires a beat or cycle patrol for access and intervention. No arrests in respect of scramblers use along this area has been recorded since the last JPC.

AGS is acutely aware of the harm and intimidation around scrambler bikes in the city environs. While recent legislation is welcome in terms of search and seizure powers we still have challenges around pursuit and a duty of care. It is common place that the youths on the scrambler bikes are teenagers and are not wearing helmets. No offence exists for wearing a balaclava which hinders the identification of the persons on the bikes.

AGS has had a number of successful detections and seizures around the use of scrambler/e scooters relating to the sale and supply of drugs which are intrinsically linked. Some of these arrests and seizures are highlighted through media releases but we won't comment further as some cases are sub juice and not appropriate to comment. AGS can confirm that a number of RTC's involving scrambler bikes have been reported with a small number involving injuries to pedestrians. These incidents are subject to full ongoing investigation

Road Traffic and Roads Act 2023- Legislation update will be provided at the meeting on the Friday.

6. Question submitted by Councillor Sean Hartigan

I will ask at the next Meeting of the Joint Policing Committee, how many attacks on people by dogs have been reported to An Garda Siochana in Limerick for the years 2021, 2022 and 2023 to date and what was the response time in dealing with these attacks.

RESPONSE:

This analysis is based on a keyword search of incident narratives on all incidents reports in the Limerick Division with a date reported between 01.01.2021 and 10.09.2023. Only those incidents whose narrative suggests any of the following occurred have been considered to be an 'attack on the person'

- The injured party has received a bite or injury directly from a dog,
- The injured party's clothing has been pulled or damaged by a dog,
- The injured party has injured themselves in an attempt to evade an attack by a dog

Limerick Division - Incidents of dog attacks on people			
(1st January 2021 - 10th September 2023)			
2021	2022	YTD 2023	Total
12	22	17	51

In terms of response time, if that is referring to the investigative process which varies based on the circumstances of the compliant. Offences under the Control of Dogs Act 1986 would be subject to the statute of limitations as predominantly summary offences and require a decision on proceedings within 6 months.

7. Question submitted by Councillor Bridie Collins

I will ask at the next Meeting of the Joint Policing Committee, in light of a recent spate of break-ins and robberies of both homes and business premises in the village of Adare can I ask what Garda service is currently being provided at the Garda Station in the village. How many Garda are appointed to the policing of the village of Adare and the surrounding area?

RESPONSE:

Garda Resources attached to the Garda Station in Adare Village patrol the local area together with other Gardaí allocated to the Limerick County Community Engagement Functional Area, Limerick Crime Functional Area and the Roads Policing Unit. Checkpoints and Patrols are regularly performed with same increased should a crime trend be identified. It should also be noted that any call for service received from this area is dispatched through the Garda Communications Room with all available resources across the Functional Area and Garda Division utilised when necessary.

I have not listed the resources attached to Adare Garda Station in the reply to this question as numbers are not shared for operational reasons.

8. Question submitted by Maurice Quinlivan, T.D.

I will ask at the next meeting for a progress report on operations designed to deal with the ongoing scourge of scramblers and electric scooters.

RESPONSE:

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This includes the walkway from Lock Quay to University of Limerick which since the last JPC meeting has had a number of proactive patrols carried out. These patrols are subject to the availability of resources as this area requires a beat or cycle patrol for access and intervention. No arrests in respect of scramblers use along this area has been recorded since the last JPC.

AGS is acutely aware of the harm and intimidation around scrambler bikes in the city environs. While recent legislation is welcome in terms of search and seizure powers we still have challenges around pursuit and a duty of care. It is common place that the youths on the scrambler bikes are teenagers and are not wearing helmets. No offence exists for wearing a balaclava which hinders the identification of the persons on the bikes.

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Road Traffic and Roads Act 2023- Legislation update will be provided at the meeting on the Friday.

9. Question submitted by Maurice Quinlivan, T.D.

I will ask at the next meeting for an update on the progress being made in establishing the multi-agency mental health de-escalation unit.

RESPONSE:

This pilot project, Community Access Support Team (CAST), will be trialed in the Limerick Garda Division. It is a partnership pilot between An Garda Síochána (AGS) and the Mental Health Services (MHS), HSE, Mid-West Community Healthcare. It is anticipated that the Pilot will commence on the 30th November 2023. The pilot should not be referred to as a de-escalation unit.

The CAST project comprises two modes of delivery to people in crisis and/or situational trauma within the Garda Division Geographical area. These are a Crisis Co Response and the Community Support Forum.

At the heart of the CAST pilot project is the establishment of Multi-Agency Support Forum in Limerick. This case management forum comprises of identified statutory agencies and approved support services. An independent person from the local authority, Limerick City and County Council, chairs the forum which will meet on a monthly basis. The aim of the forum is to provide an integrated approach to working with persons in crisis.

The CAST pilot project comprises of intervention, prevention and outreach with the potential to yield a better outcome for persons experiencing mental health crisis or situational trauma. The pilot project will also aim to reduce future presentations and interactions with Gardaí or other blue light emergency services, through community follow-ups and the case management of complex cases.

There has been extensive engagement between An Garda Síochána, HSE, Crisis Intervention Team members in other jurisdictions, and those with lived experience of engaging with the Gardaí at times of mental health crisis.

AGS has finalised their recruitment for the pilot with the HSE in the process of same.

The pilot will be evaluated fully using various metrics and analysis. This evaluation will be submitted to the Commissioner and HSE senior management after 6 months of the pilot which will inform the format for the remaining pilot duration.

Superintendent Andrew Lacey can give a presentation at the next JPC if members are interested.

10. Question submitted by Councillor Tom Collopy

I will ask at the next meeting of the Joint Policing Committee for a progress report on the steps been taken to address the ongoing and open misuse of drugs and the discarding of drug paraphernalia within the City of Limerick.

RESPONSE:

While all mobile units in Roxboro Road District are involved in the detection and prosecution of drugs, there is a Divisional Drugs Unit attached to Henry Street Station, which is involved in the detection of drugs for the entire city. Having said that there are many detections in Roxboro Road by the members there.

Operation Croí has also been set up across Limerick City, with 20 hotspots identified, and in which the members are concentrating on the detection of drugs and incidents involving scrambler bikes. From the Roxboro Road side the said members are concentrating in particular in the areas around the Peoples Park and Colbert Station and have had a number of detections there.

Records for Roxboro Rd district and from 01/05/23 to 18/09/23 there have been 64 detections for simple possession of drugs, and for the same period there has been 27 detections for sale and supply of drugs. There has also been a few detections for drugs involving scrambler bikes one of which yielded over €7000+ worth of drugs.

The Community Engagement and Crime Functional Area hubs in Limerick City North, under the supervision of Superintendent Lacey and Detective Superintendent O'Connor, launched Operation Feabhsaigh on Monday the 18th September 2023. This operation was designed to deal with drug dealing and other anti-social behaviour issues in the northside of the city. In that regard, there will be a targeted response from Gardaí in the coming weeks, which is expected to have a big impact on those involved in the afore-mentioned anti-social behaviour.

On the launch date, Gardaí carried out a search of a premises in the St. Mary's Park estate and recovered suspected Cocaine, with an estimated street value of €5,000, subject to analysis of the item seized. A quantity of cash was also recovered. A male in his 40's is currently in Garda custody, detained for the proper investigation of the offence.

11. Question submitted by Councillor Tom Collopy

I will ask at the next meeting of the Joint Policing Committee for an update on the number of "Community Gardai" presently operating in Limerick City and if it is anticipated if these numbers are due to change.

RESPONSE:

There are 7 Community Policing Members presently operating in Limerick City South Community Engagement Functional Area. It is anticipated that from the 6th of November 2023 these 7 members will revert to the Regular Units.

There are 18 Community Policing Members presently operating in Limerick City North Community Engagement Functional Area. It is anticipated that from the 6th of November 2023 these members will revert to the core units with 3 members retaining non-core hours.

12. Notice of Motion submitted by Maurice Quinlivan, T.D. (deferred from Meeting of the Joint Policing Committee held on 2nd June, 2023)

I will move at the next meeting for the creation of an action plan, similar to Operation Copóg, to target the ongoing drug dealing and associated crime in the Weston and Prospect areas of Limerick City.

As Deputy Quinlivan was not present at the Meeting, it was agreed to defer this item.

13. Notice of Motion submitted by Maurice Quinlivan, T.D. (deferred from Meeting of the Joint Policing Committee held on 2nd June, 2023)

I will move at the next meeting for the provision of additional Garda resources in the city centre.

As Deputy Quinlivan was not present at the Meeting, it was agreed to defer this item.

14. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Sean Hartigan

I will move at the next meeting of the JPC that the Chief Superintendent instigate a policy for a prioritised and rapid response to reports of attacks on people by dogs in public places.

The Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor Hartigan, seconded by Councillor C. Sheehan and agreed.

Councillor Hartigan raised a concern over the number of incidences of dogs attacking people in public places and causing fear in people out walking and cycling. He highlighted that the Gardai and the Council should be pro-active when incidences are reported.

In response, the Chief Superintendent stated that serious incidences were dealt with as a priority. He acknowledged that communication with the Environment Department is key to ensuring the issue is being dealt with.

15. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Bridie Collins and John O'Donoghue

We move at the next meeting of the Joint Policing Committee that an emergency response road traffic action plan be developed for all motorways and national roads in the Limerick area, in the event of unplanned road closure. This plan should be a traffic emergency response plan for all emergency services and be directed by An Garda Siochana under consultation with Limerick City and County Council. This plan should allow the diversion of vehicles onto suitable roads and avoid undue traffic pressure on unsuitable, narrow local roads which are unable to accommodate high traffic volumes.

The Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor B. Collins, seconded by Councillor O'Donoghue and agreed.

Councillor B. Collins referred to a number of incidences that had occurred around Adare resulting in traffic being diverted on roads that were not suitable for large vehicles, causing congestion and backlog of traffic. She highlighted the importance of an emergency action plan co-ordinated by the Council and Gardai.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Superintendent Joanne O'Brien of the Performance, Assurance & Functional Area, Limerick Garda Division stated they were seeking submissions for the Limerick Divisional Policing Plan 2024 as part of

their commitment to ongoing engagement with stakeholders within the Limerick Division. Members were welcome to forward submissions/feedback into the plan.

The Chairman stated that the next Meeting would take place on Friday, 8th December, 2023 at 10.00 a.m.

Signed: _____
Councillor Adam Teskey, Chairman

Date: _____