

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS OF MEETING OF LIMERICK JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DOORADOYLE AND ONLINE ON FRIDAY, 8TH DECEMBER, 2023 AT 10.00 A.M.

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| IN THE CHAIR: | Councillor A. Teskey |
| COUNCILLORS: | Councilor's T. Collopy, S. Hartigan, S. Keary, G. Mitchell, M. Murphy, J. O'Donoghue, J. Sheahan, K. Sheahan and C. Sheehan |
| OIREACHTAS MEMBERS: | M. Quinlivan, T.D., Niall Collins, T.D. and Minister K. O'Donnell |
| GARDA NOMINATIONS: | Chief Superintendent (Mr. D. Smart), Superintendent (Mr. A. Lacey), Superintendent (Mr. O. Kennedy), Superintendent (Mr. P. Reidy), Senior Crime and Policing Analyst (Ms. L. Collins) |
| COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES: | Dr. B. Hayes |
| OFFICIALS: | Chief Executive (Dr. P. Daly), Administrative Officer (Mr. M. Leahy), Senior Staff Officer (Ms. A. Foley), Staff Officer (Ms. L. Creamer) |
| APOLOGIES: | Councillor B. Collins and Senior Executive Officer (Ms. L. Flannery) |

Councillor S. Keary took the Chair in the absence of the Chairman, Councillor A. Teskey at the commencement of the Meeting.

1. MINUTES

Circulated, copy of Minutes of Joint Policing Committee Meeting held on 22nd September, 2023:

Proposed by Councillor G. Mitchell, Mayor
Seconded by Councillor S. Hartigan

2. UPDATE FROM CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT

The Chief Superintendent stated that there had been a significant change in Garda personnel over the last year. The Garda Safe System had also been rolled out across the country and he acknowledged the work done by Members of An Garda Síochána. He confirmed that he would answer any queries after the presentation from the Senior Crime and Policing Analyst.

The Chairman, Councillor A. Teskey arrived at the meeting and took the Chair.

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.

Councillor G. Mitchell expressed concern at the increase in crime statistics across some headings for the Bruff District and asked if there was a reason for this.

In reply, the Chief Superintendent stated that even though the percentages seemed high, it only involved a handful of cases. He added that drug related offences have increased in all areas of Limerick.

Superintendent Kennedy added that there has been an increase in a number of issues in Kilmallock. However, a Garda operation was put in place to tackle the situation there, which has been proactive and successful.

Councillor C. Sheehan expressed concern at the 56% increase in drug driving offences. He stated that drugs are becoming an epidemic throughout Ireland and asked the Chief Superintendent what needs to be done to address this issue from a Garda point of view.

Deputy Maurice Quinlivan expressed concern at the 4% increase in domestic abuse; however, he noted the fact that more incidents are now being reported. He voiced concern in relation to individuals who break barring orders and complimented the Garda on their response to ongoing domestic abuse cases. He praised the efforts of the Gardaí in relation to drug crime and said they were doing a very good job with the resources they have, but they cannot respond if they do not have adequate Garda numbers. He referred to an ongoing feud between criminals that has been brewing on the south side of the city and which is of major concern, and stated that additional Gardaí were required to patrol this area to monitor this.

Inspector Lacey stated that Garda review meetings are held regularly and the first item dealt with is domestic abuse. He confirmed that any breaching of Safety Orders are followed up on immediately.

Minister O'Donnell acknowledged the work done by the Gardaí and asked what operations will be in place for the Christmas period. He asked if there was any connection between the reduction in drink driving cases and the increase in drug driving cases. He welcomed the reduction in crime statistics in the Henry Street and Roxboro Road divisions. He asked for an update on the number of new recruits that have come to Limerick in the last year.

The Chairman stated that he was disappointed that there are only three Gardaí and one Sergeant in the Rathkeale area and said he has repeatedly asked for additional Gardaí for the area. Additional Gardaí need to be allocated to rural areas to address the increase in crime. He pointed out that twelve months ago he was informed that additional resources would be allocated to Rathkeale for Christmas but this has not happened yet. Adequate resources need to be given to Garda Divisions to address the increase in crime and asked Minister O'Donnell to take this matter up with the Minister for Justice.

In reply, the Chief Superintendent stated that drugs is a societal issue and cocaine usage is becoming more widespread with people using drugs more now across all communities. Increased education on the matter and participation by all agencies is needed to address the issue. He referred to the Life Saver Project, which was trialed in Limerick and stated that this project has now been rolled out across the country. He stated that he has sanctioned Operation Meirle, which, from 1st December, deployed on the ground high visibility patrols in the city Centre to combat any incidences of drug related crime, public disorder, aggressive begging and theft from shops. He confirmed that members of the force will also be asked to do overtime to assist with this and Gardaí attached to the unit will focus solely on beat visibility.

He stated that a Garda action plan on drugs, called Operation Feabhsaigh, which started in late September, remains focused on combating the sale and supply of drugs/open drugs use/chronic anti-social behaviour in St. Mary's Park. This operation was also targeting crime prevention and enforcement in the wider King's Island historic quarter too.

Chief Superintendent Smart said 'Operation Coronation' is another major Garda response to the activities of drug gangs across Limerick. It has been very successful and remains focused on depriving those engaged in drug trafficking and their proceeds of criminality from criminal activity. He stated that Operation Coronation had raided 132 properties, seized property, drugs, cash and other items and arrested 17 people for alleged money laundering and drugs offences and charged six people with sale and supply of drugs.

Superintendent Reidy stated that Operation Croí is running very successfully in Roxboro and is tackling anti-social behaviour, public order offences, shoplifting, drink and drug driving and additional Gardaí are brought in on overtime over the Christmas period. An extra Sergeant and Garda have also been put in to community policing which again will be very effective. Operation Twintracks commenced on 16th November to address public order issues on trains and involved putting plain clothes Gardaí on trains and this too has been very successful. He referred to another operation around the Crescent Shopping Centre where two Gardaí have been allocated to patrol regularly. The patrolling by these Guards has resulted in a reduction in shoplifting and a reduction in the number of cars damaged in the car park there. He added that the Gardaí who are engaged in Courts Service work will be redeployed while the Courts are closed between 22nd to 29th December to parks, Upper William Street and Colbert Station areas and this should have a significant impact in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour in these areas.

Superintendent Lacey added that there are four further operations in existence – Operation around King's Island. Operation Mural runs for month of December, which is high policing visibility in the city Centre and this has resulted in a reduction in shoplifting. There is another operation at Milk Market where there are two high visibility Gardaí patrolling the area and again this has had very positive results and finally there is Operation Scrambler which is monitoring the use of scramblers and this has been very successful so far also. There has been a big reduction in the number of scramblers around the city Centre which had been a big issue. He stated that the city Centre will take prime focus over the Christmas period and there are no standalone operations in the suburbs. He wanted to thank his colleagues for their co-operation in these operations.

Deputy Quinlivan, T.D., commended the Gardaí for the seizure of scramblers. Councillor C. Sheehan stated that the message needs to go out for people not to buy scramblers as Christmas presents. Serious accidents can occur on scramblers some of which could result in fatalities.

In reply to Members, the Chief Superintendent stated that Limerick is getting six trainees from Templemore. The majority of offence weapons used are knives, sticks and bars, guns are not included in the statistics. He stated that the Roads Policing Unit meet on a daily basis and they assign resources based on where the largest volume of crime is in the county. He stressed the importance of members of the public reporting crime.

In reply to the Chairman, the Chief Superintendent stated that there are some members of the force currently on suspension in relation to issues currently being investigated. The Chairman expressed concern at the length of time it takes to bring the cases against suspended members of the force to fruition. This causes a lot of distress to the member involved and to their families. He stated that Gardaí should be able to carry out their duties without fear of repercussions from GSOC and asked that Minister O'Donnell bring this matter to the attention of the Minister for Justice.

Councillor J. Sheahan reiterated what the Chairman stated, adding that GSOC has gone beyond its remit in micro managing and should be disbanded and replaced by another body. He added that it is more proactive for Gardaí to be out on the beat, instead of being in the office.

In reply to Councillor J. Sheahan, the Chief Superintendent stated that he is confident, based on the plans and operations outlined and with the support of his colleagues, that he has enough resources to police the city and county over the Christmas period, however, additional Gardaí would be always welcome. He added that a new Sergeant has been recently assigned to Croom.

In reply to the Mayor, Councillor Mitchell, the Chief Superintendent, assured Members that the Gardaí have a team in place who are sufficiently trained in dealing with public order offences should an incident occur in Limerick similar to what happened in Dublin recently.

In reply to Members requests, the Chief Superintendent stated that a Representative from CAB would be available next year to come to one of the Limerick JPC Meetings.

Minister Kieran O'Donnell stated that he would bring the matters raised today and the Members concerns to the attention of the Minister for Justice.

Members thanked the Chief Superintendent and all members of An Garda Síochána for their hard work and dedication in tackling crime in Limerick.

4. CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence.

5. TO APPROVE DATES FOR 2024 MEETINGS

It was proposed by Cllr. Mitchell, Mayor, seconded by Cllr. Keary and unanimously agreed to approve the following dates for 2024 meetings:

Friday, 1st March, 2024;

Friday, 7th June, 2024-(pending confirmation of date for European & Local Elections);

Friday, 20th September, 2024;

Friday, 6th December, 2024.

6. QUESTION SUBMITTED BY DEPUTY MAURICE QUINLIVAN, T.D.

“I will ask at the next Meeting of the Joint Policing Committee for a progress report on the activities of the Criminal Assets Bureau in Limerick city and county that will include the number of items and the value of items seized during their operations in Limerick”.

RESPONSE

Deputy Chief Superintendent Gubbins will attend a JPC Meeting in the New Year once the confirmed dates are communicated to him and my office will revert back to the Chair. Deputy Chief Superintendent Gubbins will speak on Operations.

In the Limerick Division, I can speak of the very successful Operation Coronation, which is still ongoing and has been in progress for the last 5 years. Operation Coronation has taken part primarily over two phases and is targeting organized criminality in the Limerick Division and adjoining areas. It is focused on depriving those so engaged in drug trafficking and their proceeds of criminal activity. It is engaged in targeting a number of OCG gangs.

Operation Coronation Phase 1

Targeting OCG Operation on the 17.06.2020

- 67 properties searched
- 6 High Value Luxury Watches seized to an approximate value of €100,000.00
- Deeds to a property abroad
- High value Motor car seized
- Cash to an approximate value of €222,000.00 seized, various currency
- 16 Accounts frozen
- 3 persons arrested for suspected Money Laundering offences
- 6 persons charged with offences under Section 15 of the Misuse of Drugs Act, 1977/'84

- One person arrested in respect of Section 15 Misuse of Drugs Act, 1977/'84 in respect of approximately €2,000.00 value of crack cocaine and heroin seized in one search, detained under the provisions of Section 4 of the Criminal Justice Act, 1984
- One person arrested and detained under the provisions of Section 2 of the Criminal Justice (Drug Trafficking) Act, 1996 in respect of one kilo of cannabis herb seized to the value of approximately €20,000.00
- One separate seizure of cannabis herb to the approximate value of €1,500.00 and two cocaine presses seized
- 14 persons in total arrested

Firearms and Controlled Drugs

On 9th November, 2020 two firearms and cocaine to the value of €40,320 was found in the vicinity of St. Mary's Park.

7th September, 2021 – Search Operation Phase 2

As part of this investigation, an extensive search operation commenced on the early morning of the 7th September 2021 on a large area of lands adjacent to the Moyross Estate wherein it is believed that evidence in relation to distribution of controlled drugs and firearms were located.

In total in excess of 65 searches were conducted.

Search results to date

- (a) 8 Financial institution Accounts were frozen to an approximate value of €421,000.00
- (b) Cash to the approximate value of €145,000.00 has been seized in total
- (c) Five designer watches have been seized. Three high valued vehicles have been seized.
- (d) 10 Horses were seized including a Stallion valued in excess of €50,000.00
- (e) Cannabis Herb to the approximate value of €8,000.00 has been seized.
- (f) One Horse Box valued approximately €10,000.00 has been seized.
- (g) Cocaine to the value of €2,000.00 has been seized

7. QUESTION SUBMITTED BY DEPUTY MAURICE QUINLIVAN, T.D.

“I will ask at the next Meeting of the Joint Policing Committee for a progress report on the steps being taken to address the ongoing anti-social behaviour issues, including open drug use, dumping and other anti-social behaviour within Limerick city”.

RESPONSE

Dumping in 2023 for the Division recorded on PULSE (8 incidents)

No Corroborating Evidence x 1

Summons created x 1

No Suspect x 2

Investigations ongoing x 3

Actioned by LCC x 1

Roxboro Road Community Engagement

1. Community Engagement Limerick City South have Operation CROI, which is a Joint Operation between Limerick City South and Limerick City North. The members attached to this City Operation Unit target areas which are

- frequented by drug users
- areas where there is anti-social behaviour
- main shopping areas with high footfall (City Centre)
- targeting shoplifting
- Patrolling Parnell Street, Colbert Station, Peoples Park, and Upper William Street.

The CROI unit has proven itself to be very effective and have a number of significant captures/detections and actual preventions of crime.

2. Superintendent Reidy has also increased the numbers in the Community Policing Unit which will allow for a greater engagement with local communities, the identification and targeting of anti-social hotspots and areas frequented by and blighted by drug use. Community Policing now operates with 3 units, Unit B, Unit C, and Unit D. where previously there were two Units C & D. There is also a full time Sergeant allocated to the Unit.

- Supply of drug captures +60% ytd
- Simple Possession drugs +95% ytd

This allows for greater engagement with stakeholders from a Community Policing Perspective such as LEPD (Niall O Callaghan, CEO), Regeneration (Joe Delaney) and all of the various Community Groups and the LCCC.

3 There is a very strong engagement with the Housing Section LCCC, who have been most active with working together to remove those from houses for anti-social behaviour.

4 Roxboro Road's first application for an Exclusion Order was successfully made at the District Court and an individual has been excluded from the Ballinacurra Weston area. This has sent a strong signal to others engaging in such behaviour. Other applications are currently being processed and will be brought to the Court at the earliest opportunity.

5 There has been an increase in patrols and visibility in the Peoples Park and surrounding area.

6 Community Policing ran Operation Twin Tracks on the 16th November 2023, which proved very successful in so far as, drug detections and the arrest of a number of serious criminals who were subsequently charged and are before the Courts.

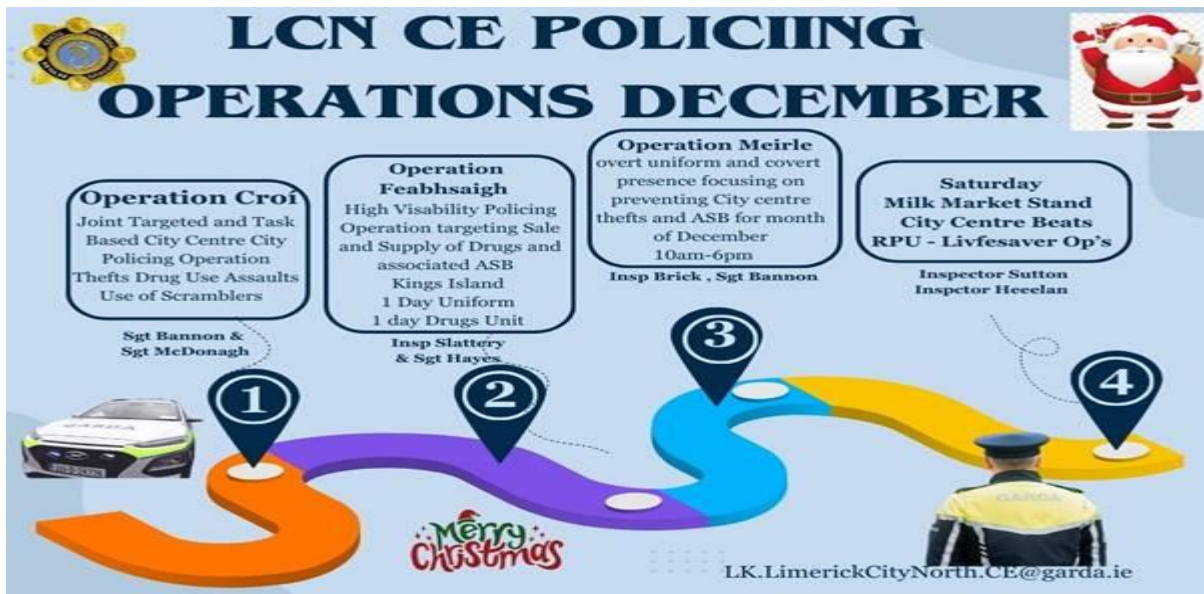
7 Operation Scrambler took place on the 24th and 25th October 2023. 46 vehicles seized, scramblers, dirt bikes, quad bikes etc. joint LCS and LCN operation.

8 Five members of an OCG arrested on the 24th October with significant drugs seized.

9 Year to date for LCS the following categories of crime show reductions:

- Property crime -13%
- Burglary -10%
- Theft from shop -26%
- Theft from vehicle -9%
- Theft u/t pedal cycle – 63%
- Crime against Person -10%
- Assault Minor -9%

Henry Street Community Engagement



Operation Croí -passed the 1-year mark recently and yielded some outstanding results across the City Centre FA's. Operation Croí focuses on recidivist offending in the City Centre as well as OCG targets involved in mid-level Sale and Supply of Drugs and ASB/intimidation/scrambler offences. Henry Street will take over the coordination of the operation with LCS counterparts in Roxboro Rd.

Operation Feabhsaigh – Commenced in late September and again is a joint operation with the Crime FA that has two key priorities- Enforcement and Crime Prevention Kings Islands Historic Quarter - Sale and Supply of Drugs/Open Drug Use/Chronic Anti-Social Behaviour/Aggressive Begging/Crime in St Marys Park and historic tourist quarter and having a visible beat presence during the Limerick Regeneration Demolition Project.

Operation Meirle- This annual operation will start to deploy on the ground resources from 1st December 2023. The focus of this operation is dedicated High Visibility Beat Patrols in Limerick City Centre on the run up to Christmas. These beat patrols will combat public order, drug related crime, aggressive begging and volume crime such as thefts from shops, and Sergeant Aoife Bannon will take over the coordination of the operation. The members attached to Operation Meirle will solely focus on beat visibility and will only be dispatched to calls where shoplifters are detained and not used to holding Garda Safe calls. This is to maintain a visible presence, which will hopefully be reflected in a reduction in call volume.

Miscellaneous Operations/Initiatives - AGS Limerick have teamed up with the management at the Milk Market to provide a presence every Saturday, which is followed by a City Centre Beat. This is an overtime resource from 10am-5pm and coordinated by Inspector Henry Street. Finally, RPU Limerick will be conducting some additional tours on overtime to carry out LifeSaver checkpoints and patrols. This will be coordinated by Inspector Henry Street.

8. QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR CONOR SHEEHAN

"I will ask at the next Meeting of the Joint Policing Committee for an outline of what measures the Chief Superintendent and An Garda Síochána are taking to tackle the far right including measures to tackle online disinformation".

RESPONSE

We are aware of the online content, which circulates through various media forums. These sites are monitored and where appropriate investigations are undertaken, files are submitted to the DPP who decides if charges are appropriate. Our relationship with the new Coimisiún na Meán is developing and getting stronger and An Garda Síochána will consult with them where appropriate.

The difficulty for An Garda Síochána is establishing where the posts are being uploaded as they may not be in Ireland thus the location of the offence is not easily identifiable. We must also be conscious of our constitutional right under Article 40.6.1 – Freedom of Expression.

9. QUESTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR CONOR SHEEHAN

"I will ask at the next meeting of the Joint Policing Committee for the number of Gardaí assigned to Limerick City broken down by division for the last 5 years".

REPOSENSE

| Year | Henry St & Roxboro Road Personnel Total |
|-----------------------|---|
| 2023 (to end Nov. 23) | 460 |
| 2022 | 464 |
| 2021 | 462 |
| 2020 | 467 |
| 2019 | 458 |

10. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY DEPUTY MAURICE QUINLIVAN, T.D. (DEFERRED FROM JPC MEETINGS HELD ON 2ND JUNE, 2023 AND 22ND SEPTEMBER, 2023)

"I will move at the next meeting of the Joint Policing Committee 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".

This matter has been discussed and dealt with earlier in the meeting.

11. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY DEPUTY MAURICE QUINLIVAN, T.D. (DEFERRED FROM MEETINGS OF THE JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE HELD ON 2ND JUNE, 2023 AND 22ND SEPTEMBER, 2023)

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

This matter has been discussed and dealt with earlier in the meeting.

12. NOTICE OF MOTION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR CONOR SHEEHAN

“I will move at the next meeting of the Joint Policing Committee that this JPC writes to the Commissioner and Minister for Justice to state our opposition to proposals to disband dedicated community policing and that we ask for the retention of these units and circulate this motion to all local authority JPC’s”.

The Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor C. Sheehan, seconded by Cllr. A. Teskey, Chairman and agreed.

Councillor C. Sheehan stressed the importance of community policing. Community policing is very effective and important and is usually the first point of contact for members of the public.

In reply, the Chief Superintendent stated that this was a decision made by industrial relations in relation to rosters and negotiations are ongoing to come up with agreed rosters. He acknowledged the need for community policing which are not now being disbanded.

Councillor C. Sheehan stated that Elected Members and the Joint Policing Committee back front line Gardaí and he expressed hope that these negotiations are concluded successfully and that Members concerns be taken on board.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Councillor Keary stated that two members of his family were recently overtaken by English registered cars in a very dangerous manoeuvre that the registration numbers of the cars were given to the Gardaí and he expressed hope that the owners of the cars are pursued. He stated that there are seven entry/exit points into Rathkeale town. He asked that consideration be given that these be temporarily reduced to four over the Christmas period. He expressed concern that the Applegreen Station on the N21 at Coolanoran, Newcastle West, will be open on Christmas Day, which may generate a lot of traffic and activity in the area and proposed that they be written to asking them to consider closing on that day.

Superintendent Kennedy confirmed that every report of dangerous driving is dealt with promptly, however, if there are any specific cases that Members want followed up on, to give him the details and he will have it fully investigated. He confirmed that four vehicles had been seized in the last twenty four hours. He stated that there is an operation ongoing at present with Customs and Excise and other bodies and three people have been arrested. He stated that he was aware of an increase in overtaking and said he is in constant communication with the Roads Policing Unit in relation to the matter. He appealed to all road users to drive within the limits and to respect other road users.

The Chief Superintendent stated that the Gardaí do not have the authority to close the Applegreen Station on the N21 at Coolanoran.

It was proposed by Councillor A. Teskey, Chairman, seconded by Councillor Keary and agreed, to write to Applegreen plc and ask them to consider the closure of that Applegreen station on Christmas Day, if possible, to reduce the level of traffic and activity in the area on that day.

Councillor Collopy referred to a recent assault on a member of An Garda Síochána in Bruff and wished him a speedy recovery. He enquired if there was a fixed prison sentence for assaulting a Garda. He asked if Garda Reserves are still being recruited.

In reply, the Chief Superintendent stated that the age limit for Garda Reserves has increased to 50 years of age. A number of the force has been lost due to retirement; however, Garda Reserves are getting renewed

focus, which is to be welcomed. He confirmed that it is up to the Judiciary to allocate a sentence for assault on a member of An Garda Síochána but added that longer sentences have been approved by the Minister for Justice.

Deputy Quinlivan, T.D., said the role of Community Gardaí is very important and they should be retained.

The Chairperson & Chief Executive thanked the Chief Superintendent and all Members of An Garda Síochána for their work in policing in Limerick, and they referenced the ongoing good relationship between the Gardaí and the Council and the significant joint operations carried out. They wished all a very happy and peaceful Christmas.

Signed: _____
Councillor Adam Teskey, Chairman

Date: _____