

Draft Minutes of Joint Policing Committee Meeting held in the Council Chamber on Monday, 27th November 2023 at 10.30am

In attendance:- Cllr. John Crowe, Chairperson, Cllrs. P. Daly, M. Begley, M. Howard, G. Keating, J. Killeen, I. Lynch, P. McMahon, P. Murphy, A. Norton, A. O'Callaghan, PJ Ryan
Deputy Cathal Crowe
Deputy Violet-Anne Wynne
Deputy Michael McNamara
Chief Superintendent, Colm O'Sullivan
Supt. John Ryan
Supt. Ollie Baker
Jason Murphy, Director of Service
Brendan Boyce, Meetings Administrator
Padraig McCormaic, Acting Senior Executive Officer
Bill Slattery, Lahinch Development Association
Dermot Hayes, Community Activist in Disability
Mary Mather Leahy, Clare Older People's Council

Apologies:

Cllr. P. Burke
Brian McManus, Clare Youth Service
Madeline McAleer, Public Participation Network

Welcome:

The Chairperson Cllr. J. Crowe welcomed the members to the meeting. Cllr. Crowe paid tribute to Cllr. Bill Chambers who served County Clare with distinction and especially the JPC. He wished Bill and his family the very best of luck in his retirement and stated that it was an honour to work with him. He also paid tribute to Cllr. P. McMahon who has decided not to stand at the next election. Cllr. Crowe stated that Pat is an outstanding representative for Clare and has served for nearly 50 years and has been a JPC member since the beginning. On behalf of the JPC members, Cllr. Crowe thanked Bill and Pat for all that they have done for local communities in Clare.

Cllr. Crowe reminded members that their deliberations are confined to 2 minutes.

1. Draft Minutes of JPC meeting held on 12th September 2023

Proposed by: Cllr. PJ Ryan
Seconded by: Cllr. I. Lynch and agreed.

2. Matters arising from minutes

There were no matters arising.

3. Correspondence

Brendan Boyce read out an email received from Supt. Conor J. Dillon, as follows:-

“Clare-Tipperary Policing Plan 2024

With reference to the above, please note that this office is in the process of preparing the Divisional Policing Plan for 2024. As part of this process, the PAFA is required to consult with external stakeholders.

This office has recently met with Superintendent John Ryan Ennis Garda Station to discuss his preferences for the 2024 Clare-Tipperary Divisional Policing Plan. With a view to contributing to the divisional Policing Plan for 2024 it would be appreciated if you could contact Garda Anthony Owens to discuss an option of bringing this to the attention of members of the next meeting of the Clare JPC.

A similar approach is being taken regarding the Tipperary JPC”.

4. Presentation by Clare County Council on the Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)

Brendan Boyce presented on the LECP as follows:-

- What is the Local Economic and Community Plan?
- Economic and Community Development
- 6 Stages of the LECP Process
- Public Consultation
- 6 High Level Goals – 36 Objectives
- LECP link to JPC
- Implementation Plan -key actions with JPC

Cllr. J. Crowe thanked Brendan for his comprehensive report and invited members to email comments/observations to lecp23@clarecoco.ie

5. Update by An Garda Síochána

Chief Supt. O’Sullivan provided the latest statistics to the JPC comparing figures from January to October 2022 against figures from January to October 2023.

Cllr. J. Crowe thanked Chief Supt. O’Sullivan for his presentation and advised that questions submitted by the members prior to the meeting would be dealt with before opening to the floor on the Garda presentation.

6. Questions from JPC Members

Brendan Boyce read out the questions received from Deputy Cathal Crowe:-

1. "To ask the Chief Superintendent, given that the Clare-Tipperary Garda Division has its divisional headquarters in Ennis, County Clare; what management structures and personnel for the entire division are based in Ennis.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan advised that his office is based in Ennis and he has a satellite office in Thurles. He stated that he would not expect people to travel across divisions and he is available to meet people in Clonmel, Thurles etc. He advised that the head of the functional area for Clare is Supt. John Ryan. He also advised that the position of Assistant Principal in the Business Service Functional Area is vacant at the moment, but this post will be filled. This is the equivalent of a Superintendent.

2. To ask the Chief Superintendent what structures the Clare-Tipperary Garda Division must combat sex trafficking, prostitution and sex crimes against women.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan advised that there is a Divisional Protective Services Unit within the Clare Division and is based in Crusheen. This unit is led by Detective Inspector David Finnerty. Detective Supt. James Tierney who is heading up the Protective Services Unit is based in Nenagh. Chief Supt. O'Sullivan advised that a lot of these crimes are intelligence led and when these investigations commence they are followed through to conclusion. He recommended that Detective Inspector Finnerty present to the JPC at their next meeting.

3. To ask the Chief Superintendent if exclusion orders have been served on individuals who repeatedly cause trouble in the public realm of towns in County Clare".

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan stated that An Garda Síochána do not have the authority to issue Exclusion Orders but can issue Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (Asbos). If a number of Asbos are served over a period of time and they are not adhered to, then the Gardaí can make an application to the Courts who can then place conditions on them. The Gardaí can arrest individuals for public order offences then the case goes before the Courts. The Courts can put a curfew on individuals on bail.

Brendan read out the question received from Cllr. P. Murphy:-

"Given the high volume of what appears to be many abandoned/off the road vehicles strewn across public roads and carparks, as well as in both local authority and private estates, I am requesting the following information, exactly what powers Clare County Council has in dealing with these vehicles (that more often than not have no road tax, insurance or NCT on display) that are taking up parking spots, causing nuisance in some cases by being parked on footpaths and are eyesores to the wider public. Also, what role do the Gardai have in dealing with this issue".

Chief Supt. Colm O'Sullivan advised that Section 41 of the Road Traffic Act allows the Gardaí to seize vehicles that are being used in public places if the vehicle has no NCT, tax or insurance. If insurance is provided or if ownership is proven then the vehicle will be returned. Vehicles can be seized from a learner driver who is unaccompanied.

Brendan advised that a reply had already issued regarding the powers of Clare County Council.

Brendan read out the question received from Deputy Michael McNamara:-

“What measures has An Garda Síochána taken to combat anti-social behaviour in Ennis town and its environs?”

Sgt. John Ryan advised that in relation to anti-social behaviour during the day they have put significant efforts in with community engagement. The issue in the vicinity of the Eir shop and O’Sullivan’s Pharmacy has been rectified by extending the shop fronts out. He stated that the Gardaí work together with the Council and engage with all the services available. They also liaise with the Homeless Action Team. He stated that significant work has been done especially during daylight hours.

Brendan read out the question received anonymously:-

“Garda Deirdre Scanlan previously of Ennistymon Garda Station, Community Garda for North Clare is not being replaced following her appointment as Juvenile Liaison Officer in Ennis Garda Station.

A direct result of a lack of resources. 1 Community Garda remaining in Kilrush Garda District, Garda Eoin Daly, Kilrush Garda Station”.

Chief Supt. O’Sullivan advised that Garda Scanlan will be replaced as soon as the competition and interviews are held.

Cllr. J. Crowe invited comments from the members.

Question from Bill Slattery:-

Bill enquired if there were any charges pending following the serious incident at Deerpark in Ennistymon. Firearms were discharged and an individual was seriously injured. He also enquired if Clare County Council paid for the cost of the damage as a result of that incident and if so what costs were involved.

Chief Supt. O’Sullivan advised that the incident is an active investigation and stated that he cannot comment on specifics. Pdraig McCormack advised that the Council will not be repairing the criminal damage caused.

Bill stated that his understanding was that there will be no charges against them and that a blind eye is being turned to the situation and that more resources are needed to deal with this. Chief Supt. reassured Bill that the Gardaí are investigating the case and will bring it to a conclusion. He stated that anything reported to them is followed through to a conclusion and investigated thoroughly.

Question from Cllr. P. Daly:-

Cllr. Daly thanked Supt. John Ryan for attending a recent Ennis Municipal District meeting. He expressed concern about the increase in shop thefts and enquired about the use of CCTV. He stated that it is becoming a regular occurrence and there

should be a Government initiative to assist the shop owners. He referred to the Council owned building in the Market which was provided for a farmers market but it had to close down due to issues with drugs.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan advised that the Gardaí cannot make shops install CCTV but it does assist the Gardaí with crime investigations.

Question from Cllr. M. Begley:-

Cllr. Begley enquired what percentage of all the increases shown on the presentation would be repeat offenders.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan advised that he does not have precise numbers but a significant amount would be repeat offenders. He advised that the Gardaí look at each individual crime but the Courts look at it collectively.

Question from Cllr. PJ Ryan:-

Cllr. Ryan enquired if there was any update on an increase in personnel in Shannon. At present he stated that Shannon has to be supplemented by other stations e.g. Sixmilebridge and Newmarket-on-Fergus. He advised that Shannon is now losing an Inspector and enquired if there will be a replacement. In relation to the new structure of JPCs, Cllr. Ryan enquired about the position of Councillors on that structure.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan advised that Inspector Paul Slattery is being moved to Henry Street on transfer and there will be an Inspector going into Shannon. This will happen closer to the end of January. At this point in time, Chief Supt. stated that he does not have information on increases but that the size of the geographic area is taken into account. The approximate figure of those due to pass out in Templemore in January is 120 but there are no details available of where they will be going.

Question from Deputy Cathal Crowe:-

Deputy Crowe referred to all crime increases and enquired what those figures feed into. He enquired if they are just reported and remain there or do they go to the Commissioner. He stated that Tipperary have 381 serving Gardaí and Clare have 299. Tipperary have 5 Superintendents and Clare have 1. Deputy Crowe requested that the JPC show solidarity and write a letter to the Garda on duty on O'Connell Street in Dublin last week, recognising his services during a very difficult situation.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan advised that figures are discussed at regional meetings and with the Senior Leadership team. He stated that he does not have accurate figures for the Country in terms of resources. It is approximately 14,000 but the Commissioner would like this figure to increase to 15,000. He outlined the gaps in recruitment and advised that it is a sign of a generation gap as a lot of people in the 20-40 age bracket have different perspectives in life. People are more transient and this is reflected across all jobs. He stated that the Superintendents' figure is not correct. He advised that Supt. John Ryan is based in Ennis, Supt. Baker is based in

Nenagh, Supt. Conor Dillon and Supt. James Tierney are the Superintendents for the entire division. Insp. Finnerty is responsible for the Protective Services Unit (PSU) and is based in Ennis and Supt. Frawley is also based in Ennis. He stated that in relation to an increase in crime and domestic offences, the Gardaí are carrying out significant work in highlighting the importance of people coming forward. He advised that the PSU are doing a fantastic job and the front-line members deal with those victims. He stated that there is an increase in figures in the Country in all crimes. Crime figures decreased during the pandemic and have increased back to pre-pandemic times. He stated that crimes are being reported, investigated and brought before the courts. Once a crime is reported the Gardaí fully investigate it to conclusion. He advised that there has been an increase in most types of crime e.g. non-residential burglaries, hit and run, crimes during the summer etc.

Question from Deputy Violet Anne Wynne:-

Deputy Wynne referred to the new Operating Model and sought clarification on the situation in Tulla. She referred to the lack of resources and how it is becoming prominent since the Operating Model is in place. She referred to the increase in anti-social behaviour and enquired what role the Gardaí have in relation to those incidences and if there is any support they can provide. She enquired about the work to support and protect vulnerable people e.g. homeless people and if the Gardaí experience any difficulties in relation to same.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan advised that Tulla was serviced by Killaloe and can still be serviced by Killaloe. When calls come through the Regional Control Unit, it will be the nearest Garda Station at the time that will deal with it. He stated that in relation to the recruitment campaign it was hoped to recruit 1,000 extra resources this year but he advised that he is unsure if this figure will be met. In relation to anti-social behaviour Supt. Ryan advised that every incident of public order offence is investigated. 198 arrests were made and some were dealt with through the Juvenile Liaison system, some were dealt with through the Adult Cautionary Scheme and repeat offenders may be prosecuted. In relation to vulnerable people, the Community Gardaí engage with them and advise them of the services available and steer them in the right direction.

Padraig McCormack advised that the Tenancy Enforcement Officer works with Supt. Ryan. In relation to drug offences, the Council liaise with the Gardaí. He advised that the number of homeless people has dissipated and there are 3 or 4 court cases ongoing. He advised that the Council works with Supt. Ryan in relation to Asbos. He outlined the role of the Homeless Action Team. In relation to accommodation during the winter months, additional beds are available.

Question from Cllr. I. Lynch:-

Cllr. Lynch enquired if the stats can be broken down. He stated that there is a need to restore public cognitive. He expressed disappointment that there was no presentation by Clare County Council and advised that there is a need to work together. He recommended that the JPC should have a budget. In relation to a lot of crime there is a lack of education and a budget could go towards a campaign on

assaults, misuse of photographs, one punch assaults etc. He recommended that a Draft Plan be prepared for next year.

Chie Supt. O'Sullivan stated that the JPC is a collaborative effort. He advised that there are multiple agencies involved and it is about what can be done as a society and what can be done collectively. He referred to the very effective "Ask for Angela" campaign which is a great campaign on how to keep an environment safe.

Question from Cllr. A. O'Callaghan:-

Cllr. O'Callaghan stated that there is still confusion and people feel there is a barrier created. He advised that there is a need to instil confidence. He stated that people in Tulla, Killanena and Scariff are now dealing with an office in Nenagh. He referred to the thuggery which took place in Dublin and was disappointed to see what the Gardaí have to put up with. Cllr. O'Callaghan felt that they are fighting a losing battle in relation to recruitment.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan stated that Killaloe was part of the Ennis Garda Division and now comes under the functional area of East Clare/Tipperary North. The Supt. responsible is now based in Nenagh. He advised that there is no change in the provision of services. He stated that it is a perception and that this is something that the Gardaí can overcome by attending public meetings in order to change people's perceptions. He stated that this is the way it will be done in all divisions. An expert group were brought together to look at the future of policing and a new structure was developed.

Question from Mary Mather Leahy:-

Ms. Leahy advised that she would like to walk safely around Ennis and in particular the Fair Green. She stated that there is no control of dogs there and more Supervisors are needed. She advised that she attends life-long learning three days per week and still wants to live a normal life without being pushed and shoved. She stated that she does not go to the Fair Green anymore and it had kept her going during Covid.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan stated that it is down to respect and education by the parents of the children. He advised that the level of respect is gone and that young people seem to forget that everyone contributes to society. He referred to the Control of Dogs Act which states that all dogs should be kept on a lead at all times.

Question from Cllr. Mary Howard:-

Cllr. Howard recommended that anonymous letters should not be read out and that it was not a positive letter. She advised that it was great to see the Gardaí back on the beat in Ennis. It instils a sense of security in the town and she advised that she would like to see this continue. As the busy season is near she recommended that the "Ask for Angela" campaign be rebooted. She referred to the incidents in Dublin and stated that the Gardaí need body cams and should be armed.

Question from Cllr. P. McMahon:-

Cllr. McMahon enquired if there was any evidence of far right in the area. He referred to the increase in anti-social behaviour and enquired if there were any laws to counteract this. He also enquired if there was any anti-migrant behaviour taking place. He referred to the increase in migrants and that 1 in 4 workers are non-Irish.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan advised that in relation to anti-social behaviour 198 arrests have been made which shows Garda activity. Anti-social behaviour is evident across all types of society. He stated that the Public Order Act ensures that the Gardaí have significant powers and there is a lot that needs to be done with regard to education which should start in the homes. He referred to agencies coming together and targeting these problems. He advised that the Gardaí are the only body that are available 24/7 at the moment.

Question from Deputy Michael McNamara:-

Deputy McNamara referred to the Market Building in Ennis and the €1.7m spend and it is now no longer a market. He referred to the ongoing drug selling taking place there and enquired if the Gardaí have investigated this. He stated that it was now the most expensive shooting gallery and there is a big drugs problem there. He stated that there was no accountability for this at any level. He stated that before the changes to the division there was a number of Detectives based in East Clare and enquired how many there was now on the beat and how many are currently based in the Killaloe area and work out of there on a daily basis.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan advised that the Gardaí are dealing with all illegal activity no matter where it is. He stated that the query on the spend is not a matter for the JPC and invited Deputy McNamara to speak to him separately on the divisional queries.

Question from Dermot Hayes:-

Mr. Hayes referred to the proposed body cams and enquired how the Gardaí feel about it and if it is an invasion of privacy.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan stated that everything the Gardaí do is governed by legislation and they deal with the law in accordance with the law and will not step outside it. He advised that whatever guidance or legislation will be brought in, the Gardaí will abide by it. He stated that the Gardaí are the envy of other countries on how they carry out their job without being armed and as a result they have successful engagement with communities.

Clarification from Cllr. I. Lynch:-

As a member of the JPC, Cllr. Lynch stated that he does not want to advocate for armed policing. He referred to the figure of €1.7m which he stated was factually incorrect as the total included the area and not just the building.

Question from Cllr. J. Killeen:-

Cllr. Killeen referred to the increase in thefts which may have resulted from more investigations taking place. He suggested that there should be greater emphasis on Mental Health services and how these services can be improved. He referred to Garda resourcing and appealed to the Oireachtas members to look for increased resources and support so that the members will stay in the service.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan stated that offenders are brought before the courts and are prosecuted. Some are repeat offenders. In relation to resourcing he advised that the Commissioner would like the figure to be 15,000.

Clarification from Bill Slattery:-

Mr. Slattery referred to a situation in Liscannor whereby a traveller from outside the County entered land with lurcher dogs and cattle were injured. The Gardaí arrived on the scene and the 5 dogs were taken to the pound but were re-chipped and given back to the owners. The landowners have threatened to shoot the dogs and have asked are they entitled to do this.

Chief Supt. O'Sullivan advised that under the firearms legislation a firearm cannot be discharged 60ft from the road for public safety. He stated that this method should be used sparingly due to safety concerns. Bill enquired what the Gardaí's role is in relation to trespassing. Chief Supt. advised that the public need to follow through, be prepared to go to court and make a statement. If this does not happen then the Gardaí's hands are tied. He stated that every person is entitled to face their accuser.

7. Draft Annual Work Plan 2023-2024

Jason Murphy suggested that a workshop be held to discuss the Draft Annual Work Plan 2023-2024 and discuss additional joint initiatives that could be brought into the plan. This was agreed by the members.

Action: Workshop to be organised in 2024.

8. Draft Annual Report 2022

Brendan Boyce referred to the Draft Annual Report 2022 which was circulated with the agenda and contained a summary of the 2022 meetings. Cllr. I. Lynch enquired about an update on CCTV. Jason advised that there are strict rules being enforced by the Data Protection Officer. Where there is a need for CCTV, a Data Protection Impact Assessment needs to be completed and it is a lot more complicated but where there is a need this can be reviewed.

9. Any other business:

The meeting dates of 26th February and 10th May were agreed. Cllr. John Crowe advised that the last two dates will be decided by the next JPC members.

With no other business Cllr. J. Crowe drew the meeting to a close and thanked all the members for attending.