

County Laois Joint Policing Committee

Minutes of Annual Public Meeting

Held on Monday, 19th September 2016 at Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise

Present: Cllr. Pdraig Fleming (in the Chair), Mr. John Mulholland, Supt. Joe Prendergast, Sgt. Joe Culliton, Cllr. Paddy Bracken, Cllr. Seamus McDonald, Cllr. Paschal McEvoy, Cllr. John King, Cllr William Aird, Cllr. James Kelly, Cllr. Noel Tuohy, Cllr. Caroline Dwane Stanley, Mr. Brian Stanley, T.D., Mr. Conor O’Leary, Mr. Noel Dooley, Mr. Michael Cobbe, Mr. Pat Fitzpatrick, Mr. Thomas Jones,

In Attendance: Mr. Donal Brennan, Director of Services, Mr. Michael Rainey, Senior Executive Officer, Ms. Georgina Ireland, Administrative Officer, Ms. Theresa Bergin, Clerical Officer.

Members of the Public/Press in attendance: Mr. Matthew Kennelly, Downtown Portlaoise, Mr. Joe Barrett, Laois Nationalist.

Apologies: Chief Supt. John Scanlan, Mr. Sean Fleming, T.D., Cllr. John Moran, Cllr. Tom Mulhall, Cllr. David Goodwin.

Cllr. Pdraig Fleming welcomed all members and members of the press and public also.

Confirmation of Minutes

Upon the proposal of Cllr. Paddy Bracken and seconded by Cllr. John King, the minutes of the Laois County Joint Policing Committee Meeting held on June 2016 were confirmed.

An Garda Síochána Report

Supt. Joe Prendergast presented a report on behalf of An Garda Síochána in respect of the period April – June 2016 (Copy attached). He remarked that the statistical trend was positive and advised in relation to a number of recent successful Garda operations.

Supt. Prendergast also highlighted the issue of people leaving property in their vehicles and asked how this committee could assist in successfully conveying this message to the public. He advised that a new Divisional Drug Unit would be established in the coming months.

On the subject of driving offences, the Superintendent noted with disappointment that the number of people still driving under the influence of intoxicants is quite high and asked that the road safety message be conveyed again to the public. He referred also to a number of road traffic operations ongoing.

Members noted that a number of new Gardaí would be recruited to the District in the coming months, and that despite retirements and transfers, Garda numbers in the District have increased.

The Members thanked the Superintendent for his report and congratulated An Garda Síochána on their work to date.

Other comments made in relation to:

- Appearance of new designer drugs and the consequences of same.
- The assistance of Community CCTV in detecting crime and whether it is useful for road traffic offences. The quality of imaging on Community CCTV systems was also discussed. It was noted that all CCTV and Text Alert systems will help to increase vigilance.
- Rural crime - crimes being committed on the pretext of night hunting.
- Garda powers in relation to illegal encampments.
- Texting whilst driving. The Superintendent agreed to bring to the next meeting a breakdown of offences of this type.
- Members discussed road safety issues including cycling and cycle lanes, particularly in rural areas.
- An Garda Síochána were thanked by members for their ongoing presence in Pairc an Phobail Portlaoise, which helped to curtail anti-social behaviour in the area.
- The positive influence on crime through the relationship between An Garda Síochána and the Irish Farmers' Association was praised by members.
- Mr. Conor O'Leary introduced the concept of property marking and listing and advised that further information would be made available by Muintir na Tíre at the National Ploughing Championships later that month.
- The issue of the location of the Courthouse currently on Main Street Portlaoise and related anti-social behaviour was raised by members. Mr. Donal Brennan advised the meeting in relation to the Courthouse issue, that the Chief Executive had some positive engagement with the Courts Service on this matter and a location is currently being sought for its relocation. There was some discussion on this matter, during which some members expressed their concern that this matter be addressed urgently. Mr. Brian Stanley agreed to seek a meeting on the matter with the Office of Public Works.

Laois County Council Report

Mr. Michael Rainey, Senior Executive Officer presented a report on behalf of the local authority (*copy attached*).

The Members thanked Mr. Rainey for the report. Members welcomed the concept of Age Friendly parking and also congratulated the local authority on its work regarding stray horses.

JPC Strategic Plan 2016 -2020 – Update on Implementation Plan 2016

The Members noted an actions' update circulated in respect of the JPC 2016 Implementation Plan. Mr. Conor O'Leary sought a gathering of Community Alert Groups before the end of 2016 and was advised that this would be taking place in November 2016, date to be confirmed. Members also noted the convening by An Garda Síochána of a Community Alert Working Group upon which Muintir na Tíre and Laois County Council are also represented.

Questions submitted by members of the public

One question was submitted by Mr. Matthew Kennelly, Chairperson, Downtown Portlaoise:

“I am writing on behalf of the traders association, Downtown Portlaoise, and would like to first compliment the Gardaí on their response times to thefts and other crimes in the area, however with our growing population will we be seeing any increased numbers on the beat on Main Street and surrounding areas? Are there any plans in relation to rostering for this?”

Supt. Joe Prendergast responded to the question, thanking Downtown Portlaoise for their positive comments. He advised that it is a high priority of An Garda Síochána to get as many personnel as possible on the beat. He also expressed his hope that another five Gardaí would be recruited to the District by the end of 2016 which would be of great assistance.

The members thanked Mr. Kennelly and the members of the Downtown Portlaoise group for their interest and their submission.

Any Other Business

None.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____

**Cllr. Padraig Fleming
Chairperson**

Date: _____