

**Minutes of Joint Policing Committee Meeting**  
**held on Monday, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2014, in Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise**

**Present:** Cllr James Daly (In the Chair), Mr Peter Carey County Manager, Cllr Ben Brennan, Cllr Brendan Phelan, Mr Brian Stanley TD, Cllr Catherine Fitzgerald, Mr Charles Flanagan TD Chief Superintendent John Scanlan, Inspt Declan Dunne, Cllr John King, Mr Michael Cobbe, Cllr Michael Lalor, Cllr Paul Mitchell, Cllr Tom Mulhall, Cllr David Goodwin, Cllr Seamus Mc Donald, Cllr Paddy Bracken, Mr Sean Fleming TD

**In Attendance:** Ms Anna Marie Delaney, Director of Services, Mr Ian Mc Cormack, Senior Executive Officer, Ms Honor Deevy, Senior Staff Officer, Ms Theresa Bergin, Clerical Officer

**Apologies:** Cllr Mary Sweeney, Senator John Whelan, Ms Mary White, Ms Kathleen Gorman, Cllr Ray Cribbin

Cllr James Daly opened the meeting and welcomed all members.

**CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

On the proposal of Cllr Tom Mulhall and seconded by Cllr Brendan Phelan, the minutes of the County Laois Joint Policing Committee Meeting held on 7 October 2013 were confirmed and agreed.

**MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising.

**AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA REPORT**

Chief Superintendent John Scanlan made a presentation in respect of crime statistics for the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2014 (*presentation attached*). In his presentation he highlighted a number of points:

- Thefts from shops are up. Items being stolen can vary from groceries to high value clothes and pharmacy items eg razors.
- Sometimes these thefts are a result of economic hardship whilst at other times they are a result of professional shoplifters or opportunistic visitors to the area.
- Drive-off Thefts are down and these are covered in the statistics under 'Thefts Other'.
- There are no specific trends in general, however, prior to Christmas a trend was developing and practices were put in place with retailers to avert this.
- The Text Alert System is a valuable tool, however, it must be managed well as misinformation can be dangerous but in general the system is good to put people on guard.

- Thefts from Vehicles are down and again The Chief Superintendent appealed to people to avoid having valuable items and other items such as Handbags, phones and cash on display in vehicles.

The members welcomed the report from An Garda Síochána. Some issues/queries were raised by members in relation to:

- Concern was again raised in relation to the issue of people texting while driving, a highly dangerous activity.
- The problems of drug use and the closure of Garda Stations was also raised.
- The possibility of having a Garda presence at least one day a week in Post Offices in areas where the Garda Station was closed to deal with issues affecting these communities.
- The issue of the Speed Limit Review was raised and whether this could be undertaken more frequently than the current 3 year review which is currently in place.
- A suggestion was made of having a process put in place whereby if a review of a Speed Limit was required that it should be dealt with As Soon As Possible.
- The issue of Traffic Accidents at Kilmullen was raised. It was acknowledged that the County Council have invested heavily over the years in making this stretch of road safer, however, accidents continue to occur there.
- The issue of Sporadic Speed checks was raised. On local roads traffic can travel at very high speeds and road signage is being knocked down. The Public have become familiar as to the location of the Speed Check Vans and the question was raised as to whether the location of the checks could be moved.

Chief Superintendent Scanlan responded to some queries in relation to the above.

- The Drug Statistics are a measure of activity.
- The use of Post Offices by An Garda Síochána has been run on as a pilot scheme. This issue is now gone back for Policy Review.
- In the absence of Garda Stations in areas a member of An Garda Síochána has been assigned to that area and will visit that area one day per week.
- In respect of the Speed Limit Review the Gardai will co-operate with the Council on this matter.
- In relation to dangerous driving the Chief Superintendent reiterated that it was up to each individual to report such incidents by either contacting the Gardai or the Traffic Line.
- In relation to Kilmullen the Gardai will look at the statistics in respect of same and will bring to the next Joint Policing Committee.
- He advised that there had been 602 tickets issued in respect of mobile phone offence whilst driving.
- Garda Resources are down, however, the outrun of the Traffic Division is up.
- The Chief Superintendent advised that he would welcome advance notice of questions so that he could have the relevant information to hand for meetings.

## LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT

Ms Anna Marie Delaney presented a report giving an update on the local authority's response to community and other issues. *(Copy attached)*

Cllr James Daly thanked Laois County Council for this report.

A number of queries were raised following this report:

- Cllr John King welcomed the report and acknowledged that it was very positive. He raised the issue of the Youth Café in Rathdowney and the need for such a facility in the area. He thanked all those who helped and supported the initiative and wished to advise that the group were successful in their application to An Pobal for funding to the sum of €50,000. The building project is now gone to tender. When this facility is up and running it will help prepare Young People for life, college and further afield.
- Deputy Flanagan wished to acknowledge National Clean Up Week and its importance in respect of Tourism and wished to encourage community groups to get involved. He also raised the issue of vandalism at the Glendine Pass in the Slieve Blooms. There is evidence of hand break turns and litter and an important Monument at the site has been broken. He asked that Gardai in Mountrath and Offaly to monitor this area.
- Cllr Tom Mulhall spoke of the recent Community Alert Meeting of 19 February 2014 and the fact that Ratheniska Community Alert were not invited to attend. Cllr Daly confirmed that he would ensure that the group would be invited to attend the next meeting. He also raised the issue of illegal dumping at Emo Park.
- Deputy Fleming raised the issue of Green Schools. He pointed out that not all schools are involved in this scheme. He noted that there was a requirement to get these schools involved and asked who would take the initiative to ensure that this happened.
- Cllr Catherine Fitzgerald raised the issue of the Low Cost Safety Improvement Scheme for Roads and how submissions are accessed. She was advised that locations with a high incident of accidents were scheduled for improvement. Cllr Daly advised that it was part of the roads programme. She also enquired as to the Roundabout at Rockview on the Mountrath Road in Portlaoise and pointed out that this was not included in the programme. She expressed her extreme disappointment regarding this. She had been advised that this Roundabout was top of the list and the Engineers also agreed that this was a priority and was extremely dangerous.
- Cllr Brendan Phelan raised the issue of response times by An Garda Síochána in rural areas and stated that these had increased since the closure of Garda Stations in these areas. He acknowledged the need for a Speed Limit Review and stated that the last time a review took place was pre Motorway (M7/M8) opening.

Mr Peter Carey, County Manager welcomed the overall trends. He acknowledged community involvement and how invaluable this was to local communities. He advised that the Council were currently looking at Age Friendly Initiatives and the elderly living alone.

He expressed his thanks to the Chief Superintendent for the support, co-operation and assistance from An Garda Siochana during the recent bad weather in respect of community safety.

Cllr James Daly confirmed that he would obtain feed back in respect of Rockview. He advised that there were 10 low cost projects in respect of roads and the list of these were available. Cllr Fitzgerald advised that she had not received this list.

Cllr Daly advised that Clean Up Laois Week will take place in April.

He also advised that National Bike Week would take place form 15 – 23 June and that this initiative had been very successful in 2013. He advised that they would be in contact with the Gardai and their help and support would be welcome.

#### **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Cllr Ben Brennan wished to express his thanks to An Garda Siochana for their support during the recent Storms. Their support was invaluable.

Mr Michael Cobbe raised the issue of Housing Estate without names.

This concluded the business of the meeting. Cllr James Daly thanked all who participated in the meeting and discussions.

He advised that the next meeting would take place in June or July.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Cllr. James Daly**  
**Chairman**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_