

Minutes of Joint Policing Committee Meeting

Held on Monday, 23rd March 2015, in Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise

Present: Cllr. Pdraig Fleming (Chair), Chief Supt John Scanlan, Supt. Joe Prendergast, Mr. Gerry Murphy, Chief Executive, Cllr. Paddy Bracken, Cllr. Seamus McDonald, Cllr. John King, Cllr. David Goodwin, Cllr. James Kelly, Cllr. Paschal McEvoy, Cllr. Tom Mulhall, Cllr. Catherine Fitzgerald, Cllr. Noel Tuohy, Cllr. Caroline Dwane Stanley, Cllr. Willie Aird, Mr. Conor O’Leary, Ms Antoinette Kinsella, Mr. Sean Fleming, T.D., Mr. Brian Stanley, T.D.

In Attendance: Ms. Anna Marie Delaney, Director of Services, Ms. Georgina Ireland, Administrative Officer, Ms. Jennifer Moore, Clerical Officer

Apologies: Cllr. John Moran, Cllr. James Kelly, Senator John Whelan.

Cllr. Pdraig Fleming welcomed all members and facilitated introductions.

PRESENTATION ON THE JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE

Ms. Georgina Ireland made a presentation in respect the operation of Joint Policing Committees. The presentation contained a number of points for the guidance of new members and a refresher for those that have previously been members of Town Joint Policing Committees, but also to recap on the Joint Policing Committee’s intended direction under the new guidelines issued last year. (See copy of presentation attached)

The members thanked Ms. Ireland for her presentation and a number of comments were made.

ADOPTION OF STANDING ORDERS & CODE OF PRACTICE

Ms Anna Marie Delaney, Director of Services spoke about the Code of Practice previously circulated to all members. She stressed issues pointed out in the presentation and the importance of focusing on such matters such as Illegal drugs, major events, and communication with other groups through our new established Public Participation Network.

The matter of a quorum was discussed, and the necessity to have 7 members present to include at least one elected member and one member of An Garda Síochána. Ms. Anna Marie Delaney clarified that the JPC Guidelines state the necessity for only one elected member to be present but that this could be amended by the members if they so wish.

Mr William Aird MCC proposed no amendment to the standing order. Ms Caroline Dwane Stanley MCC proposed that it should be amended. This matter was discussed and on the proposal of Cllr. Willie Aird and seconded by Cllr. John King, it was agreed that the standing orders should remain as is, in accordance with the Guidelines, and could be reviewed in the future if necessary.

Chief Supt. John Scanlan raised the matter of public representatives raising policing issues at meetings with no prior notice given to An Garda Síochána. He suggested that operation of the JPC in this regard be reviewed so that matters are raised with An Garda Síochána in advance of a JPC Meeting. He suggested that issues could be raised directly with him if necessary. He described the JPC as a valued forum and how it should be used as a forum for cohesive strategic work on crime prevention measures and not for issues to be raised specifically for An Garda Síochána to answer at meetings.

Cllr Paddy Bracken suggested that a system could be developed for questions to be given three weeks before the Steering Group Meetings.

CONSULTATION ON THE JPC STRATEGY

Ms Georgina Ireland advised the members in relation to the obligation of each JPC to prepare a 5 year Strategy, a report on the implementation of which would be sent to the Dept of Justice annually. She circulated a draft consultation document, which would be circulated, with the JPC's agreement, to organisations and agencies locally and nationally for their submission.

Ms Antoinette Kinsella, Coordinator, Midlands Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force offered assistance in consulting the drugs services providers and Mr Conor O'Leary, Development Officer, Muintir Na Tire also offered assistance, adding that communities may need support in being consulted. He suggested holding a Community Alert District meeting in order to do this.

Deputy Brian Stanley spoke about the consultation document and its time frame. He stated that he was in favour of allowing time for agencies and the public to examine a draft and that this process would not be rushed.

Mr Gerry Murphy Chief Executive asked that there be an amendment on the appendix to change the term "drivers" to "road users".

There was some discussion as to how to progress the compilation of the Strategy objectives and it was agreed that a facilitated session would be arranged, dedicated to the Strategy and its content.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Cllr. Catherine Fitzgerald thanked the local Gardaí for all their assistance with the Portlaoise St Patrick's Day Parade, and particularly mentioned Garda Gerry Dillon, who assisted that local committee.

Chief Supt. John Scanlan thanked the members for their words of support and also mentioned Garda Gerry Dillon. He stated how important the local community is and how valuable they are to An Garda Síochána as a source of information. He highlighted the importance of vigilance by local communities. He spoke of community groups engaging with the Community based CCTV scheme and complimented them on their own fundraising for same. He spoke highly about the public in small communities and how they prevent crime.

Cllr. Willie Aird asked about the members of the public and if they could send in questions before each Joint Policing Committee meeting. Ms Georgina Ireland advised in relation to the statutory Annual

Public Meeting, to which members of the public can submit questions and have them answered at the meeting, at which they can be present and have the right of reply.

Cllr. William Aird raised the issue of rural crime, particularly affecting the farming community. Chief Supt. John Scanlan responded and also advised of legislation to come before the Oireachtas in respect of the regulation of the scrap metal trade. He stressed the importance of being good neighbours and asked that the public be alerted to the following:

1. Valuable machinery should have tracking systems installed
2. Don't buy if you don't know the person you're buying from.

Ms Georgina Ireland advised the committee of the resignation from the JPC of Mr Charles Flanagan TD, due to work commitments in his role as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____

Cllr. Padraig Fleming
Chairman

Date: _____

County Laois Joint Policing Committee

Minutes of Annual Public Meeting

Held on Monday, 2nd November 2015, in Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise

Present: Cllr. Pádraig Fleming (Chair), Chief Supt John Scanlan, Supt. Joe Prendergast, Mr. John Mulholland, Chief Executive, Cllr. Paddy Bracken, Cllr. Seamus McDonald, Cllr. John King, Cllr. David Goodwin, Cllr. James Kelly, Cllr. Paschal McEvoy, Cllr. Tom Mulhall, Cllr. Catherine Fitzgerald, Cllr. Noel Tuohy, Cllr. Caroline Dwane Stanley, Cllr. Willie Aird, Mr. Noel Dooley, Mr. Sean Fleming, T.D., Mr. Brian Stanley, T.D, Senator John Whelan, Mr. Michael Cobbe, Mr. Pat Fitzpatrick and Mr. Tom Jones.

In Attendance: Ms. Anna Marie Delaney, Director of Services, Ms. Georgina Ireland, Administrative Officer, Mr. Ian McCormack, Senior Executive Officer, Ms. Jennifer Moore, Clerical Officer, Geraldine Delaney, Staff Officer.

Apologies: Cllr. John Moran, Ms. Antoinette Kinsella

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

A vote of sympathy was passed by the JPC members to An Garda Síochána on the loss of their colleague Garda Tony Golden in Dundalk. Sympathies were also extended to Cllr. John Moran on the death of his sister.

Confirmation of Minutes

Upon the proposal of Cllr. Willie Aird and seconded by Cllr. Seamus McDonald, the minutes of JPC Meeting held on 23rd March 2015 were confirmed.

Correspondence

Ms. Georgina Ireland advised the members in relation to correspondence received from Borris-in-Ossory, Shanahoe and Dunmore Community Alert Groups seeking JPC approval for the installation of Community CCTV Schemes in their respective areas.

She outlined the role of the Joint Policing Committee in the approval stages of the scheme, in that each scheme should be approved in principle by the JPC, subject to An Garda Síochána approval and relevant Planning approvals being in place. In each case, Upon confirmation that these approvals were in place, the JPC Members approved each Community CCTV Scheme as follows:

- Borris-in-Ossory Community CCTV Scheme was proposed by Cllr. John King and seconded by Cllr. Seamus McDonald.
- Shanahoe Community CCTV Scheme was proposed by Mr. Brian Stanley TD and seconded by Cllr. Paddy Bracken.
- Dunmore Community CCTV Scheme was proposed by Mr. Brian Stanley TD and seconded by Cllr. James Kelly.

The Members congratulated all three groups on the tremendous work that was taking place in their local areas.

Report from An Garda Síochána

Chief Supt. John Scanlon presented his report in respect of the period 1st January, 2015 - 2nd November, 2015 (copy attached). He also outlined a policing initiative recently launched “Operation Thor” He also discussed the Community Alert Networking Meeting which took place on the 22nd October, 2015 in the Heritage Hotel and was attended by 34 groups from around the county. He advised the members in relation to the proposed establishment of a Community Alert Steering Group, comprising Community Alert Representatives, members of An Garda Síochána and local authority staff, with the purpose of coordinating assistance and advice to these groups.

Cllr. Caroline Dwane Stanley raised the issue of the Community Garda in Portlaoise and praised the previous work of Sgt. Justine Reilly in this regard. She was advised that further Garda resources had been sought and that Sgt. Reilly’s input would continue in Portlaoise, as the Sergeant in Charge in Portlaoise Garda Station. Chief Supt. Scanlan commented that it was envisaged that all members of An Garda Síochána would have a community engagement function and role in their work.

The members thanked the Chief Supt for his report and comments were made as follows:

- Cllr. John King highlighted the issue of theft in rural areas and suggested that cameras be put on motorway junctions. He also stated that people should be made aware of bogus callers.
- A number of members raised the issue of anti-social behaviour in the vicinity of the Courthouse on Main Street, Portlaoise. Chief Supt. Scanlan reiterated that the siting of the Courthouse was not a matter for An Garda Síochána but for the Courts Service, however every effort would be made by An Garda Síochána to limit issues associated with anti social behaviour in the vicinity of that location.
- Cllr. Willie Aird raised the issue of anti-social behaviour in derelict properties and welcomed the advice of An Garda Síochána in that regard. Chief Supt. Scanlan advised that as the lead agency the local authority would advise in relation to such matters, and An Garda Síochána would liaise where appropriate.
- Cllr. Tom Mulhall praised those who arranged and hosted the recent Community Alert meeting, stating that it was a very good discussion and provided plenty of local knowledge. He highlighted the need for such networking meetings and enquired as to the existence of a group entitled “Laois Community Alert”.
- Senator John Whelan agreed that it is important to acknowledge that An Garda Síochána have been starved of resources and it will take time to make up ground. He stated that a policy response and changes to legislation were needed. He highlighted the issue in respect of members of An Garda Síochána and Emergency Services being attacked when attending incidents.
- Mr. Brian Stanley, TD agreed that it was not good that burglaries were still up. There is no room for complacency. He stated that the work of the Community Alert was valuable and that the use of CCTV working with the An Garda Síochána was very positive. He welcomed the announcement of extra Garda patrols on the motorways and agreed that every effort should be made to report thefts and investigate crime.

- Mr. Sean Fleming TD highlighted concerns about incidents of burglary in Portarlinton and Ballymorris.

Chief Supt. John Scanlon impressed the need for authorities to allay the fear of crime and to encourage members of the public to help An Garda Síochána by coming forward with information in relation to crimes that might be occurring in their area.

The Chief Supt reiterated his previous request that he get advance knowledge of members' questions. He thanked all the public representatives for highlighting issues of Garda resources, and welcomed the recent announcement of investment of extra resources into areas of crime. He stated that speeding is responsible for many deaths on the roads particularly pertaining to motorbike and many single vehicle accidents. He asked that this Committee promote publicly the national anti-drink driving campaigns and stated that drinking and driving will not be tolerated by An Garda Síochána.

Cllr. Willie Aird asks the Oireachtas Members to change the bail laws. He asked that legislation be brought forward in relation to this issue.

Laois County Council Report

Ms. Anna Marie Delaney, Director of Services presented her report on behalf of the local authority. The Members thanks Ms. Delaney for her report and comments were as follows:

- Cllr. John King welcomed the announcement of DCYA funding of €145,000 for development of a Youth Café in Rathdowney, to be open before the end of 2015. He thanked the local residents and the parish for their interest.
- Cllr. John King asked about the possibility of elected members requesting the salting of areas of concern. Mr. John Mulholland, Chief Executive replied on behalf of the local authority that salting / gritting would take place on the majority of major roads but precautions should still be used when driving.
- A request by Cllr. John King that the an increase to the Dog Licence fee should be considered to further combat the issue of dog fouling was noted.
- Cllr. Tom Mulhall suggested that the free parking scheme operated in Portlaoise at certain times of the year should be extended to Portarlinton and was advised that this matter should be discussed by the Portarlinton/Graiguecullen Municipal District Committee.
- Cllr. Noel Tuohy enquired as to plans for the redevelopment of Lyster Square, citing issues for people with disabilities at that location.
- Mr. Michael Cobbe enquired as to whether free legal aid is made available to people with over 60 convictions.

Questions submitted by members of the Public

Ms. Anna Marie Delaney Director of Services presented the questions submitted by the public. She advised that for members of the public who submitted questions, but were not present at this meeting, they would be contacted separately with a view to responding to their queries.

In his response to a question submitted by Mr. John Coughlan, Laois Community Alert in relation possibility of a free text alert system for groups, Chief Supt. Scanlan stated that he wished to publicly acknowledge the support of text alert groups in crime prevention and detection, stating also his intention to hold several meetings per year with Community Alert Groups.

In his response to a question from Cllr. John King in relation to theft of farm machinery, Chief Supt. John Scanlon advised that the Irish Farmer's Association would launch 'Theftstop' in Laois in association with An Garda Síochána on the 9th November, 2015, and briefly outlined the this system of identifying machinery/property.

Mr. John Cowhig, Kilminchy Home Owners when submitting his question, stated his disappointment that this meeting of the JPC was held in the afternoon and not the evening. He outlined communication issues with Portlaoise Garda Station and complaints made in this regard by local residents. In his response to the question, Chief Supt. John Scanlan stated that his hope that people would be dealt with efficiently and courteously by An Garda Síochána. It was noted that Mr. Cowhig agreed to discuss his queries separately with An Garda Síochána after the meeting.

In his response to a question submitted by Aidan Mullally, Ballymorris Residents, Chief Supt. Scanlan advised in relation consideration given by An Garda Síochána as to the best use of resources when policing local areas, including Portarlinton. He also reiterated that it would be inappropriate to give information in relation to matters relating to the Prison Service.

Any Other Business

The Members noted the retirement of Sgt. Tom Walton from Portlaoise Garda Station and unanimously extended their good wishes in that regard.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: _____

Cllr. Pdraig Fleming
Chairman

Date: _____