

**Minutes of Joint Policing Committee Meeting held online
Monday, 6th September 2021 at 2:00 p.m.**

In attendance:- Cllr. John Crowe, Chairperson

Cllrs. Ann Norton, Alan O’Callaghan, Joe Killeen, Pat McMahon, Ian Lynch, Mary Howard, P.J. Ryan.

Deputy Violet Anne Wynne

Gardaí:

Chief Supt. Sean Colleran

Insp. Morgan O’Donoghue

Supt. John Galvin

Karen Shelly, Assistant Principle, Policing Authority

Officials:

Leonard Cleary, Director of Service,

Karen Fennessy, Administrative Officer

Mary Mather Leahy, Clare Older People’s Council

Brian McManus, Clare Youth Service

Madeline McAleer, Public Participation Network

Apologies:

Cllrs. Gabriel Keating

Deputy Joe Carey

Deputy Michael McNamara

Dermot Hayes, Community Activist in Disability

Welcome:

The Chairperson Cllr. J. Crowe welcomed everyone to the online meeting and outlined the meeting protocol due to Covid regulations. He said the meeting was not being recorded and that there was no permission to record the meeting. An attendance roll call of JPC members was taken to confirm attendees.

1. Draft Minutes of JPC meeting held 12th April 2021

Proposed by: Cllr. Ann Norton

Seconded by: Cllr. Alan O’Callaghan and agreed.

2. Matters arising from Minutes

Madeline McAleer requested a change to the minutes as follows - she advised that in relation to the 2014 EU report she had stated that 10% of victims come forward which translates to 100 cases per week.

3. Correspondence

Karen Fennessy outlined correspondence received from Deputy Joe Carey on 14th May in relation to the setting up of a Local Project Team to implement the Community CCTV System for Clarecastle. He was enquiring if the Council would set up this team. Karen stated that Leonard Cleary had advised that the policy on Community CCTV projects is being reviewed nationally by the Local Government Management Agency (LGMA) and the Department of Justice and Clare County Council must await the outcome of this National Policy for the Local Government Sector.

4. Update by An Garda Síochána

Chief Supt. Colleran provided the latest statistics to the JPC comparing figures from January to August 2020 to the same period in 2021. He also provided a snapshot of Community Engagement Initiatives.

Cllr. John Crowe thanked Chief Supt. Colleran for his presentation and invited comments from the members.

5. Questions from JPC Members

M. McAleer thanked Chief Supt. Colleran for his presentation. She requested details regarding the 3,000 “999” calls not responded to, that were referred to the Chief Superintendents in the various divisions. She requested the total calls referred to the Clare Division and if there was any outcome of the situation.

Chief Supt. Colleran advised that the figures for Clare were very small, considerably less than 30 and in comparison with the 28 divisions around the country, Clare’s figures are much less than the national figure, but stated any number is of concern. Out of these figures 50% did not need any response and a number were mis-categorised. Chief Supt. Colleran advised that there were no issues of concern and the mis-categorised calls have been addressed satisfactorily.

Deputy V. Anne Wynne thanked Chief Supt. Colleran for his presentation and requested further statistics in relation to car burglaries i.e. the locations and if there is a percentage of those that could have been avoided e.g. cars left open. Deputy Wynne stated that while there was a decrease in domestic violence in Clare there was an increase nationally and stated that reassurance should be given to the general public that if they do make contact that their actions will guarantee a response. She stated that she would like to see an increase in reporting. If the figures were higher it would mean that more people are coming forward to report incidents. She advised that she is aware that there is a review of the 3,000 calls taking place.

Chief Supt. Colleran stated that this can be looked at positively in which the Gardaí present as an agency with other stakeholders to break down the barriers. He advised that when they receive a report they have trained Gardaí, Community Gardaí and the Garda Victim Service Office who will provide reassurance to people who are not sure where to go. Chief Supt. Colleran welcomed the downward figures but is also aware of the risk. In relation to car burglaries, he stated that he did not have the figures to hand and will include them in the next presentation to the JPC. He advised that the

figures are quite significant in relation to cars being left open. The opportunists will keep going until they find one open and is similar to house alarms. The public need to make it difficult for criminals by activating alarms and locking cars.

Cllr. A. Norton referred to Covid restrictions being lifted around the Halloween break and a lot of teenagers will be hoping that the night clubs will open. Cllr. Norton enquired if the Gardaí have considered putting something in place to make sure the streets are closed off to ensure the safety of the teenagers, similar to what has happened over the years which had worked very well. She stated that there has been 18 months of restrictions and that it would be good to know that there is support on the ground coming up towards the Mid-term break.

Chief Supt. Colleran stated that An Garda Síochána are guided by national policy and legislation in relation to gathering of crowds. He advised that the Gardaí will work with night club owners. He referred to the Ennis Purple Flag status which was granted to Ennis because of engagement with night clubs. He appreciates what everyone has gone through during the restrictions and referred to the recent Leaving Certificate result night. Historically this night caused a lot of public order offences and he welcomed that no major incidents had occurred last weekend. He advised that this is something that the Gardaí are very conscious of and will work closely with everyone involved.

Cllr. J. Killeen congratulated the Gardaí on the work carried out during the Summer as there were some incidents around popular beaches. He enquired if there will be changes next Summer.

Chief Supt. Colleran thanked Cllr. Killeen for his kind words. In terms of staycations the Gardaí have a policing plan in place. Public order incidents were reduced however, a number of incidents occurred in populous areas and were responded to accordingly. A certain amount of public order incidents were as a result of tourists arriving from other areas. These incidents were de-escalated before crowds gathered. Chief Supt. Colleran advised that the Gardaí will work ahead in terms of flash points and certain locations/band stands which are drawing people more. He stated that the Gardaí will work with partners and Clare County Council and mitigate these incidents occurring and will look to stay ahead of the curb.

Deputy V. Anne Wynne referred to the upcoming meeting with the Commissioner Drew Harris taking place on 18th October and enquired if an update on the review of the 3,000 “999” calls can be mentioned. Deputy Wynne expressed concern in relation to the 50% of calls that did not require direction, the miscategorised calls and that callers do not receive a response in a timely manner. She enquired if this can be referred to in the meeting with the Commissioner.

Chief Supt. Colleran advised that he is not sure about requesting this formally regarding the review but the Commissioner may be able to give an overarching response. In relation to the 50% that did not require further action, having contacted the callers the Gardaí were happy that no further action was warranted. In relation to the miscategorised calls, these related to public order offences, mental health issues or RTA's and once call back and engagement was made, they did not need the Gardaí.

6. JPC Six Year Plan 2022-2027

L. Cleary referred to the Six Year Plan 2022-2027 and recommended starting with a base plan. A clear programme of works then needs to be put in place by collecting ideas from the various stakeholders and invited members of the JPC to submit ideas to Karen Fennessy who will collate them. He stated that it is more productive to seek preliminary ideas initially rather than starting with a blank page.

M. McAleer referred to Community Safety Partnership pilots and enquired if all JPCs were transitioning into this model and also enquired what these partnerships will do that is different from the JPCs. She requested an outline on why they are looking towards this community approach, how it might help the JPC and the overarching principles involved.

L. Cleary advised that the local government sector had been briefed nationally in relation to these pilots. In relation to transitioning to different models, this is very much an experiment to see if the general role of the JPC can be expanded. He advised that it is only at inception stage and it may be a number of months before they have a brief. L. Cleary stated that he would contact the LGMA to see when an interim preliminary report will be available and he will arrange a brief thereafter. He advised that a lot of logistics need to be worked out and that the Commissioner may refer to it at the next meeting.

7. JPC meeting dates 2021

The next meeting will be held on the 18th October 2021 and attended by Garda Commissioner, Drew Harris.

8. Any other business

Retirement of Supt. Brendan McDonagh

Chief Supt. Sean Colleran advised that it was Supt. Brendan McDonagh's last week with over 40 years' service and stated that he wanted to acknowledge Brendan's tremendous work over the years. He stated that Brendan made his job and the job of the Divisional management easier. He advised that Brendan took a huge interest in the policing of Clare and the Gardaí are very grateful to have that caliber of person for over 34 years in Clare. This is a very significant time and he never let problems escalate. He referred to his relationship with the Council, members and stakeholders and while at times they encountered different opinions, ultimately they want the same outcome – to make Clare a safe place to work, live and visit. He stated that Brendan will be hugely missed and took the opportunity to acknowledge all of Brendan's hard work on the JPC since 2015.

L. Clearly stated that on behalf of Clare County Council's executive, he would like to echo those words and pay tribute to Brendan's commitment and hopes to see him at many sporting events. He thanked him for his service to Clare County Council and is an exemplary member of An Garda Síochána. He is always available at the end of a phone and worked together on solutions, in particular with event planning and management. Leonard thanked him for all his service in all ranks.

Cllr. A. O'Callaghan echoed these sentiments and advised that Brendan was very helpful and was a great asset to Co. Clare. He wished him all the best in his well-deserved retirement.

Cllr. M. Howard also echoed the sentiments and stated that he is a very easy person to deal with. She passed on her best wishes for the future and good health and happiness in his retirement.

Cathaoirleach Cllr. P.J. Ryan, on behalf of the people of Clare, wished Brendan well in his retirement and stated that Brendan is leaving a fantastic legacy and was always excellent to deal with and appreciated everything he did.

Chief Supt. Colleran advised that he will make sure all the complimentary comments will be passed on to Brendan.

Sixmilebridge – illegal encampment

Cllr. A. O'Callaghan expressed frustration at the illegal encampment at the train station in Sixmilebridge. The general public are very frustrated and feel intimidated and also fear that something will happen to one of the children involved who are cycling and playing in the vicinity. A screen has been damaged, a punch bag has been put up and another caravan has been parked there lately. They are breaking the law with no repercussions. Cllr. O'Callaghan requested an update regarding housing etc. A lot of older people living in the area are reluctant to use the train service and Cllr. O'Callaghan expressed disappointment that this is still being allowed.

Cllr. P.J. Ryan advised that engagement with An Garda Síochána, Gardaí in Sixmilebridge and the JPC had taken place and there is a court case coming up in mid-September which may resolve the situation. He echoed Cllr. O'Callaghan's concerns and advised that the case is not easily solved and needs to be done legally. They are keeping the pressure on to try and get a resolution.

Cllr. J. Crowe said it was important that this issue is resolved. He advised that the local Scouts are returning in the near future to the Old Station House and appealed that the situation should be rectified.

Chief Supt. Colleran advised that a huge amount of effort has been made to get the case to the Courts and he hopes progress will be made. He asked members if they have any more issues on this situation to let him know.

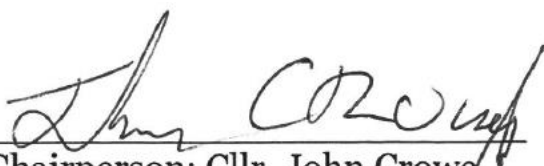
Boy racers and anti-social behaviour

Cllr. M. Howard referred to boy racers at Sheill's Garage in Ennis. She had received a number of complaints about noise late at night e.g. doing hand brake turns in the car park and people cannot sleep. She advised that the complainants have reported these incidents to the Gardaí. Cllr. Howard referred to an incident outside the Cathedral where a member of the public tried to pay for a parking ticket but there was a group gathered around and this person felt intimidated. People are frightened particularly if these people are drinking and enquired if they can be moved as they are picking the most awkward spots to hang around.

Chief Supt. Colleran advised that he would take these observations on board and action them.

Cllr. J. Crowe, as Chair of the JPC, thanked Supt. Brendan McDonagh for all the work he has done over the years. He advised that he is such an approachable man and wishes him well in his retirement. He thanked the Chief Supt. and the members for attending today and thanked Karen Fennessy for carrying out an excellent job in preparing for the meeting. He took the opportunity to welcome Insp. Morgan O'Donohue to the meeting and will look forward to the next meeting with the Commissioner in October.

With no other business the meeting concluded.


Chairperson: Cllr. John Crowe

Date: 21st February 2022