

Minutes of Meeting of County Cavan Joint Policing Committee – Council Chamber, Courthouse, Farnham Street, Cavan on 2nd September 2022 at 3pm.

Present:

Councillors: Cllr C. Brady, Cllr John Paul Feeley (Chair), Cllr Paddy Mc Donald, Cllr Madeleine Argue, Cllr. Trevor Smith, Cllr. T.P.O' Reilly, Cllr. Brendan Fay, Cllr C. Kelly, Cllr. Aiden Fitzpatrick,

Community Representatives: Stanley Nwaneri (New Communities), Elizabeth Ormiston (Farming / Rural Community Interests), Vanessa Clarke (Community Alert / Neighbourhood Watch), Leanne Coyle (Youth Affairs), John Magee (Youth Affairs), Tony Mc Govern (Farming / Rural Communities)

Executive: Brendan Jennings (Director of Services, CCC)

Garda Officers: Chief Superintendent A. Mc Govern, Superintendent Padraic Jones, Superintendent Gordon Englishby

Oireachtas Members: Senator Diarmuid Wilson, Deputy Pauline Tully, Deputy Brendan Smith, Deputy Niamh Smyth

Apologies: Cllr. Shane P. O' Reilly, Cllr. Peter Mc Vitty, Cllr. Craig Lovett, Cllr Patricia Walshe, Cllr. Sarah O. Reilly, Margaret Matthews (Dugs & Alcohol)

In Attendance: G. Boyle (CCC), Karen Coughlan (An Garda Síochána), Garda Noel Loughran, Eddie Butler (Northern Sound), (Anglo Celt)

Chair Cllr. Feeley opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He reminded members that no discussions of a personal nature were to take place.

Minutes & Matters Arising

The minutes were proposed by Senator D. Wilson and seconded by Deputy P. Tully.

Matters Arising

Chair Cllr. Feeley mentioned that he had attended An Garda Síochána's Centenary Event which was very good and congratulated all involved in its organisation.

Cllr. C. Kelly gave his apologies for being unable to attend the event organised in memory of Garda Donegan. Deputy B. Smith congratulated An Garda Síochána on the event organised in memory of Garda Morrissey, he said it is very important that the past is not forgotten.

Cllr. C. Brady asked if there is any update on An Garda Síochána's Divisional Canine Unit. Chief Superintendent Mc Govern replied that this is still in motion, in the meantime they are relying on the national team for any support needed.

Cybercrime with a focus on how it impacts the elderly and vulnerable community members. Garda Noel Loughran

Garda Loughran talked about the various online challenges which young people are presented with on various social media platforms, many of which are quite dangerous in nature.

He also covered the various online cybercrimes taking place, many of which older people who are not experienced in online activities are particularly susceptible to. These include various scams which involve the use of unsolicited emails. This is called 'Phishing', where people are sent emails with a link to click on. There are also scams which involve the landline, many older people still have landlines and therefore would not have 'Caller ID' and can be

easily targeted. He said there has been a 25% increase in cybercrime activities over the last year.

In terms of protecting yourself against these activities he provided the following advice:

- Do not give your personal information once you click on links in unsolicited emails
- Be careful what you post online in terms of your whereabouts and activities
- If something is too good to be true, it generally is

Cllr. B. Fay asked if it is immediately dangerous to click on the link within the email, Garda Loughran replied generally only if you start adding personal details.

Deputy N. Smyth complimented Superintendent G. Englishby on the awareness raising he carried out within local schools on Cybercrime and also in the area of online bullying as this is so prevalent amongst young people now. She hopes the new Media Bill will tackle this area more effectively. She asked how the gardaí currently tackle this issue and are the Social Media companies supportive in assisting them. Garda Loughran replied that actual evidence is needed to tackle any issue, so screenshots are useful, although many people have fake accounts and this can make it difficult to trace. However, many young people facing online bullying tend to know those who are bullying them. He said the social media companies are becoming more supportive in assisting them to tackle these issues.

Deputy B. Smith asked if there is good collaboration between the Gardaí and schools regarding cyberbullying. He believes a common message is needed on how wrong Cyberbullying is. He doesn't think the social media companies are doing enough, they are very slow to take information down and tackle the issue.

Chief Superintendent Mc Govern informed members that Planet Youth has now been launched. This is an evidence-based initiative and will be very

effective in tackling these issues and getting the message out to the public. Cyberbullying is a nationwide issue, not just confined to County Cavan. He referred to the new Harassment and Community Act 2022 and while this does not deal with this harmful content being posted, it will help with the issue indirectly. Superintendent Jones added that this Act does deal with issues such as revenge porn which is related, and this is now being treated as a criminal offence. Deputy N. Smyth complimented the Gardaí on the work they are doing within schools in relation to this.

T. Mc Govern commented that with the two recently announced bank closures it is estimated that older customers of these banks will be prime targets for cybercrime activities. They are now being forced to go online to do their banking. He asked if there is anything that can be done to support them over this transition. Garda Loughran suggested awareness raising and giving information to them is key. But, he warned, it's very difficult to keep up with the level of criminality that is evident in the digital world.

Deputy P. Tully said there is a lot of reactive work going on but asked if there were opportunities for more preventative measures to be taken. Garda Loughran replied that cybercrime prosecution is difficult, but it is happening, 5-year minimum sentences have been issued. Chief Superintendent Mc Govern said that criminals are becoming very sophisticated online and the Gardaí are working with banking institutions and technology companies to find solutions.

Cllr. C. Kelly said the purchase of mobile phone SIM cards without any ID needs to be looked at as this makes it extremely easy for anyone to purchase and discard of the card afterwards.

Crime statistics to cover Q.2 2022 compared to Q.2 2021

Chief Superintendent A. Mc Govern talked through the Crime Statistics YTD 2022 versus YTD 2021 and also included some pre-covid statistics from 2019 so as to assess the figures with pre-covid times.

While the number of burglaries are increasing they are still well below pre-covid figures. He said this year's total so far of 74 is still well down on that recorded in 2019, the last full year prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. A total of 159 burglary offences were recorded in Cavan for that year. He noted many crime categories are on the increase across the country and again whilst on the rise they are still not as high as pre-Covid and he was hopeful the figures would remain relatively low. The rise of over 100 in the number of public order offences is of concern however. A total of 355 such incidents were recorded in 2022, up from 250 last year, it's also up by 10 on the figure recorded in 2019. The number of assaults has also increased so far this year. More serious assaults, assault causing harm, is up from 15 to 89 so far this year. Minor assault offences are also up, from 147 last year to 185 in 2022. There was a rise in the number of sexual offences recorded from 46 to 59 and he believed this would be partly due to the work of the newly formed Divisional Protective Services Unit. Theft from shops was up from 113 in 2021 to 234 in 2022 and he believed this may be down to the fact that we are in hard times and there may be harder times ahead with the rise in the cost of living.

Cllr. A Fitzpatrick referred to drugs possession and supply. He said he has been contacted by a number of locals who say they are seeing drug dealing going on openly on the streets, people even know the names of those who are doing it. There is a strong fear around what would be done if they reported this activity. He wanted to know what can be done about this. Both Cllr. C. Brady and Cllr. P. Mc Donald concurred with this. Chief Superintendent A. Mc Govern said he would speak to Cllr. A. Fitzpatrick on this issue after the meeting so it can be investigated further. Now that they have new garda recruits he hopes that he can get more gardaí on the ground doing patrols and this will have an impact on this activity. Cllr. C. Kelly said that drugs is an

issue for every town, it is vitally important that the gardaí's confidential line number is promoted more to the public. He asked how many personnel were allocated to the Drugs Unit. Chief Superintendent Mc Govern said that every garda member has a role in tackling drugs rather than just being confined to the Drugs Unit. He added Cavan is very lucky to have both a Divisional Protective Unit and a Drugs Unit, the balancing of resources is an ongoing issue for An Garda Síochána.

Deputy N. Smyth also agreed with Cllr. A. Fitzpatrick's comments. She passed on her full compliments to the Drugs Unit but senses that it is under-resourced and questioned if it needs additional personal to tackle the problem. She believes visibility is so important and people are afraid to come forward. The Community Engagement Unit is having a great impact which is very beneficial. She asked has a policing car being allocated to Bailieborough yet. Chief Superintendent A. Mc Govern replied not just yet although one has been sought.

Cllr. P. Mc Donald commented that he would be more worried around the bigger players who are targeting younger people to do their selling for them. He feels that the Criminal Investigations Bureau has a very important role in targeting these people.

Deputy B. Smith asked Chief Superintendent Mc Govern if An Garda Síochána believe the current sentences and sanctions on drugs related crimes to be adequate. It was recently raised within the Daíl that they may not be. In many cases minor sentences are being handed down for serious offences. While he acknowledged this is a multi-faceted issue he enquired if more needs to be done around this. Chief Superintendent Mc Govern replied that this is a judicial matter and that it is out of An Garda Síochána's control. They will issue sanctions as they see fit, the Gardaí have a lot of challenges on trying to get the perpetrators into the court of itself and after that, it is out of their hands.

Cllr. B. Fay believes the Gardaí's patrol cars are having a great impact on the ground and was wondering if a new one will be allocated to Belturbet. Chief

Superintendent Mc Govern said that they put in a request to seek additional patrols cars.

Road Collision & LA16 Statistics

Brendan Jennings confirmed that LA16's have been completed and submitted for the following incidents in 2022.

- N3 Billis 18-08-2022
- N3 Kilnalack 09-06-2022
- L3023 09-04-2022
- N3 Derrygarra Upper 02-03-2022

Chair Cllr. Feeley offered his condolences on behalf of the JPC to the families involved.

Chief Superintendent Mc Govern reported the following road statistics for 2022. There were 15 serious incidents, 15 minor damages and 506 material damages. Chair Cllr. Feeley stated that there has been a large increase in traffic offences following the lockdown, many drivers seem to be ignoring the basic rules of the road now. He continuously sees reckless driving and aggressive behaviour and believes the roads have become a very unpleasant place to be. Cllr. C. Brady agreed and also believes speeding is a big factor. Cllr. T.P. Smith added that due to the Virginia roadworks he is seeing a rise in aggressive driver behaviour. Cllr. B. Fay said the Belturbet to Ballyconnell road is a lethal stretch of road, he added that texting while driving is also causing many collisions. Chief Superintendent Mc Govern said these trends are reflective at the national level, they do enhance their road safety operations over every holiday period to help tackle this. They also have a Road Safety Group set up who are continuously monitoring and tackling this.

T. Mc Govern said that he has concerns around the speed of lorries on the roads, he has seen many going well over the driving limits. Chief Superintendent Mc Govern replied that he has noted his comments.

Cavan JPC Public Meeting 2022

Chair Cllr. Feeley informed members that the JPC will need to host a Public Meeting before the end of the year as per Departmental Guidelines. It has not been possible to host this meeting over the last couple of years due to COVID. Chief Superintendent Mc Govern said the Louth JPC are hosting their Public Meeting soon and they plan to deliver various presentations on a selection of topics. He suggested that this is something perhaps the Cavan JPC can follow. Chair Cllr. Feeley said the JPC Steering Committee will have a meeting in relation to this and report back to the main committee. The Public Meeting will be hosted before the next JPC meeting in December.

AOB

Cllr. C. Brady wanted to raise the issue around vaping amongst youths. She is seeing children as young as 10 / 12 vaping and wondered is there any way it's popularity amongst young people can be tackled. Chief Superintendent Mc Govern replied that they do link in with the schools to provide education around this as well as linking in with the local shops. Deputy Wilson informed members that the issue of vaping was recently raised in the Senate. He promised to send on the response once received to members. He said it is a very complex area and it is important to get things right so that any legislation developed can hold up and be effective. He hopes that it can be effective as the Head Shop legislation was 15 years ago.

Deputy N. Smyth enquired was there any further updates in relation to the Bailieborough Station. Superintendent Englishby replied that they are still on course and hopes to see it open for October 2023. He is currently trying to organise a 'turning of the sod' and will keep members posted.

Cllr. B. Fay asked if there was any update in relation to the CCTV Scheme. Chief Superintendent Mc Govern informed him there is ongoing work taking place between An Garda Siochana and the CCTV Advisory Committee.

GDPR is of upmost importance, they are proceeding with caution to prioritise carrying out Data Protection Impact Assessments on existing schemes to ensure they are compliant with current legislation before looking at applications submitted. Chair Cllr. Feeley said that the scheme has had a number of issues and is not fit for purpose.

John Magee complimented Garda N. Loughran on his presentation. The Community Engagement Unit is currently linking in with the Cavan Institute on their Social Media / Cybercrime Courses and acknowledged Garda Cathal Buggy's support. He looks forward to continuing working with An Garda Síochána on a collaborative basis into the future. He believes that there will be a lot more opportunity to overlap in the future and their Private Security Course has had a recent name change to Private Security & Policing Studies. Chief Superintendent Mc Govern reciprocated the comments, he praised the students for the initiatives they have helped the gardaí deliver recently. There may be opportunities for these students to get involved in awareness raising initiatives in areas such as vaping and road safety also.

Deputy B. Smith wanted to follow up on Garda Loughran's presentation also and stated that with the bank closures are affecting older people in particular and that additional resources should be provided through the closing banks concerned to support their older customers. He proposed that the Cavan JPC write to these banks requesting that support is provided directly to their older customers on closing / opening bank accounts. We have a large number of older customers in this region in particular who would have been customers of Ulster Bank.

Cllr. M Argue requested directly to Chief Superintendent Mc Govern that she would like to see increased Garda presence within Cavan Town.

Chair Cllr. Feeley announced that G. Boyle will be taking up a new post with Monaghan County Council and wanted to extend his gratitude for her support with the Cavan JPC over the years.

Chief Superintendent Mc Govern informed members that Superintendent Jones will be taking up the role of Chief Superintendent and wished him all the best in his new post.

Chief Superintendent Mc Govern informed members that the Cavan Monaghan Garda Division is celebrating its Centenary event on the 11th September at the Courthouse in Carrickmacross. Members were invited to attend.

Next Meeting

2nd December at 3pm. This will take place in the Council Chamber.