

Minutes of Meeting of County Cavan Joint Policing Committee & Public Meeting – Townhall, Cavan on 27th February 2023.

Present:

Councillors: Cllr C. Brady, Cllr John Paul Feeley (Chair), Cllr. Trevor Smith, Cllr. Brendan Fay, Cllr. Aiden Fitzpatrick, Cllr Philip Brady, Cllr Patricia Walsh, Cllr Peter McVitty.

Community Representatives: Stanley Nwaneri (New Communities),

Executive: Brendan Jennings (Director of Services, Cavan County Council)

Garda Officers: Chief Superintendent Alan Mc Govern, Superintendent Shaun Grant, Superintendent Gordon Englishby,

Oireachtas Members: Senator Diarmuid Wilson, Deputy Brendan Smith,

Apologies: Vanessa Clarke (Community Representative - Community Alert), Elizabeth Ormiston (Community Representative - Farming / Rural Communities), Deputy Pauline Tully, Cllr Sarah O'Reilly, Cllr T.P. O'Reilly, Senator Robbie Gallagher

In Attendance: Detective Inspector Nial McKiernan (An Garda Síochána), Detective Garda Suzanne Carlos (An Garda Síochána), Sergeant Michael Duffy (An Garda Síochána), Jodie Curran (Northern Sound), Deirdre Donnelly (Cavan County Council), Siobhan Morgan (Cavan County Council) Bob Gilbert (Cavan Older People's Council), Elizabeth Coyle (Cavan Older People's Council), Carmel Ellis (Cavan Older People's Council), Zoe Wells (Merchants Quay Ireland Cavan Monaghan Drug & Alcohol Service), Daniel Downey (Cavan Public Participation Network),

The Chair Cllr. Feeley opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He welcomed Superintendent Shaun Grant who has taken up the position of Superintendent in Cavan Garda Station recently.

He also welcomed speakers Sergeant Michael Duffy, Detective Inspector Nial McKiernan and Detective Sergeant Suzanne Carlos. Cllr Feeley explained that the Public Meeting of the JPC scheduled for January was postponed due to the death of Cllr Sean Smith, he wished to extend sympathy of the JPC to The Smith Family, especially his brother Deputy Brendan Smith who was present at the meeting.

The Chair reminded those present that any comments/questions should not identify any individual or pertain to any matter that is under investigation by An Garda Síochána.

Presentation on Crime Prevention Advice

Sergeant Duffy gave a presentation on Crime Prevention. He outlined the main principles of Crime Prevention. He advised on the following topics;

- Home Security Advice
- Garage Security Advice
- Vehicle Security
- How to handle a Bogus Caller
- Holiday Advice
- Fraudulent Text Messages
- Property Marking Machine.

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

- Always report suspicious activity to An Garda Síochána.

Cllr. B. Fay asked if it is immediately dangerous to click on the link within the email, Sergeant Duffy replied generally only if you start adding personal details but advisable not to click on them at all.

The Chair thanked Sergeant Duffy for his presentation.

Presentation on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and the role of the Divisional Protective Service Unit

Detective Inspector Nial McKiernan and Detective Garda Suzanne Carlos gave a detailed presentation on Online Child Sexual Exploitation and the role of Divisional Protective Services unit. Their role is to:

- To investigate all types of sexual crime against children within the division.
- To investigate rape and sexual assault and historical sexual abuse in adults.
- Investigation of Child Pornography and Online Child Sexual Exploitation
- Investigation of serious or complex domestic abuse and coercive control cases.
- Human Trafficking in relation to organised prostitution.
- Conduct joint approaches with Tusla in respect of children who have placed themselves at risk online.
- Assist in the global effort in respect of Victim Identification.

Cllr Philip Brady asked about how historical abuse is dealt with and was there a difficulty in convicting people when cases go back so many years.

Detective Inspector McKiernan responded by saying that every case is different so it was difficult to answer the question. He stated that all cases be they historical or not are robustly investigated and that every case is dealt with in a sensitive manner.

Ms Zoe Wells enquired as to how Divisional Protective Services Unit deal with offenders outside the jurisdiction of Ireland, Detective Inspector McKiernan said that they work closely with Interpol and if necessary offenders would be transferred to the relevant jurisdiction.

Deputy Brendan Smith asked if all countries co-operated in investigations or were there some countries who were unwilling to participate. Detective Sergeant Suzanne Carlos stated that in general most countries do provide assistance but that in some developing countries there might not be internet capability. Interpol is based in Lyon in France and staff would get information from them and go to other countries to provide assistance. Deputy Smith enquired if other EU countries were more likely to co-operate than those countries from outside the EU. Detective Sergeant Carlos explained that generally there would be no difference but that there may be differences in legislation that would cause issues.

The Chair thanked Detective Inspector McKiernan and Detective Sergeant Carlos for their presentation he noted that this was a particularly challenging area of work for An Garda Síochána but it was extremely important.

Crime Statistics

Superintendent S. Grant and Superintendent G. Englishby presented the Crime Statistics YTD 2023 versus YTD 2022 in both Cavan and Baileborough District. The statistics for drug detections in both Cavan and Baileborough were 13 and 9 respectively. Cllr Patricia Walsh commented that these numbers appeared very low, she asked was there a drug unit in Cavan. Chief Superintendent McGovern stated that that every garda member has a role in tackling drugs rather than just being confined to the Drugs Unit. He stated that 246 searches under the Misuse of Drugs Act took place in Cavan and 114 in Baileborough in the same quarter. He stated that awareness campaigns are running.

Cllr Walsh stated that when there was a specific unit dealing with drugs, there was a rapport built up with the members. Deputy B. Smith also agreed with

Cllr Walsh, he stated that drugs were an issue in every parish in the country, Deputy Smith recently attended a public meeting in Virginia where a presentation was given by Sergeant Mick Kearney and Deputy Smith stated that this was an excellent presentation that should be given to every group, school etc in the county. Deputy Smith went on to say that Minister Harris recently secured cabinet approval for new legislation for criminalising the grooming of children into crime and asked that the JPC write to Minister Harris and encourage to bring forward this legislation. The work of Merchants Quay Ireland CAMDAS in supporting people affected by drugs was mentioned by Deputy Smith – there is not just a criminal justice aspect to dealing with the issue there is help and support available for people.

Cllr A. Fitzpatrick agreed with Cllr P. Walsh and encouraged people to speak to the Gardai. He said that there has been no gardai presence in Cootehill town in years. Cllr McVitty agreed with Cllr Walsh and also seconded Deputy Smiths proposal to write to Minister Harris. He asked was a Garda driving in a patrol car equipped to carry out a drug test. Cllr McVitty spoke about dangers of Gardai working alone, that people no longer have respect for Gardai. Chief Superintendent McGovern said that he would encourage people to come forward if they observe drug dealing.

The Chief Superintendent highlighted that the National Drugs Unit are making significant progress in preventing drugs coming into the country and have had great success with detections recently.

Cllr P. Brady asked about the new incident management system that is due to come into effect. He asked what is going to happen, that he is aware that there are a lot of complaints among Gardai as it is time consuming and will take away from Gardai activity.

Cllr B. Fay agreed with the others and stated that there is a fear of a patrol car calling to homes and people getting targeted. He recommended that the 1800 number advertised in local media.

Chief Superintendent McGovern responded by stating that no complaints have been received from members of the force in relation to the proposed

new system. He pointed out that there have been 3800 high visibility patrols in Cavan with more than 10 per day.

Superintendent Grant stated that all mobile units have the ability to carry out drug testing they now also have quicker tests available to them. He also stated that beat patrols will increase in Cavan Town as it is important to get a feel for the issues in the area , he asked that if people have information re drug activity that they let An Garda Síochána know.

Daniel Downey withdrew his question for the public meeting and it was agreed it would be discussed at a future meeting,

Next Meeting

The next meeting of County Cavan Joint Policing Committee will take place on Friday 2nd June at 3pm in the Council Chamber in the Courthouse in Cavan.