**Minutes of Meeting of County Cavan Joint Policing Committee held on-line over Microsoft Teams, Cavan on 25th September 2020 at 3pm.**

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**Present:**

**Councillors:** Cllr Sarah O’ Reilly, Cllr John Paul Feeley, Cllr Clifford Kelly, Cllr Peter Mc Vitty, Cllr Paddy Mc Donald, Cllr Carmel Brady, Cllr Madeleine Argue, Cllr. Aiden Fitzpatrick, Cllr. Brendan Fay, Cllr. Trevor Smith, Cllr. Patricia Walsh, Cllr. T.P. O’Reilly, Cllr Shane P. O’Reilly,

**Community Representatives:** Vanessa Clarke, John Magee, Leanne Coyle, Stanley Nwaneri, Tony Mc Govern, Elizabeth Ormiston, Margaret Matthews

**Executive**: Brendan Jennings, (Director of Services, CCC), Tommy Ryan (CE, CCC)

**Garda Officers**: Chief Superintendent John O’Reilly, Inspector Valerie Gahan, Superintendent James Coen,

**Oireachtas Members:** Senator Joe O’Reilly, Deputy Brendan Smith, Senator Robbie Gallagher, Deputy Pauline Tully, Deputy Niamh Smyth

**Apologies:** Cllr. Philip Brady, Senator Joe O’ Reilly, Senator Diarmuid Wilson

**In Attendance:** Inspector Nial Mc Kiernan (An Garda Síochána), Gráinne Boyle (CCC), Mark Nother (Policing Authority), Garda Commissioner Drew Harrison, Eddie Butler (Norther Sound), Seamus Enright (Anglo Celt)

Chair Cllr. J.P. Feeley welcomed everyone to the meeting.

He congratulated Senator Joe O’Reilly on his election as Leas Cathaoirleach Seanad Éireann.

On behalf of the JPC he extended best wishes to Chief Superintendent John O’Reilly who retired from An Garda Síochána on the 1st September 2020 and to Superintendent James Coen who is due to retire by the end of October. He thanked them for their great service and commitment to the County Cavan JPC and the people within the community they have saved.

He welcomed Garda Commissioner Drew Harris to the meeting and wished him well in his role. He hoped that due to the Commissioner’s background he would have an appreciation of County Cavan’s unique position as a border county.

He believes that An Garda Síochána are a very important organisation in that they are well placed to know the people within their communities they serve and are in a good position to work on a collaborative basis with them. He hopes that their excellent work can be built on further into the future.

Garda Commissioner Drew Harris concurred with the Chair comments in relation to Chief Superintendent John O’Reilly and Superintendent James Coen, adding that they both served with great distinction. He thanked the JPC members for inviting him to attend the meeting, adding that he would have preferred to meet in person and hopes that this will be possible at some point in the future.

**New Operating Model for An Garda Síochána**

Garda Commissioner Drew Harris talked through the new poling model for An Garda Síochána. He explained that the ultimate aim of the changes being introduced are to bring about improvements in An Garda Síochána’s services, structures, processes and performance. The goal is to keep people safe by:

* Enhancing community policing, with an emphasis on protecting the vulnerable
* Adapting more readily to changing demand
* Building a more effective & efficient service

This Operating Model is part of the transformation programme ‘A Policing Service For our Future’ (APSFF)and was developed based on internal and external input to An Garda Síochána. He explained the rational for introducing the new model was due to the need to respond to a changing society, due to:

* Changing Communities
* Changing Crime
* Changing Workforce

The mission is to keep people safe by:

* Enhancing community policing, with an emphasis on protecting the vulnerable
* Adapting more readily to changing demand
* Building a more effective & efficient service

He went on to explain the:

* Development process around the new operating model.
* The consultation process involved.
* An overview of how the operating model will be implemented, which will see:
* Larger divisions: As of 7 October 2019, An Garda Síochána moved from 6 to 4 operational Regions. The current 28 Divisions will transition to 19 new Divisions.
* More frontline gardaí.
* Enhanced national & regional support.
* Improved performance.
* The differences between the old and new operating models.
* Frontline Gardaí by numbers.
* Function area services.
* Overarching benefits of the new operating model.
* More frontline Gardaí
* Enhanced Divisional policing and community engagement
* Regions and Divisions will have greater control over how policing is delivered locally, while working with a corporate framework.
* Greater accountability throughout the organisation.
* Improved performance measurement and assurance delivered. through a dedicated Performance Assurance Functional Area.
* Introducing Business Services Functional Area. Business Services will be the first Functional Area to be rolled out to Divisions. Each Business Services Functional Area will encompass Finance & Logistics, HRM and General Administration processes and will, over time, replace current Divisional and District administration functions. As part of the implementation, the model prioritises standardising processes and ways of working across all Divisions.
* Local Implementation for the North Western Region:
* The North Western Region Headquarters is located in Murrough Road, Galway
* The Divisional Headquarters for the Louth/Cavan/Monaghan Division will be Drogheda.
* However, this does not mean that all personnel will be centralised in these HQ’s. Superintendents, Inspectors, Sergeants and their teams will be geographically dispersed throughout the Regions and Divisions

The Commissioner ended his presentation by providing the rational around how the amalgamation of the Cavan/Monaghan and Louth Divisions and the selection of Drogheda as the Divisional Headquarters were made.

Chair Cllr. J.P. Feeley thanked the Garda Commissioner for his comprehensive presentation and agreed that the increase to the Community Policing approach is vitally important. He invited members to put forward their questions to the Garda Commissioner.

John Magee wanted to complement An Garda Síochána on their great work to date during the COVID 19 pandemic. He explained that he comes from a background of working within the Education Sector and recognised the effectiveness of the An Garda Síochána’s Roads Policing Education Programmes. He asked if An Garda Siochana would consider rolling out a similar programme aimed at schools and colleges, in an effort to enhance compliance with COVID-19 guidelines /regulations in private and public spaces.

Deputy Brendan Smith welcomed the Commissioner to the meeting. He stated that the value of community policing has been particularly evident and effective during COVID 19 and wanted to thank An Garda Síochána for their response during the pandemic. He asked the Commissioner if additional resources will be provided to deal with paramilitary activity in the border regions by persons commonly referred to as dissidents. He acknowledged and welcomed the Armed Support Unit for Cavan / Monaghan but hoped that staff being allocated to this unit were additional and not being taken from the existing personal within the division. He added that Cavan has a large border area and that additional and unique resources are needed to adequately respond to the challenges this presents.

Cllr. P. Walsh asked the Commissioner if he could confirm that the present Cavan District Drug Unit in Cavan Garda station will be retained going forward as the results seen on the streets are positive. She requested to be associated with the previous speakers compliments to An Garda Síochána for their response during the COVID 19 pandemic.

The Commissioner responded that the small to medium drug dealing/crimes has been the focus for the Cavan Drugs Unit. This is a strategy that they wish to continue. There have been some significant drug seizures due to the unit and it is working very well.

In response to Deputy B. Smith’s question in relation to the Armed Support Unit he responded that the Unit is a temporary assignment and the process is underway to make it permanent. It will receive an additional three sergeants and fifteen officers next year which will grow the compliment of staff to twenty five in total. In relation to personal allocated overall to the County he said that the commitment under the new operational plan to Community and Roads Policing will see the number of gardaí on patrol increase as many gardaí will have to carry out less administrative duties and processes will become more operational in nature. He recognised that the Border facilitates criminality, and this requires joint working and co-operation with their respective counterparts across the Border. There is a need to reassure the public that An Garda Síochána have a strong presence in this area. To this end, he stated the number of personal allocated to the Border Region has increased substantially over the last few years.

Cllr. S. O’ Reilly enquired about the progress of the new Garda Station in Bailieborough. As the tendering process for the station has concluded, she asked if the Commissioner could provide a timeline for its opening. Superintendent G. Englishby responded on behalf of the Commissioner that the station will fully open and operational by Summer 2021. Cllr. S. O’ Reilly also asked the Commissioner would An Garda Síochána consider taking on the role of data controller for the CCCTV Scheme. She considers the scheme as it stands to be at an impasse over this issue. The Commissioner replied that the legislative framework meant that An Garda Síochána was precluded from being the data holders. Cllr. S.O ‘Reilly’s final question related to the loss of senior gardaí within the Cavan-Monaghan Division. The Commissioner acknowledged the loss but said that there are some very capable gardaí who will be able to step forward. Retirements are a natural process which will always take place. All replacements need to be sanctioned by the Policing Authority and this process will take place.

Cllr. A. Fitzpatrick said that during the COVID-19 pandemic gardaí have been dispersed to cover all the smaller stations and community engagement has significantly increased as a result and this is most welcomed. He asked the Commissioner if he could give a commitment that this would continue going forward. The Commissioner replied that since there has been a large presence of the gardaí on the ground within all communities this has resulted in other activities having to be postponed, this would not be sustainable in the long-term. They have learned a lot about what works well around re-deployment however.

Deputy P. Tully enquired if the position of Chief Superintendent for the Cavan / Monaghan Division will be refilled following the retirement of J. O’Reilly. She said the issue of drug use is not confined to Cavan Town, all areas of County Cavan are affected by it resulting in poor mental health issues. She stated not enough resources are being provided to tackle this issue and a strong Multi-Agency approach is very much needed. The Commissioner replied that An Garda Síochána support the implementation of the National Drugs Strategy, linking in locally with the relevant organisations and key players. The Gardaí play their role around enforcement however he believe more is needed around education on the impacts of taking drugs. People need to know the wider picture such as the poverty and devastation they cause to the communities producing many of them.

Deputy P. Tully also asked if An Garda Síochána were working in conjunction with the PSNI on a plan if there is a ‘No Deal Brexit’. The Commissioner said that they have joint operational plans in place with the PSNI if needed. They have been building up the Armed Support Unit and as a result this will be well equipped and ready to respond If there is an increase in parlimillitary activity.

Cllr Brendan Fay referred to the Community CCTV Scheme and the application submitted by Project Belturbet. He emphasised the need for this within the town and asked the Commissioner if there is any solution around this and noted his thanks to Inspector N. Mc Kiernan on all the support provided to get their application together. He also referred to the benefits of the gardaí’s patrol cars which were very prevalent over the last few months and enquired if this will continue going forward.

Deputy N. Smyth referred to the Community CCTV Scheme and said that it was her understanding that some community groups have been successful in their applications under the scheme. She wanted to know how this was, She concurred with other speakers remarks around the issue of drugs within the community and in particular paid tribute to Inspector Mick Carney on his work in tacking this issue. She asked would there be further manpower given to the Drugs Unit to support them in their work. She also thanked the gardaí for their visibility during the pandemic and would like to see this continue as it is essential for community safety and re-assurance. She asked the Commissioner to demonstrate a positive bias for the Border area in terms of resource allocation due to its unique circumstances.

Cllr. T.P. O’ Reilly complemented the gardaí on securing a conviction in the Detective Donohoe murder case. He wanted to wish Chief Superintendent J. O’ Reilly well in his retirement. He asked the Commissioner can he reassure the public that the new Policing Plan is not a downgrading of existing services as that is what many people think.

The Commissioner assured members that he will assess the four local CCTV applications before returning to the JPC on how best to progress them if possible. In terms of the Data Controller issue there is nothing he can do as it is a legislative issue. He said there is a review on the Community CCTV Scheme at present underway and perhaps something will come out from this.

In response to Cllr. Fay’s query on more patrol cars he said that more investment was due. They have committed to purchasing 50 new vehicles and these would supplement those already in use and reduce the reliance on hire vehicles.

The Commissioner welcomed the Cllr. T.P. O’Reilly’s comments on the Detective Donohoe case. He said that it is still a live case, and there are still others who will need to be brought to justice they continue to pursue. He encouraged members of the public with any information to come forward. In relation his comments around the re-structuring process he offered reassurance that it is about being more responsive as an organisation. It will lead to improved leadership and more responsibility being taken within the ranks which will lead ultimately to a more responsive organisation rooted in local concerns.

Chair Cllr. J.P. Feeley thanked the Commissioner for taking the time to attend the meeting.

**Minutes**

Minutes from the June JPC meeting were approved by Cllr. C. Kelly and seconded by Cllr. P. Walsh.

**Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

**Crime Statistics Q2 2019 compared to Q2/2020**

Superintendent James Coen talked through the crime statistics for the Cavan Divisional District.

The number of Domestics Incidents in the home and Drug Driving has been on the increased substantially over the COVID 19 period. Superintendent James Coen said An Garda Síochána continue to drive through the message of how irresponsible it is to drink and drive, but equally to drive whilst under the influence of drugs. There has also been a big increase in drug detections and there is an ongoing commitment to tackle this.

Superintendent Gorden Englishby talked through the crime statistics for the Bailieborough Divisional District. Again Domestic Incidences have increased for this Division. However there have been very few drug detections. He explained that unfortunately their division does not have a Drugs Unit and staff have been re-allocated to the newly established Divisional Protective Unit and Armed Support Units. He said it is of immense importance that they have allocated personal appointed to tackle this issue, they are working to address this. He has submitted a detailed business case to request more manpower for the Bailieborough Division to Chief Superintendent Aiden Glacken, who currently has the remit for Cavan-Monaghan. The statistics show that there has been a decrease in the number of burglaries and this is due to the increased presence of gardaí on the ground over the COVID-19 lockdown period.

Cllr. C. Kelly commented that is acknowledges the scarcity in resources but asked that Kingscourt be in kept in mind when they do become available.

Cllr. P. Walsh said that she hopes the Drugs Unit is retained because it has proven itself to be very effective.

Cllr A. Fitzpatrick referred to the big difference in Thefts & Burglaries due to the big increase in Gardaí on patrol. He said it was worrying to see the low detections in the Bailieborough Division. He acknowledged the lack of resources but said that this is something that really needs to be tackled, especially at the moment. He queried the zero detections figures for Drug Possession - Sale or Supply. Supt. Coen explained that Drug Possession for Sale or Supply cannot only be recorded as Detected once they have been tested and in 90% of cases this tends to be the case.

Cllr P. Mc Vitty enquired if there are many convictions made in relation to the Domestic Violence Incidents reported. Supt. Coen replied that the Gardaí’s Domestic Violence Policy is very clear on this. If someone is charged, they will be brought to court, however it is the courts who decide if they are to be convicted. He was unsure as to what the current rate of convictions were, but offered for this information to be provided at the next JPC meeting if needed. He noted the establishment of the two new Divisional Protective Services units within Cavan-Monaghan which will support this work. Their role will be to investigate specialised crime such as sexual crime, human trafficking, child abuse and domestic violence abuse.

**Correspondence**

Three letters of correspondence had been issued to the JPC.

The first letter was in relation to the Policing Authority survey on Policing Engagement. The deadline for online responses was 5pm, 25th September 2020. Mark Nother from the Policing Authority informed members that the deadline had been extended to midnight for responses to be received.

A letter of response relating to the JPC’s concerns over the Department of Justice’s Community CCTV Scheme was received from Patrick Mc Cabe, Private Secretary to the Minister for Justice & Equality. Chair Cllr. J.P. Feeley said the letter states that a review was currently being conducted on the scheme and the views of the Cavan JPC will be taken into consideration as part of this. He also hoped that the Oireachtas members would make a strong contribution to this review.

Two letters of response, one from Minister O’Gorman and one from Joan Mullan, National Manager for Domestic, Sexual & Gender Based Violence, were received concerning the JPC’s request for the need for a Women’s Domestic Violence Refuge for County Cavan. Chair. J.P. Feeley said that there is a real need for progress to be made within this area. Cllr. P. Walsh agreed with him and added that it’s needed more than ever due to the increased levels of domestic violence that have been seen over the pandemic. Cllr. T.P. Reilly requested to be associated with these comments, stating that a Women’s Refuge Centre was imperative for the County.

**AOB**

Chair J.P. Feeley informed members that Bike Week is coming up in October. He made an appeal to those cyclists taking part that helmets and high vis jackets are worn, especially at this time of year.

Cllr. T. Smith wished the best to Garda Noel Fleming and Chief Superintendent Coen on their upcoming retirements. Cllr. P. Walsh also wished the best to both Superintendent Coen and Chief Superintendent J. O’Reilly on their retirements.

Superintendent Coen said that he has served in the Cavan and Monaghan Division for 40 years and that it has been a privilege to serve both An Garda Síochána and the JPC. He thanked the Chair and the elected members and said that there are very capable gardaí who will fill the upcoming positions.

**Next Meeting**

The next meeting will take place on the 4th December 2020 at 3pm.