

County Laois Joint Policing Committee Public Meeting
Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 20th November 2023 at 3.30 pm in County Hall



Present: Mr. John Mulholland, Chief Executive, Laois County Council
Deputy Brian Stanley, T.D.
Cllr Aisling Moran, Chairperson
Cllr Paddy Bracken, Laois County Council
Cllr Seamus McDonald, Laois County Council
Cllr Catherine Fitzgerald, Laois County Council
Cllr James Kelly, Laois County Council
Cllr John King, Laois County Council
Cllr Ben Brennan, Laois County Council
Cllr Conor Bergin, Laois County Council
Cllr Caroline Dwane Stanley, Laois County Council
Cllr Thomasina Connell, Laois County Council
Chief Superintendent Anthony Lonergan, AGS
Inspector Joe Culliton, AGS
Seargent Graham Kavanagh, AGS
Mr. Bobby Delaney, PPN Representative
Mr. Thomas Jones, PPN Representative
Ms. Antoinette Kinsella, Midlands Drug & Alcohol Taskforce
Mr. Conor O'Leary, Muintir na Tíre

In attendance:

Mr Donal Brennan Director of Services, Laois County Council
Ms Pamela Tynan, A/Senior Executive Officer, Laois County Council
Ms Anne Marie Kirrane, A/Administrative Officer, Laois County Council
Ms Rose Doolin, Assistant Staff Officer, Laois County Council

Apologies: Deputy Sean Fleming TD
Deputy Charlie Flanagan TD
Cllr Pdraig Fleming; Laois County Council

Cllr Aisling Moran welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Adoption of Minutes

On the proposal of Cllr Seamus McDonald and seconded by Cllr Ben Brennan, the Minutes of the meeting held on the 11th September 2023 were adopted.

Questions submitted by Members of the Public

The following questions were raised by members of the public.

Q.1

“Research shows that parking on footpaths can lead to severe consequences for people with disabilities. A study by Guide Dogs UK found that almost a third of people with sight loss said that pavement parking made them less willing to go out on their own and just under a quarter said that it made them feel more lonely or isolated.

Can it be confirmed that a no tolerance approach to parking on footpaths & cycle lanes is policy for An Garda Síochána in County Laois?”

Response: An Garda Síochána are aware of the impact that parking on footpaths and cycle lanes has on the public. A number of fines have issued. Gardaí will continue to enforce. They will continue to monitor the situation and will enforce the law, where appropriate.

Q.2

“What is being done at a local level to tackle the problem of illegal dumping, particularly in isolated rural areas?”

Response: The Waste Enforcement Section, Laois County Council continue to tackle illegal dumping in various problematic/rural areas within the County in accordance with current legislation. Enforcement efforts are limited by virtue of the current prohibition on the use of CCTV which is in law, however we are awaiting on the Minister to commence the sections of the Act that allow use of CCTV for the purposes of environmental enforcement. It is envisaged that this will be available in early 2024.

Deputy Brian Stanley, T.D. stated that CCTV is part of the Circular Economy Bill and that it needs Minister Ryan to enact same. He proposed that a letter issue from the JPC to Minister Eamon Ryan T.D. requesting him to enact the appropriate section. This was seconded by Mr Tom Jones. Cllr James Kelly added that random dumping needs legislation.

Report from An Garda Síochána

- Property Crime is down overall but burglary has increased slightly, whilst theft from M.P.V.s and shops has decreased.
- Crimes against the person has increased. Gardaí are examining the cause for this increase.
- Criminal Damage has decreased.
- Possession of drugs for sale or supply has increased. This increase is currently being investigated.
- Traffic Collisions causing serious injury has increased. There is no pattern to this. There was one fatality in the last quarter.
- Breach of Orders has decreased.
- All domestic violence incidences are treated very seriously. Focus is on call back and engagement and incidences are reviewed on a weekly basis.

During the last quarter, AGS attended the following:

- Launch of Business Watch which is an initiative to assist with the reduction of crime and safety in the community.
- Garda National Youth Awards were held in the Midlands Park Hotel in November.
- 'Cops and Donuts'. This will take place from 10am to 5pm on Sunday 26th November at Laois Shopping Centre, where Gardaí strive to sell more than 2000 doughnuts, with all the proceeds of the sales going directly to Special Olympics Leinster.
- A Property Marker has been acquired through Laois PPN and training has been organised.
- AGS hope to promote safety and community engagement along with increased visibility going forward.
- Garda Traffic Corp are targeting areas around the county and are assisted by local gardaí in detecting intoxicated driving and speeding offences.

The members thanked the Chief Superintendent for his Report.

- Cllr Catherine Fitzgerald thanked the Community Gardaí for the work they are doing. She inquired if there was any update on a new Courthouse for Portlaoise and proposed that the JPC write to the OPW on the matter.
- Deputy Brian Stanley, T.D. stated that there is a problem with scooters and cyclists on the roads in dark clothes with no lights or reflectors visible. He enquired if AGS could stop a cyclist for not having lights and if the use of scooters could be kept off footpaths, whilst awaiting legislation. The Chief Superintendent stated that he would encourage cyclists to wear hi-viz clothing. AGS avail of every opportunity to stop and remind people of road safety obligations.
- Mr Conor O'Leary asked if AGS could engage with Community Alert Groups. AGS have a plan to engage with communities over the next few months and will reach out to all community alert groups.
- Cllr Thomasina Connell stated that while crime figures had decreased, theft from shops is the biggest issue for shop owners. AGS advised that it is intended to address this issue coming into the Christmas period, with additional visibility. Cllr Thomasina Connell also noted that personal drug possession has increased. The Chief Superintendent stated that the Drug Unit is actively working to decrease this and advised that some of the increase was due to consumption during the Electric Picnic Festival.
- Cllr Connell also enquired if the reason for the decrease in Breach of Domestic Orders was due to less Orders being made. The Chief Superintendent stated that victims feel confident talking to AGS but that they will continue to monitor.
- Cllr Aisling Moran enquired if in a situation where an individual decided not to press charges, are those incidences recorded. The Chief Superintendent stated that all calls are logged and followed up.
- Cllr Caroline Dwane Stanley asked if the Lyster Square area could be patrolled in the lead up to the Christmas period, to ensure that the incidences of people begging is minimised. AGS will increase patrols in this area.
- Mr Bobby Delaney raised the issue of cyclists crossing on pedestrian crossings. He also raised the issue of strong bright lights on cars and if it leads to some accidents. The Chief Superintendent advised that there is no data at present to confirm that.

JPC Strategy – Implementation Plan – Update on Actions

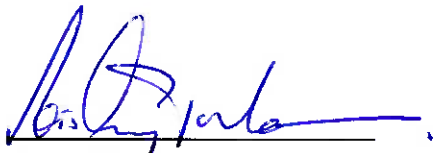
Ms Pamela Tynan advised that the JPC Strategy Implementation Plan was circulated to members in advance of the meeting for their attention. The update was noted.

Any Other Business

- Cllr Ben Brennan enquired about training for the Property Marking Machine. He was informed that training in the use of the machine will take place in early December, for members of An Garda Síochána and community groups. It is anticipated that marking will commence in early 2024.
- AGS advised that a garda is being assigned to Arles Garda station.
- Cllr Ben Brennan raised the issue of AGS Carlow not attending incidents on or just inside the Laois/Carlow border and the delay in responding to such incidences. The Chief Superintendent stated that all calls will be responded to and that AGS from other areas may assist. AGS will continue to prioritise demands and provide policing for everyone.
- Inspector Joe Culliton informed the members about a new call system replacing Command Control called “Garda Safe” which went Live in Laois on 7th November. It is being operated by a group of fully trained personnel from a Control Room in Tramore, Co Waterford. Calls received by AGS at stations throughout Laois, will now be transferred to this Control Room. All urgent calls should dial 999.
- Cllr Thomasina Connell commended the Gardaí on the Aisling Murphy case.
- Cllr Aisling Moran raised the issue of junctions on country roads. She proposed that a working group be set up and that TII be invited to a meeting to discuss the matter.
- Cllr Aisling Moran asked the JPC members if all meeting papers could be issued by email going forward. The members requested that all meeting papers continue to issue in paper form.

That concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:


Chair of JPC

Dated: 11 March 2024