

County Laois Joint Policing Committee Meeting
Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 12th June 2023 at 3.30 pm in County Hall



Present: Cllr Pdraig Fleming; Laois County Council (in the chair)
Cllr Paddy Bracken, Laois County Council
Cllr Paschal McEvoy, Laois County Council
Cllr Catherine Fitzgerald, Laois County Council
Cllr James Kelly, Laois County Council
Cllr PJ Kelly, Laois County Council
Cllr John King, Laois County Council
Cllr Conor Bergin, Laois County Council
Cllr Caroline Dwane Stanley, Laois County Council
Superintendent Eamon Curley, AGS
Inspector Joe Culliton, AGS
Sgt Jason Hughes, AGS
Deputy Brian Stanley, T.D.
Deputy Sean Fleming TD
Mr Bobby Delaney, PPN Representative
Mr Thomas Jones, PPN Representative
Mr Conor O'Leary, Muintir na Tire
Mr Brendan Birney, IFA
Ms. Sara Rasool, PPN Representative
Ms Antoinette Kinsella, Midlands Drug & Alcohol Taskforce

Apologies: Cllr Aisling Moran, Chairperson
Mr John Mulholland, Chief Executive, Laois County Council

In attendance: Mr Donal Brennan Director of Service, Laois County Council
Ms Pamela Tynan, A/Senior Executive Officer, Laois County Council
Ms. Suzanne O'Connor, A/Senior Staff Officer, Laois County Council
Ms Rose Doolin, Assistant Staff Officer, Laois County Council

Cllr Pdraig Fleming welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Adoption of Minutes

On the proposal of Cllr Conor Bergin and seconded by Deputy Brian Stanley the Minutes of the meeting held on the 13th March 2023 were adopted.

Matters Arising

Concerns regarding the unauthorised parking of caravans at The Heath were raised. Superintendent Eamon Curley stated that AGS did attend an incident and the investigation is at an early stage.

Deputy Sean Fleming, T.D. enquired when the new Chief Superintendent will be appointed. He also enquired if the building works for Portlaoise Garda Station are on track. Superintendent Eamon Curley stated that the matter of filling the Chief Superintendent position is currently being addressed and a decision is imminent. He also stated that the works on the Divisional Headquarters are being carried out but that in the interim, suitable space will need to be sought for staff. He stated that the current building will continue to house the public office as normal.

Cllr Catherine Fitzgerald enquired about the UN Veterans base, which is also on the Garda HQ site. Deputy Brian Stanley, T.D. stated that the OPW have advised that the Veterans will be accommodated at another location near the prison.

Correspondence

Ms Pamela Tynan advised that the response to a letter that issued to Minister Eamon Ryan T.D. regarding the monitoring of illegal dumping by CCTV, as was requested at the March JPC meeting, had been circulated to all members with the meeting papers.

Report from An Garda Síochana

- *Property Crime*: overall property crime has decreased. Burglary has increased with a number of these detected and currently before the court. While unauthorised taking from vehicles increased, 11 of these are connected to one case and currently under investigation.
- *Crimes against the Person* – while threats to kill or cause serious harm have increased, threats of this nature almost always relate to the people they are associated with.
- *Criminal Damage and Public Order Offences* – there was a decrease overall.
- *Drugs and Weapons offences* – there have been a number of drug operations during the 1st quarter up to mid-April. These involved multi agency operations with searches of 5 houses and were successful operations.
- *Traffic* – 50% of the intoxicated driving of a vehicle offences are now drug driving. On 25th March 2023, the traffic core and divisional officers in Offaly carried out an operation in relation to boy racers in Glendine. A number of Fixed Penalty Notices were issued and a number of vehicles were seized. This will be kept under review.
- *Domestic / Domestic disputes* – No increase in offences recorded. Garda would like to advise members of the public, that AGS take the threat of domestic abuse seriously and all calls receive a high response.

Members thanked the Superintendent for his report and in particular the action in Glendine. It was conveyed that the area was more peaceful and the level of intimidation has been eliminated.

An inquiry was made in relation to the number of staff in the Drugs Unit. Members were informed that there is currently 1 sergeant and 5 gardaí in the Drugs Unit. Drug operations involve staff from the entire division.

JPC Strategy – Implementation Plan Update

- The update was circulated with the meeting papers. Deputy Sean Fleming, T.D. asked if the gardaí could go into the 10 secondary schools in the county at least once a year, to talk to

students about drugs and other issues. Superintendent Eamon Curley stated that they would try to expand their awareness programmes into the schools and give advice about drugs and crime prevention.

- Mr Tom Jones thanked the Gardaí for the role out of the HEAT Programme in The Heath GAA.

Any Other Business

Mr Bobby Delaney noted the lack of a Community Welfare Officer in Mountmellick citing that a Community Welfare Officer did in the past come to Mountmellick one day per week. However, since the COVID pandemic, this service has ceased. Members of SVP fear that people in need, are not going to a Community Welfare Officer or SVP but instead going to money lenders. Deputy Brian Stanley, T.D. requested that a letter be sent to Minister Heather Humphries T.D. stating the negative effect of not having a Community Welfare Officer in Mountmellick, is having on the community in Mountmellick and the huge challenges in getting through to them by phone, if someone is looking for an emergency payment. This is leading to people going to money lenders. Deputy Sean Fleming, T.D, also requested that a letter be written to the Minister, stating that emergency payments are taking too long to process. Superintendent Eamon Curley advised that if people are having difficulties with money lenders, to speak to a member of An Garda Síochána. They have methods of investigating crimes of this nature.

It was further noted that the number of Gardaí in Mountmellick, Stradbally and Ballylinan had fallen significantly. Superintendent Eamon Curley stated that Mountmellick currently have 2 Sergeants and 6 Gardaí, which is similar to 12 months ago. He stated that policing in Mountmellick is also conducted jointly by Portarlinton and Portlaoise. It is a district wide policing policy. The number of Gardaí in Stradbally was reduced by 2 with Ballylinan being reduced by 1. This is as a result of reallocation of resources to different areas. It was noted that garda numbers are down nationally.

Ms Sara Rasool thanked the gardaí for getting out and integrating with people and working to get involved in the community.

Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on **Monday, 11th September 2023 at 3.30 pm** in County Hall.

That concluded the business of the meeting.

Chair of the JPC

Dated: