

**County Laois Joint Policing Committee Public Meeting**  
**Minutes of Meeting**  
**Held on Monday 20 September 2021 in the Dunamaise Arts Centre**

**Present:** Chief Superintendent John Scanlon, Inspector Joe Culliton, Mr John Mulholland, CEO, Laois County Council, Deputy Brian Stanley TD, Deputy Sean Fleming, Cllr Aisling Moran (Chair), Cllr Pdraig Fleming (Vice Chairperson), Cllr Seamus McDonald, Cllr Paschal McEvoy, Cllr Catherine Fitzgerald, Cllr James Kelly, Cllr Conor Bergin, Cllr Caroline Dwane Stanley, Cllr John King, Cllr Thomasina Connell, Cllr. P.J. Kelly, Mr Bobby Delaney, Mr Brendan Birney, Mr Conor O'Leary, Mr Thomas Jones.

**Apologies:** Mr Donal Brennan Director of Service, Ms Sara Rasool, Cllr Paddy Bracken, Deputy Charles Flanagan, Cllr Ben Brennan

**In attendance:** Ms Carmel McNicholl, Senior Executive Officer, Ms Pamela Tynan, Administrative Officer, Ms Rose Doolin, Assistant Staff Officer Laois County Council

Cllr Aisling Moran welcomed everyone to the meeting. Members of the Committee congratulated Cllr Moran on her new position as Chair of the JPC.

**Adoption of Minutes**

On the proposal of Cllr Seamus McDonald and seconded by Cllr John King the minutes were adopted.

**Matters Arising**

The members thanked the Garda Commissioner for his attendance at the last JPC Meeting and said his insight into Laois policing issues was very informative.

**Report from An Garda Síochána**

A full report was given by the Chief Superintendent. In summary:

- Property crime is again down by 9%. However, as the pandemic eases and people are returning to work burglaries are on the increase as homes are once again unoccupied during the day. Theft from cars is down. While theft from shops is down this is expected to rise again as all shop that were closed during the pandemic start to re-open.
- Crimes against the Person is down by 5%. This is a result of the night-time economy being closed. This may increase again as these businesses re-open.
- Criminal Damage and Public Order is down by 22%. This figure may increase as lockdown restrictions ease.
- Drugs and weapons offences are also down by 35%.
- Traffic offences are up by 75%. A lot of this is due to people returning to work after the pandemic.
- Domestic abuse is down by 4%. Domestic abuse is always a concern to An Garda Síochána (AGS). Not all incidents will not appear in statistics for different reasons.

- The Chief Superintendent advised that the Sergeant Promotion Competition is ongoing. As soon as Sergeants are available, they will be appointed. He added that in the last 10 years the number of Gardai in Laois area has increased by 100. The number of Inspectors has increased from 2 to 10 over the same period. He advised that it is important to acknowledge that Laois is a low crime area having regard to its proximity to Dublin. He thanked Laois County Council and other agencies for all their assistance over the course of the pandemic.

The members thanked the Chief Superintendent for his presentation. A question was raised regarding the number of non-national Gardaí on the force in Laois. The Chief Superintendent informed the members that diversity is a feature of the force and there are currently non-national gardaí officers stationed in Portlaoise. He added that 6 different languages are spoken by members of the force. This facilitates interaction and was particularly useful during the pandemic.

The Committee complimented Inspector Joe Culliton on the work he has been doing with the Joint Policing Committee Working Groups for each Municipal District. Members agreed that the working groups are very beneficial and provide a forum where issues can be addressed and discussed prior to the JPC meeting.

It was proposed by Deputy Brian Stanley that a letter be written to Minister Catherine Martin indicating that members of the JPC would not be in favour of extended opening hours for public houses to 6 am. Deputy Stanley added that this would lead to more serious incidents of assaults and alcohol related incidents. This proposal was seconded by Cllr Paschal McEvoy.

#### **JPC Strategy Implementation Plan – Update on Actions**

Ms Carmel McNicholl advised that the document had been circulated at the meeting. She indicated that a review of the Strategy would now need to take place.

#### **Approval of Community CCTV Schemes**

2 Community Alert schemes were brought before the meeting for approval by the JPC. This is in order to meet the requirement for Garda Authorisation of the CCTV scheme.

- A letter was received from Rosenallis Community Alert seeking approval by the Joint Policing Committee in respect of installation of CCTV in their area. Upon the proposal of Cllr John King, seconded by Cllr James Kelly approval was given, subject to all other necessary AGS and Laois County requirements being met.
- A letter was received from Dunmore Community Alert – Phase 2 seeking approval by the Joint Policing Committee in respect of installation of CCTV in their area. Upon the proposal of Cllr John King, seconded by Cllr James Kelly approval was given, subject to all other necessary AGS and Laois County requirements being met.

A question was raised regarding the lengthy process involved before a Scheme can become operational. It was indicated that AGS have a lot of initial work to do with each application. The groups have to raise substantial funds locally, and the applications require sign off at national level also. There is also the expense of running and maintaining the system which is approximately 10%

of the cost of the works each year. 3 groups in Laois have received DoJ grant funding for CCTV systems to date.

#### Any Other Business

- A discussion took place regarding fraudulent phone calls/scams. Members were advised by AGS to not engage with these calls and to never disclose personal data to these callers. In this regard Chief Superintendent Scanlon advised that AGS will deliver Awareness Seminars to communities during October/ November.
- The issue of uncontrolled dogs in rural areas, particularly at night, was raised. Chief Superintendent Scanlon advised that AGS will respond to calls and follow an evidence-based approach.
- The matter of GDPR in relation to CCTV footage generally, and its admissibility in the prosecution of crimes was raised. It was proposed that an invitation be extended to the Data Protection Commissioner to attend a JPC meeting to clarify issues pertaining to GDPR and CCTV systems. This was proposed by Cllr Caroline Dwane Stanley and seconded by Cllr Aisling Moran.
- The matter of the truck which overturned on the N80, Mountmellick Road, was raised and questions were asked about the widening of this road. Mr John Mulholland, Chief Executive, Laois County Council stated that this is a national route and there are no plans to do so by government under the TII programme. Investment is being channelled into alternative transport systems. Deputy Sean Fleming stated that he will bring the matter back to government.
- Speeding outside Coolbanagher was raised and the Chief Superintendent said this would be investigated.

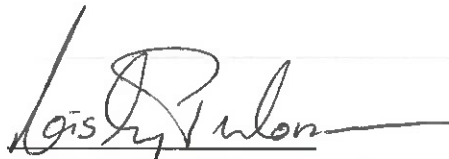
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#### Time and Date for next meeting

The next meeting will be the Annual Public Meeting and will be held on 15 November 2021 at 3.30 pm.

That concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed:

  
Chair of Joint Policing Committee

Dated:

15 Nov 2021

