

County Laois Joint Policing Committee
Minutes of Meeting
Held on Monday 21st September, 2020 at Dunamais Arts Theatre, Portlaoise

Present: Chief Supt John Scanlon, Supt Anthony Pettit, Mr Sean Fleming TD, Mr Brian Stanley TD, Cllr Pdraig Fleming (Vice Chairperson), Cllr Paddy Bracken, Cllr Seamus McDonald, Cllr Paschal McEvoy, Cllr Catherine Fitzgerald, Cllr Aidan Mullins, Cllr John King, Cllr Ben Brennan, Cllr Conor Bergin, Cllr Thomasina Connell, Cllr Aisling Moran, Cllr Caroline Dwane Stanley, Mr Conor O'Leary, Mr Bobby Delaney, Mr Thomas Jones, Ms Sara Geraldine Rasool, Mr Brendan Birney

In attendance: Mr John Mulholland, CEO, Mr Donal Brennan Director of Service, Ms Carmel McNicholl, Senior Executive Officer, Ms Elaine Moore, Senior Staff Officer, Ms Emma O'Connor, Laois County Council,

Apologies: Mr Charlie Flanagan TD, Cllr Tom Mulhall, Ms Antoinette Kinsella, Garda Joe Culliton.

Cllr Pdraig Fleming (Vice Chairperson) welcomed everyone to the September meeting and expressed his best wishes Cllr Tom Mulhall in his recovery.

Confirmation of Minutes of Meetings

Upon the proposal of Cllr John King and seconded by Cllr Seamus McDonald, the minutes of the meeting of 6th July 2020 were confirmed and signed.

Matters Arising

None

Cllr Pdraig Fleming expressed the apology from Commissioner Harris that he was unable to attend and Commissioner Harris confirmed his intention of attending at a future meeting.

The members extended their well wishes to Tom Mulhall and his family and commented on his valuable contribution and work with the JPC and John Mulholland Chief Executive LCC, and Chief Supt John Scanlon formally sent best wishes to Tom Mulhall, who has been a stalwart of support for the JPC.

Report from An Garda Siochana

Supt Anthony Pettit gave an update with statistics for the first three quarters of 2020. He stated that Property Crime was down by 27% and Aggravated Burglary was down by 60%. Interfering with Mechanism of MPV was up from 6 incidents to 16 which reflected the lack of burglary opportunity during lockdown and a move in opportunistic robberies to parked cars which has now abated.

Drug offence detection rates are up, taking into account the Electric Picnic adjustment.

In respect of Crimes against the Person there is a reduction overall of 20%, and Criminal Damage and Public order Offences are also down by 17%.

Traffic Crime including Intoxication down by 34% and Laois Fatalities are at zero.

The members complimented An Garda Siochana on the excellent work done to date and welcomed the positive trends in the figures provided.

Further clarification and detail was sought on a number of matters, to include:

- a) Are call backs to domestic incidences part of an ongoing policy?
- b) How are public order offences in Housing estates being policed?
- c) Has there been interference with vehicles in a particular area or location?
- d) With pubs reopening, what is the policing policy regarding this?
- e) Regarding incidents that occur in Housing estates, are there specific actions that can be taken?
- f) What procedures are in place dealing with affected children when domestic violence occurs in the home?
- g) How are the Domestic Violence figures classified and categorised?
- h) Is there a danger of Burglary numbers increasing with the darker evenings and did the three week lockdown have any impact?
- i) Is the problem of dog theft in Laois as prevalent as it appear to be Nationwide?

- j) Is the use of Nitrous Oxide Gas an issue in Laois and is it something our youth needs to be educated about?
- k) What is the legislation regarding control of weapons such as Samurai Swords?
- l) Is there any evidence of the operation of illegal Sheebin type bars and how are they dealt with by AGS?
- m) How to educate our Young People about Money Muling and Laundering?
- n) In an increasing cashless society can a retail unit refuse to take payment in cash?
- o) How are crowds outside the Courthouse to be managed?

There was discussion on each of the matters raised and Supt Anthony Pettit clarified and provided further detail on each issue. With regard to the last matter, Chief Supt John Scanlon suggested a meeting between Solicitors, AGS, and the Court Service and that all might work together with a view to finding a solution.

Update on Community CCTV schemes

Donal Brennan outlined the substantial progress that has been made with regard to CCTV Federation member groups, in relation to:

Mountmellick – significant progress and should have their grant payment shortly,
 Donaghmore is progressing and should be in the same position within a number of weeks and
 Woodenbridge and Ratheniska have both been written to with a view to commencing meetings.
 Borris in Ossory Group are also progressing well with correspondence and follow up ongoing.

Paddy Bracken thanked everyone involved in getting the Mountmellick Scheme approved and hopes the work they did will prove to be a template for the County and assist other Groups in their Applications. John Mulholland, Chief Executive echoed these sentiments and acknowledged the progress made.

JPC Strategic Plan 2016- 2020

Plan was circulated and the contents noted and agreed as read.

Any other Business

It was indicated that additional resources are being assigned to a Community Policing Unit (5 officers) assigned. A competition is underway at present for these positions.

The replacement of lead shot with steel shot was raised and Chief Supt John Scanlon indicated he would examine further.

The issue of cars speeding in the Slieve Bloom area and motorbikes in The Heath areas was raised.

The issue of Country walkers is to be highlighted using the “Be Visible Be Seen” message, driven on social media.

The use of a text system for reporting anti social behaviour similar to that used in Swords was raised and it was agreed that the concept was good and Supt Anthony Pettit would look into it prior to the next meeting.

Policing Plan for Halloween is being finalised this week and door to door calling will be discouraged this year.

Date for next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled to be held on 16th November 2020.

That concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: Paddy Bracken
 Chairperson

Dated: 16/11/2020