

**County Laois Joint Policing Committee Public Meeting**  
**Minutes of Meeting**  
**Held on Monday 21 June, 2021 via TEAMS**

**Present:** Chief Superintendent John Scanlon, Superintendent John Lawless, Inspector Joe Culliton, Sergeant Garda Graham Kavanagh, Crime Prevention Officer, Mr John Mulholland, CEO, Laois County Council, Mr Donal Brennan Director of Service, Deputy Brian Stanley TD, Deputy Sean Fleming, Deputy Charles Flanagan, Cllr Pdraig Fleming (Vice Chairperson), Cllr Paddy Bracken, Cllr Paschal McEvoy, Cllr Catherine Fitzgerald, Cllr James Kelly, Cllr Conor Bergin, Cllr Caroline Dwane Stanley, Cllr John King, Cllr Thomasina Connell, Cllr Ben Brennan, Cllr. P.J. Kelly, Mr Bobby Delaney, Mr Brendan Birney, Mr Conor O'Leary, Ms Antoinette Kinsella.

**Apologies:** Cllr Aisling Moran, Ms Sara Rasool, Mr. Thomas Jones.

**In attendance:** Ms Carmel McNicholl, Senior Executive Officer, Ms Elaine Moore, A/Administrative Officer, Ms Rose Doolin, Assistant Staff Officer Laois County Council, Mr Drew Harris, Garda Commissioner, Ms Judy Higgins, Policing Authority, Liam Geraghty, Garda Press Office

Cllr Pdraig Fleming (Vice-Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting and informed them that the Garda Commissioner, Mr Drew Harris would be joining the meeting at 3pm. He also welcomed the attendance of a representative from the Policing Authority, Ms Judy Higgins, in an observer capacity.

**Adoption of Minutes**

On the proposal of Cllr James Kelly and seconded by Deputy Brian Stanley the minutes were adopted.

**Matters Arising**

The matter of Public Order and drinking outdoors was raised by Deputy Brian Stanley, in the context of recent comments by AGS, and that clarification would be welcome, particularly from the Commissioner. The Chief Superintendent stated that AGS advised to exercise discretion and that there was no major breakdown of public order to note locally at this stage. He stated that An Garda Síochána would enforce the law but that it was a matter for the Oireachtas to make and amend the laws.

The reports from the JPC working groups were welcomed and that these forums would be of great help and benefit to the business of the JPC.

**Report from An Garda Síochána**

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

- Property Crime is down by 38%. This is due mainly to COVID 19 restrictions. Most properties are now occupied during the day. While theft from shops are up slightly this is partly attributable to the fact that everyone is now wearing masks.
- Interfering with MPV is up but a large number of these crimes are now before the courts.
- Crimes against the person is down by 15%. However, it should be noted that the night-time economy will bring a rise in the number of minor assaults.
- Criminal Damage and Public Order is also down by 18% although public order offences rose by 1.
- Traffic offence are down by 32%.
- Domestic Disputes are down by 7%. People are at home more, and a lot of sensitive work has been done in this area. The Gardaí are working with the Housing Section in Laois County Council to locate a site for a refuge for people from domestic abuse. The Chief Superintendent stated that as a member of the Domestic Violence Board, there is a need in Laois to provide a domestic abuse refuge centre for people in need of assistance. He thanked Mr John Mulholland, CE, LCC and the Councillors for their support in this matter.
- He noted that since the beginning of the Covid 19 Pandemic the Gardaí in Laois have been assisting vulnerable and isolated people by ensuring that they are supported with basic and social needs. This service has proved invaluable to the community and also assisted the Gardaí in building up a good rapport with the communities they serve.
- The Chief Superintendent also advised that the Community Police Unit was re-established in Portlaoise during December 2020 and comprises of one Sergeant and seven Gardaí. This unit is focused on Community Engagement, crime prevention, problem solving and law enforcement with a view to building trust and enhancing the qualities for life of the entire community.

The members thanked the Chief Superintendent for all the good work being done by front line staff and for the high visibility of Gardaí which has been a source of reassurance for the public during the pandemic. The matter of Garda CCTV on the Mountmellick Road in Portlaoise was brought up but the Chief Superintendent stated that due to Covid 19 this had not yet progressed but that he would be meeting with the Council in the future to arrange to progress this.

#### **Presentation by Commissioner Drew Harris**

Cllr Padraig Fleming welcomed Garda Commission Drew Harris to the Laois JPC meeting. He stated that the Gardaí in Laois were a credit to the organisation and he acknowledged the appreciation of JPC members for the progression of the refurbishment of the Portlaoise Garda Station which is due to commence later this year.

Commission Drew Harris then made a presentation to the members of the JPC on the new Operating Model of AGS, outlining the efficiencies and benefits that will accrue as a result of implementation.

It was indicated that a copy of the Commissioners presentation would be circulated to all Members.

Following the presentation the Commissioner took questions as raised by the JPC members providing additional clarifications, as well as addressing 3 pre- submitted questions.

### Update on Community CCTV Schemes

As indicated at the April meeting, an update had been circulated with the meeting papers in relation to the current position with Community CCTV Schemes in Laois. There were no questions arising.

### AOB

Cllr Padraig Fleming welcomed Cllr PJ Kelly to the membership of the JPC. He will replace Cllr Tom Mulhall who had to retire due to health reasons. The Chief Superintendent thanked Cllr Tom Mulhall for his excellent role as chair of the JPC Committee. He stated that he worked hard for the people of Laois. This was supported by members of the committee.

It was advised that Cllr Aisling Moran will be the Chair of the JPC from the next meeting, as per agreement reached and decision of the Elected Members in September 2019.

Cllr Caroline Dwane Stanley also thanked Cllr Padraig Fleming (vice Chair) for chairing the recent meetings.

The matter of having choice of being physically present at the September meeting or virtual attendance was raised and it was indicated that it is hoped that the IT system in the Council Chamber will be updated to allow for this.

A query was raised on the membership of the MD Working Groups and it was indicated that it is open to all Members to participate on any WG, at their discretion. Ms Carmel Mc Nicholl will follow up in this regard.

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### Date & Time for next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 20th September 2021 at 2.30 pm.

The Chief Superintendent indicated that this meeting may need to be changed to the following week if the Electric Picnic proceeds this year. It was indicated that a decision will be made nearer the time on the change of the date if required.

That concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: 

Chair

Dated: 20/9/21