**Minutes of Joint Policing Committee Meeting**

**held on Wednesday 1st February 2012, in Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise**

**Present:** Mr. Ben Brennan, M.C.C., Mr. Brendan Phelan, M.C.C., Ms. Catherine Fitzgerald, M.C.C., Chief Supt Frank Moore, Mr. David Goodwin, M.C.C. Mr. James Daly, M.C.C. (Chair), Mr. John King, M.C.C., Mr. John Nolan, Inspector, Ms. Mary Sweeney, M.C.C. , Mr. Michael Cobbe, Mr. Michael Lalor, M.C.C., Mr. Paddy Bracken, M.C.C., Mr. Paul Mitchell, M.C.C., Mr. Peter Carey, County Manager, Mr. Ray Cribbin, M.C.C., Mr. Seamus Mc Donald, M.C.C., Mr. Tom Mulhall, M.C.C., Supt. Philip Lyons

**In Attendance:** Ms. Anna Marie Delaney, Director of Services, Ms. Georgina Ireland, Administrative Officer, Ms. Honor Deevy, Senior Staff Officer, Community & Enterprise, Mr. Ian Mc Cormack, SEO Community & Enterprise.

**Apologies:** Mr. Brian Stanley, T.D., Mr. Charles Flanagan, T.D. Senator John Whelan, Ms. Mary Wheatley, Mr. Michael Lynch, Mr. Sean Fleming T.D.

***Confirmation of Minutes***

On the proposal of Cllr. Seamus Mc Donald and seconded by Cllr. Ben Brennan, the minutes of County Joint Policing Committee Public Meeting held on 10th October 2011 were confirmed and agreed.

***Report from An Garda Síochána***

Chief Supt. Frank Moore presented the report from An Garda Síochána.

He stated that there has been a significant Increase in burglaries in the Laois / Offaly area, with robbery statistics in respect of the last quarter of 2011 increased by 58%.

Cllr. Brendan Phelan stated that he was not surprised by the increase in break-ins. He acknowledged that this was a major complaint from communities. Stealing gold and scrap metal to resell is common. He suggested the installation of CCTV as a remedy to identifying culprits.

Cllr. James Daly stated that in his opinion, businesses that refuse to install CCTV are admitting that the gold / scrap that they take in is not genuine and that this should be highlighted in any legislation passed.

Chief Supt. Frank Moore suggested that this JPC should lobby at national level ensure that legislation is in place in respect of to sellers of scrap metal / gold and that they have proper ownership.

Following discussion on this matter, it was agreed that this matter is affecting all levels of the community and that this JPC should bring this to the notice of legislators.

Cllr. Mulhall stated that due to recent increases in robberies and their effects on all communities in Laois, there is now a significant uptake and interest in Community Alerts.

Cllr. John King also enquired as to the best way to protect citizens in relation to bogus callers, posing as local authority officials collecting household charges, etc. He stated that there was a fear among people in this regard.

Chief Supt. Moore stated in relation to vulnerable people targeted by bogus callers that Church services are an ideal way to let the public know. He stated that often in these cases, there is local knowledge involved. He also stated that the Council needs to highlight to the public that officials calling to houses would be carrying proper identification.

Cllr. Michael Lalor enquired in relation to robberies at locations of ATM deliveries. He stated that the theft of money from these delivery vans looked like a very simple operation. He asked were banks playing their part in security. Supt. Philip Lyons stated that there are strict procedures for ATM deliveries but a breach of security can occur.

Mr. Michael Cobbe enquired as to the numbers of Gardaí who have retired up to the end of January in the division. He also enquired in relation to the recent announcement that Gardaí would be disarmed and commented that this measure might be a step in the wrong direction and could lead to very serious and harmful situations for An Garda Síochána.

Chief Supt. Frank Moore stated that the Gardaí would be reduced by 8 – 10%. Both the Fleet and Division will be reduced. He stated that the reduction of arms for Gardaí will be done in a phased way nationally.

Concerns were expressed by Members in relation to upcoming retirements by Senior Gardaí in the Division, particularly in relation to a changeover period during which replacements could be trained. Chief Supt. Moore responded stating that there would be no gap in relation to taking over vacated positions.

**Laois County Council Report**

Ms. Anna Maria Delaney, Director of Services presented a report on behalf of Laois County Council, containing some issues which came to the attention of the local authority and an update on projects being progressed by the local authority. *(Copy report attached)*

The Members thanked Ms. Delaney for the report. Some members raised the issue of litter and illegal dumping, stating that it is a nationwide problem, particularly in relation to rural dumping.

Cllr. Tom Mulhall raised the issue of motorists driving over roundabouts and destroying signs. He suggested that An Garda Síochána and the local authority should come together to examine this issue.

Cllr. Mary Sweeney raised the issue of the restrictive application process for grant aid for in respect of supports for the elderly. She recommended that the JPC should write to the Department regarding improving the process.

She also thanked Inspector John Nolan and the Abbeyleix Garda District for their assistance.

Cllr. Seamus McDonald raised the issue of dog fouling as a major problem in the county and the need for this to be addressed in every town.

It was agreed to examine other schemes in relation to support for the elderly and community based schemes, e.g., GAA.

**Annual Report**

The County Joint Policing Committee Annual Report in respect of year ended 31st December 2011 was examined.

Chief Supt. Frank Moore requested that the following additions be made to the content of the Annual Report to reflect a very successful Road Safety Campaign, carried out in October.

Cllr. Mary Sweeney proposed the Annual Report, subject to these additions, and it was seconded by Cllr. John King.

Cllr. Brendan Phelan suggested that the Annual Report should also be circulated to all members of the Oireachtas for their comments also, in advance of its being forwarded to the Garda Commissioner and Dept. of Justice.

**Any Other Business**

On behalf of the members of the County Joint Policing Committee, Cllr. James Daly wished Chief Supt. Frank Moore and Supt. Philip Lyons well in their retirements and thanked them for their service to Laois and to the State.

County Manager, Mr. Peter Carey joined in wishing both Chief Supt Frank Moore and Supt. Philip Lyons well in their retirements. He stated that the Council had excellent relationship with An Garda Síochána and highlighted the tremendous support received from An Garda Síochána in relation to major emergency planning and severe weather alerts. He commended the Chief Superintendent for his work and his attendance at meetings.

He also stated that the support of An Garda Síochána was very welcome for the hosting of Events and festivals held by Laois County Council.

Both Chief Supt Moore and Supt Lyons responded, thanking the County Manager, Ms. Georgina Ireland, Mr. Declan Byrne, former Director of Services, Councillors and the members of the JPC.

**Signed: Date:**

**Cllr. James Daly  
 Chairman**

**Minutes of Joint Policing Committee Meeting**

**held on Monday, 9 July 2012, in Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise**

**Present:** James Daly MCC (Chair), Ben Brennan MCC, Brendan Phelan MCC,

Brian Stanley TD, Catherine Fitzgerald MCC, Charles Flanagan TD,

Chief Supt Michael Byrnes, Supt Yvonne Lundon, Sgt Stephen O Sullivan,

John King MCC, Mary Sweeney MCC, Michael Cobbe, Michael Lalor MCC,

Paul Mitchell MCC, Seamus McDonald MCC, Sean Fleming TD,

Tom Mulhall MCC, Kathleen Gorman

**In Attendance:** Anna Marie Delaney, Deputy County Manager,

Kieran Kehoe, Acting Director of Services,

Georgina Ireland, Administrative Officer

Theresa Bergin, Clerical Officer – Community & Enterprise

**Apologies:** Mary White, Ray Cribbin MCC

**Confirmation of Minutes**

On the proposal of Cllr Ben Brennan and seconded by Cllr Seamus McDonald, the minutes of County Joint Policing Committee Meeting held on 1 February 2012 were confirmed and agreed.

**Report from An Garda Síochána**

Chief Superintendent Michael Byrnes introduced Superintendent Yvonne Lundon to the Members and all present extended their warm wishes to her and wished her well in her new position.

Chief Supt Byrnes then presented his report in respect of An Garda Siochána, in which he particularly highlighted that the community be conscious of personal security and the security of their property.

He reported that in general, overall crime is down 11%, however, burglaries have increased 43% in the first 6 months of 2012. He advised that since the introduction of Operation Obair statistics have improved for May and June 2012 with a corresponding increase in detections.

He highlighted areas for concern ie theft, theft from shops, theft from the person and theft from vehicles, Beer Kegs and Scrap Metal thefts were up 24%. Public Order Offences had increased slightly, however, there is a much higher level of enforcement.

He advised his disappointment in noting that there was an increase in Drink Driving cases since last year. He conveyed that An Garda Síochána would be working diligently in Laois/Offaly and Kildare to target bad driving behaviour, as it is a contributor to fatalities.

All present welcomed the report and the arrival of the Superintendent and hope was expressed by several members that a Chief Superintendent would be appointed in respect of Laois/Offaly shortly.

Deputy Flanagan raised the issue of the Duty Roster and why many roles of duty are being carried out by Gardai from outlying stations. Deputy Stanley requested Garda numbers in the district for 2010 and 2012. He raised the concern that Garda numbers are down and hence response times are down and that this is a particular problem in rural areas and smaller towns.

Deputy Flanagan complimented Community Alert and asked that An Garda Síochána support them. Cllr Sweeney commented on a National Pilot Text Alert Scheme proposed in conjunction with Muintir na Tire, and requested an update on this, citing it as an exciting development, which should be fast tracked if possible.

Deputy Flanagan raised a concern that there might be a lack of support by Gardaí and the Local Authority towards communities that have CCTV installed in their area. The law facilitates the placing of cameras however there are issues with Data Protection. It was noted that CCTV helps with detection of mobile crime. The work of the Community Gardaí in fostering good relations was acknowledged and the wish was for this to continue.

Chief Supt Byrnes responded that An Garda Síochána are doing everything to support Community Alert. In respect of CCTV he stated that any system coming from the community is beneficial. CCTV helps to build up a movement profile and helps with detections (detections up 70%).

Deputy Stanley raised a concern regarding the reported increase in the number of thefts and burglaries. Highlighting an issue regarding thefts form shops, in Portlaoise and other areas. He also raised the issue of vacant houses, acknowledging that some of these vacant properties have been resolved by the Derelict Sites Notices, but that these properties are a problem for people living either side of them.

Chief Supt Byrnes responded that An Garda Síochána works closely with the Local Authority to try to remedy these situations as soon as possible.

Deputy Flanagan stated rural crime is a huge issue and that Garda Cars are required especially for the Mountmellick/Clonaslee area, adding that the absence of a Patrol Car exacerbates this situation, having a Garda Car helps with visibility. The question was asked if Garda vehicles in Dublin could be swapped with those in this district in respect of the mileage issue.

Some members raised the issue of Garda and Prison Service vehicles outside the Courthouse in Portlaoise and the fact that court days may deter shoppers due to the threat of antisocial behaviour on the Main Street. Cllr Fitzgerald raised the question in respect of the possibility of relocation of the Courthouse.

In relation to vans outside Portlaoise Courthouse Chief Supt Byrnes stated that this matter would be examined but that the issue regarding the location of the Courthouse should be raised with the Courts Service.

Some members raised the issue of temporary encampments and discussions ensued in relation to the condition of temporary sites and the effect on local communities.

In response to the issue of temporary encampments, Chief Supt Byrnes stated that there is a good relationship between An Garda Síochána and sections of the Council in respect of serving notices and injunctions. He noted that swift action insofar as possible can be the best course in most cases.

Members enquired in relation to any reduction in services at Abbeyleix Garda Station and as to the links in border areas of the county with other Garda divisions.

Chief Supt Byrnes advised that the Abbeyleix Garda District now comes under the Portlaoise District and with taking account of new criteria around Garda Stations, there is a move towards upgrading security in stations and the streamlining of staff. He clarified that the border areas come under the Portlaoise District in respect of policing, some out of hours responses will come from other districts, depending on available resources.

The issue of Illegal Dumping was again discussed and it was agreed that the message should be highlighted that this is not the cheap option. The importance of the visibility of Litter Wardens on patrol was highlighted.

Chief Supt Byrnes thanked all Elected Representatives for their support. In respect of the Text Alert Scheme he stated that the detection rates of crime as a result of this scheme have increased, it focuses policing and is very successful and they would be in support of this scheme.

In respect of Garda Rosters he stated that Gardaí are now on a longer shift when on Duty. Gardaí report for duty in Portlaoise but also return to their particular areas. Supervision and handover is better in this regard and there is the pooling of Garda vehicles.

In relation to Garda Vehicles he stated that once a Garda Vehicle reaches 300,000 kilometres they must be withdrawn from service by stipulation of the manufacturer. Therefore, there has to be rotation of cars within the district and this is an ongoing problem nationally.

Supt Yvonne Lundon stated that she was heartened by the successes of An Garda Síochána, she noted concerns and issues raised and looks forward to working with all.

**Laois County Council Report**

Mr Kieran Kehoe, Acting Director of Services presented a report on behalf of Laois County Council, containing some issues which came to the attention of the Local Authority and an update on projects being progressed by the local authority. *(Copy report attached)*

The Members thanked Mr Kehoe for the report, some issues having been addressed in previous discussions.

**Annual Public Meeting**

It was agreed to hold the Annual Public Meeting of the Joint Policing Committee on Monday, 8th October 2012.

**Any Other business**

A query was raised about the role of An Garda Síochána in attending repossessions/evictions.

Chief Supt Byrnes advised that a Court Order must be executed by a Local Authority or Sherriff and the role of An Garda Síochána would be to prevent a Breach of the Peace on site of the eviction. He stated that in most cases, breaches of the peace would not occur, however, An Garda Síochána is present to ensure that the integrity of the order and the safety of the person serving it are protected.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

Signed: Date:

**Cllr James Daly**



***Laois County Joint Policing Committee***

***Laois County Council Report to Meeting 9th July 2012***

**Supports for Young People**

***Laois Comhairle na nÓg***

Laois Comhairle na nÓg represents young people in Laois and works to promote the importance of youth participation in civic life in Laois and their inclusion in the decisions being made at county level that affect them. The Comhairle membership comprises representatives from each secondary school in Co. Laois, as well as youth organisations, sports clubs, girl guides and those representing the seldom heard groups, e.g., the travelling community, Youthreach and youth justice projects.

The Comhairle recently met with County Manager, Peter Carey and discussed ways in which they, on behalf of young people in Laois, can assist the authorities, including highlighting community issues and campaigns, such as litter, road safety and community alert. It was recommended that the Comhairle present on a regular basis, in relation to their work to the Joint Policing Committees and County Council members.

As part of a Mental Health Awareness Week in Laois in September, the Comhairle in association with Youth Work Ireland (Laois) will host a Youth Mental Health Conference. They are also working on the publication of a booklet on skills for leaving home, which will be distributed to 6th year students in each school in Laois during the new school year.

***Drug Awareness***Laois Local Drugs Network was established to target delivery of services and assist in raising drug awareness in Laois. The Network is currently working a number of actions during 2012.

* The Street Leagues, a 10-week soccer league designed to engage men in recovery from or at risk of substance abuse is operated in association with Laois Sports Partnership and Laois Partnership. The League when commenced recently, entertained a record number of 110 men between the ages on 18 and 40 years, the largest number since the league began in 2009.
* A community coaching programme will be operated in September in a similar way, also sponsored through the Drugs Network, Laois Sports Partnership and various other organisations.
* A booklet produced by the Local Drugs Network, targeting parents and offering advice on spotting the signs of substance misuse, will be promoted at the beginning of the new school year to Parent Councils’ for all the schools in Laois, primary and secondary, in the county. The booklet also contains useful tips on talking to children about the subject of drugs and alcohol.

The Midland Regional Drugs Task Force will be hosting a Drug & Alcohol Awareness week from 1st – 5th October next, during which some events will be held in Laois, which will be further notified.

**Community Networking**

***Community Alert/Neighbourhood Watch***

Laois Community Forum and An Garda Siochána are working together to ensure Community Alert and Neighbourhood Watch Schemes are spread appropriately across the county.

An Garda Síochána and members of Laois Community Forum and Muintir na Tire, recently met a gathering of representatives from all Community Alert groups in Laois. At this meeting, Laois Community Forum advised that they will be making a small amount of funding available to groups to assist should they wish to install a rapid text alert system in their own community alert areas. This scheme will be notified to those groups registered with the Forum in the coming weeks.

Laois Community Forum and An Garda Siochána jointly met with residents’ groups in the Portlaoise area in March of this year, discussing issues that they wanted to highlight in relation to managing their estates and also to allow the groups to network and share experiences. The outcome of the meeting was very positive and it is intended to host a similar meeting again in the Autumn, also looking at hosting meetings in other areas in the county.

Laois Community Forum will be supporting the roll out of any further campaigns for the upcoming winter months in an attempt to ready and inform communities of their role and their supports, should a period of severe weather occur.

**Traffic/Parking/Road Safety**

* ***Active Travel Town / National Cycle Network & Public Transport Hubs***

Applications have been made under these schemes to the Dept. of Transport. No funding allocations for NCN or PTH are being given. Awaiting notice of funding application in respect of Active Town Travel (formerly known as SMART Travel).

* ***Borris Rd. Improvement Works***– The Department of Transport, Tourism & Sport have continued to fund this realignment scheme into 2012.  €750,000 allocation received. – Construction Drawings from Consultants are expected early, week commencing 9th July. Commencement of Works Onions Lane., to be discussed with Area Office.
* The Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport have allocated funds for seven Low Cost Safety Improvement Schemes on the Local and Regional Road network in 2012.  Schemes include:
  + R435 Donaghmore €30,000
  + R435 Rathdowney €30,000
  + R425 Cashel €40,000
  + L3838 Coolnabacky €41,000
  + R430 Boleybeg Cross €30,000
  + R424 Ullard €10,000
  + L3932 Rossnamullane €20,000
* Parking Bye-Laws were recently adopted to include the Taxi Rank at Dunnes Stores on the Kylekiproe Road, Portlaoise.

**Environment Issues**

***Litter Offences/Illegal Dumping***

Despite the Council’s best efforts, illegal dumping and littering continues to spoil our landscape. By allowing this very visible form of pollution to continue, it will have an adverse affect on how we view the areas we visit or live in and it affects our quality of life. Everyone should have the right to a litter-free environment.

Whilst the Council recognises its role as the lead authority in combating litter, it is also aware that the eradication of litter can only happen if everyone shares the responsibility. The Environment Section have a dedicated free phone confidential litter hotline (1800 323230) which is promoted at every opportunity to encourage everyone to take a “zero tolerance” approach and report breaches of the Litter Act.

In 2011, 612 litter complaints were logged and actioned. So far in 2012, 321 litter incidences have been reported and investigated. However, dealing with such complaints only represent a small portion of the Litter Wardens workload which includes patrolling areas, carrying out surveys, judging competitions, office work and attending court to name a few.

The following enforcement statistics were applied in 2011 **and to date in 2012:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Timescale*** | ***Fines*** | ***Prosecutions*** | ***Convictions*** | ***Notices*** |
| ***At Year ended 31/12/ 2011*** | 183 | 39 | 21 | 11 |
| ***To date in 2012*** | 105 | 17 | 10 | 9 |

***Dog Fouling Awareness***

The Environment Section of Laois County Council identified that dog fouling was becoming a serious litter nuisance for many communities. As a result, a week long dog fouling campaign took place from Monday 26th – 30th March 2012. The launch took place in Mountmellick and, during this week, environment staff in conjunction with Tidy Town groups, visited Portarlington, Mountrath, Rathdowney, Abbeyleix and Durrow. Additional awareness was created by the purchase of revised signage, hi-viz jackets, dog bag holders, stickers and the introduction of a leaflet dedicated to dog fouling. Feedback was very positive, with lesser complaints received and an improvement in the incidences of dog fouling reported. Two fines have issued for dog fouling since the campaign.

***Gum Litter Campaign***

Laois County Council was successful again in participating in this years’ campaign, with the local launch carried out at Laois Shopping Centre on 16th May last. The mid-campaign boost will take place during the month of July whilst monitoring of 3 targeted sites for gum litter was finalised on 2nd July last.

***Clean Up Laois Week 2012***

Clean Up Laois Week 2012, in association with An Taisce’s National Spring Clean, took place from Monday 16th to Friday 20th April 2012. As is the norm litter-pickers, hi-viz jackets, bags and gloves were provided to groups, schools and individuals who took part in clean-ups in their own localities. The resulting bags of rubbish were collected by the Litter Wardens. The yearly initiative was very successful with 46.6 tonnes of rubbish collected.

***Other Anti-Litter Initiatives***

The Inter-Community Litter Challenge (ICLC) is currently underway, with this years’ competition being carried out on a “knock out” basis. Similarly, the local Tidy Towns Federation competition is currently being judged but revised this year due to staffing levels. We rely on the ongoing support from volunteers, especially the Tidy Towns Committees/Community Groups, countywide. Their dedication and hard work is fundamental and forms the backbone of any community. Recognition of their commitment to the environment is highlighted during the yearly Environment Awards Ceremony and an increase in their marks at National level in the last few years is testament to the great work they achieve.

***Cooperation/Assistance with An Garda Síochána***

Whilst the Environment Section recognises that the Guards’ main priority is Public Order Offences, meetings have been held to seek their support/assistance in litter offences especially out of hours and at weekends. Fine books have issued to the various stations and, whilst few fines have issued, the Guards have been instrumental in 2011 in assisting with road checkpoints, serving legal notices, assisting in house visits and furnishing information.

**Combating Anti-Social Behaviour**

Laois County Council has a duty to manage and control dwellings let under:-

* Housing Act 1966 – 2009
* Dwellings in which relevant purchasers reside within the meaning of Section 1 of the Act of 1997.
* Dwellings which are the subject of Chapter 4 Tenancy Agreements.
* Sites within the meaning of Section 1 of the 1998 Act.

To date in 2012, the Estate Management Section has served 2 Abandonment Notices and 31 houses have been surrendered back to Laois County Council.

It is also within our remit to secure and protect the interests of tenants and their families in the peaceful occupation of their dwellings. To this end, Laois County Council is committed to taking action to prevent and abate anti-social behaviour. Anti-social behaviour can result in increased costs to the local authority in terms of vandalism to properties and communal areas, difficulties in letting vacant properties and generally destabilising local communities. It is acknowledged that the greater majority of the Council’s tenants are law abiding citizens who take great pride in their community.

***Kieran Kehoe***

***A/Director of Services***

**Minutes of Public Joint Policing Committee Meeting**

**held on Monday, 8th October 2012, in Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise**

**Present:** Cllr. James Daly (In the Chair), Cllr. Ben Brennan, Cllr. Brendan Phelan, Mr. Brian Stanley, T.D., Cllr. Catherine Fitzgerald, Mr. Charles Flanagan, T.D., Chief Superintendent John Scanlan, Inspector Martin Harrington, Cllr. John King, Ms. Mary White, Mr. Michael Cobbe, Cllr. Michael Lalor, Cllr. Paddy Bracken, Cllr. Paul Mitchell (Cathaoirleach), Mr. Peter Carey County Manager, Cllr. Ray Cribbin, Mr. Sean Fleming, T.D., Cllr. Tom Mulhall.

**In Attendance:** Ms. Anna Marie Delaney, Director of Services, Ms. Georgina Ireland, Administrative Officer, Ms. Theresa Bergin, Clerical Officer, Sgt. Tom Walton, Sgt. Justine Reilly, Sgt. Elaine Horan, Sgt. Ingrid Moore, Ms. Josephine Sutton, Lakeglen Residents’ Association, Mr. Andy Sutton, Portlaoise Town JPC.

**Apologies:** Cllr. David Goodwin, Senator John Whelan, Cllr. Seamus McDonald

Cllr. James Daly, Chairperson opened the meeting and welcomed all members, and members of the public in attendance.

On behalf of the County Joint Policing Committee, he welcomed Chief Supt. John Scanlan, who recently took up his post in the Laois/Offaly Garda Division, and wished him well in his future endeavours.

***CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES***

On the proposal of Cllr. Paul Mitchell and seconded by Cllr. John King, the minutes of the County Laois Joint Policing Committee Meeting held on 9th July 2012 were confirmed and agreed.

***MATTERS ARISING***

Charlie Flanagan, T.D. sought an update in relation to the issue of allocation of Garda vehicles to patrol in the Mountmellick area.

He also sought an update in relation to an issue raised at the last meeting regarding Garda and Prison Service vehicles parking directly outside the Courthouse in Portlaoise. He stressed that this is a serious issue and stated his wish that this should be addressed as a matter of urgency.

Brian Stanley, T.D. sought an update on a previous request for the numbers of Gardaí stationed in Co. Laois. He also advised that he had forwarded correspondence to the Minister for Justice & Equality in respect of the Garda vehicles issue and was awaiting a reply.

***AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA REPORT***

Chief Superintendent John Scanlan made a presentation in respect of crime statistics for the quarter ended 30th September 2012 (*presentation attached).* In his presentation he highlighted a number of points:

* The presence of decreasing crime statistics does not reflect or lessen the effect that crime has on any one individual victim; crime is still something that shouldn’t occur at all.
* Burglary figures are a significant point of concern. There is a need for the entire community to become involved in helping to reduce/prevent crime and to support victims of crime.
* The message needs to be conveyed to the public to ensure that their properties are properly secured and burglar alarms used, to engage in behaviour of checking on neighbours and not to be afraid to contact An Garda Síochána if necessary.

Cllr. James Daly thanked the Chief Superintendent for a very comprehensive report, which was noted by the Members. A number of Members raised points in relation to the following:

* Concerns around the increase in burglaries in the county
* Scrap metal theft and disposal
* Increase in sexual assault cases in Co. Laois and the need to source increased funding for domestic abuse services.
* Issues with speeding on the route R419 and at Coolbanagher
* The need for a greater Garda presence in Portarlington
* Anti-social behaviour in estates, harassment of residents
* Monitoring of criminals travelling via our motorways
* Garda resources in the county
* Increases in criminal incidents (burglary) in the Graiguecullen/Killeshin areas.
* Issues relating to erection of cameras in communities.

The Chief Superintendent responded to some queries in relation to the above and advised of legislation to come before the Oireachtas in respect of the regulation of the scrap metal trade. He also pledged to examine the issue of speeding on the aforementioned routes.

He advised that the situation in relation to Garda resources is a national one and that An Garda Síochána will be giving the best service possible despite the current circumstances. He advised that he was not at liberty to give out actual numbers in relation to Garda resources or numbers in Co. Laois, and would not be issuing that information at any stage. He highlighted the need for support from communities, and particularly thanked community alert and neighbourhood watch groups for their assistance in crime prevention measures. He reiterated the importance of all communities supporting An Garda Síochána in solving, but more importantly preventing, burglaries.

The Chief Superintendent invited elected members/members of the Oireachtas to contact An Garda Síochána in relation to any issue occurring in their own local areas, stressing that issues should be raised when they occur and not held to be raised at a Joint Policing Committee Meeting, so that particular issues can be dealt with as efficiently as possible locally and to everyone’s satisfaction.

The Chief Superintendent referred to the issue of Garda vehicle resources, stating that An Garda Síochána is currently working in a challenging environment in relation to transport. He stated that a number of unmarked vehicles are also being used in areas and the best use of resources available is currently being made.

He also made reference to the issue of erecting cameras, stating that while An Garda Síochána would welcome it as a deterrent and support local communities in their crime prevention efforts, he also noted the difficulties associated with erecting surveillance equipment, i.e., funding, data protection, maintenance etc.

**LAOIS COUNTY COUNCIL REPORT (*ATTACHED*)**

Ms. Anna Marie Delaney presented her report giving an update on the local authority’s response to community and other issues.

Cllr. James Daly thanked Ms. Delaney for her report which was noted by the Members.

***QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC***

Questions were submitted from various committees and groups from across the county as follows:

***Question submitted on behalf of Portarlington Combined Residents’ Association:***

1. *In light of the recent fatal shooting in Portarlington, does the Joint Policing Committee still feel that our town still does not need a 24 hour opening in our Garda Station?*
2. *What steps have been taken now to clamp down on Criminals living among decent living people, trying to do their best for their families? I know of old people living in fear every night they go to bed. The dogs on the Streets know who these elements are, so therefore our Gardaí must have a list the length of their arm of these known criminals. So on behalf of Portarlington Combined Residents Association we would like this serious question answered.*

***Response by An Garda Síochána***

1. Since recent incidents occurred in Portarlington, the Garda station there has been open on a 24-hour basis. However, in more usual times, there is a justification to put Garda resources to better use patrolling the town, as opposed to manning the station. Statistics show that calls to the station, by phone and in person, are low. As the need arises, the opening hours of this station will be examined.
2. It is not possible to discuss particular incidents in detail, due to ongoing investigations in that respect. However, it should be noted that recent incidents are not indicative of life in Portarlington, where the community is extremely vigilant and protective of its citizens. Control of the private rental sector and the behaviour of individuals who live in rented properties is difficult; this is a matter for the community and the people who own these properties to deal with these issues and An Garda Síochána will provide support wherever possible.

***Questions submitted on behalf of Marian Avenue Community Group, Portlaoise:***

1. *An increased level of antisocial behaviour has been experienced within the Marian Ave. area; this has been reported to our local Gardaí recently. This antisocial behaviour has also highlighted concerns by residents (of whom there is a high elderly population) of the lack of safety felt when accessing their homes from the back lane, and fear of entering their back yards after dusk. Would it be possible for the County Council to support the efforts of an Garda Síochána by installing lighting in the back lanes and enhancing the general lighting of the estate, improving safety, and deterring crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour within the area?* ***Response by An Garda Síochána***

Members of the An Garda Síochána Community Policing Unit recently met with Marian Avenue Community Group to discuss the local issues raised, to assist in any way they could. This area is also included in the An Garda Síochána Community Policing Unit’s “Cup of Tea, You and Me” scheme.

1. *Community Group Safety issues have been raised repeatedly to the County Council by the Marian Avenue community group in relation to Clonminam Road., namely;* 
   1. ***Speed ramp as a traffic calming measure*** *- Residents of Clonminam Road have requested that a speed ramp be installed on Clonminam road as the speed of traffic on this road (even in the extremely wet conditions recently) remains a concern and the number of H.G.V.’s has remained high. Many young children play in this area and thus the speed of traffic is of great concern.*
   2. ***Junction of Clonminam Road and Abbeyleix Road*** *- Access to and exiting from Clonminam Road is often difficult and consequently unsafe. Requests for a yellow box junction to assist access from the Abbeyleix Road have been made to the Laois County Council. The extension of double yellow lines at the corner of this junction would also aid in regulating parking near this junction which hinder the safe movement of traffic both exiting and entering Clonminam Road.*
   3. *While suggestions have been submitted to enhance road safety of the above area, would it be possible for Laois County Council to implement any safety configurations or structures, to reduce the threat of fatal and serious injuries and improve road safety in Clonminam Road and Marian Avenue in accordance with the Garda Síochána’s road safety units’ strategic goals?*

***Response by Laois County Council’s Roads Section***

At this time funding is quite limited and Laois County Council does not have any discretionary funding available for a speed ramp on the Clonminam Road. In some instances, Residents themselves consider providing funding and in these instances, the Council would construct the ramp at a location that complies with the standards.

Clonminam/Marian Avenue road has a number of relatively sharp bends. In addition the road width is usually restricted by parking, along the kerb. These factors would normally be expected to provide a degree of natural traffic calming. These factors should also make the route less attractive for HGVs.

At times of heavy traffic, there are backups on the Abbeyleix road, from the roundabout past the Clonminam junction. A yellow box would ease this situation. But we have also to be careful so that we do not introduce any measures that would encourage traffic to choose the Clonminam/Marian Avenue road, instead of the preferred route of the Old Knockmay Road.

If funding is available in the coming year Laois County Council will endeavour to provide the yellow box and to modify the double yellow lines. Funding is available under the Department of Transport Safety Schemes for measures to enhance the safety of roads, at specific locations. The locations are prioritised primarily on the basis of accident statistics. Under this scheme, Clonminam would not attract funding in the near term.

*Ms. Clare Hurley, Marian Avenue Community Group expressed sincere thanks to Sgt. Justine Reilly and the Community Policing Unit for their advice and assistance. She also stated that the Group would welcome a yellow box and consultation with the community with regard to same.*

***Questions submitted on behalf of Willow Grove Residents’ Group, Mountmellick:***

1. ***Anti-social Behaviour:***  *Clarity required in relation to Anti Social Behaviour. In relation to Anti-social Behaviour or incidents between residents, how should this be addressed?? Residents are getting conflicting information in relation to this (both the local Gardaí and the TLO of LCC have been contacted in relation to same). It would be appreciated if the procedure in relation to this point is clarified for residents.*
2. ***Speed:*** *Throughout the years there have been issues in relation to speeding within the estate. It would be appreciated if the issue of speeding could be addressed and clarity in relation to the procedures in dealing with same. The residents feel that the current traffic calming measures are not effective in deterring individuals from speeding (there are 4 bump ramps in place in the estate) the residents have signed a petition in relation to same. We would appreciate some advice on this issue as there are a large number of children residing in the estate and as the main green is in close proximity to the estate entrance we would appreciate if modifications could be made to the existing ramps to ensure our children’s safety.*  
   ***Response by An Garda Síochána***

It is important that An Garda Síochána are made aware locally of incidents/issues as they occur. The co-operation of the community is necessary in order resolve these issues locally, with which An Garda Síochána will do our best to assist.  
  
***Response by Laois County Council’s Housing Section***In relation to breaches of tenancy or incidents of anti-social behaviour, every complaint received is investigated by the Council’s Housing Dept.

Evictions will be carried out in all cases where tenants or members of their household are involved in drug dealing or allow their dwelling to be used for drug dealing.

You must make sure you do not cause damage or become a nuisance to your neighbours, In particular, this means:

• No drugs

• No criminal activity

• No violence or threats of violence

• No harassment or abuse

• No loud noise

Laois County Council’s estate management team are not in a position to intervene in disputes between children. Children should be supervised at all times. It is the parent’s responsibility to supervise their children at the family home. Breaches of the peace and riot situations are matters for the Gardaí. Laois County Council, in accordance with its Anti-social Behaviour Policy, will liaise with the Gardaí regarding alleged incidents to ascertain the powers, if any, of Laois County Council to act. If you cannot resolve the issue yourself, please inform the Housing Department, giving the full details of the nature of the complaints and if relevant the dates/times of the incidents concerned. Your complaint will be treated with total confidentiality.

1. ***Litter:*** *Litter is still a continuing issue in the estate especially in the hedge/ditch surrounding the main green area. We have been provided with bins/bin collectors and road sweepers and this is proving to be very successful in reducing litter in the estate but the issue of household waste being disposed in the hedges/ditches continues. Advice and clarity on same.****Dogs:*** *There are increasing issues of dog fouling in the estate. This includes dogs belonging to residents, stray dogs and members of the public who choose to walk their dogs in the estate. What is the procedure in relation to this?*

***Response by Laois County Council’s Environment Section***

Unfortunately most estates suffer in a similar manner, however, the Residents Committee (if in place) normally take it upon themselves to carry out regular litter picks to keep litter to a minimum in the estate and its surrounds. In addition, this Section organise a yearly “Clean Up Laois Week” in April of each year. During this week, volunteers carry out an extensive litter pick of their surrounds with the resulting bags collected by Laois County Council. Some bags, gloves and litter picking devices are distributed free of charge to the registered groups. If you wish to avail of some litter pickers for use by the residential group, please do not hesitate to contact the Environment Section, Laois County Council. It may be worth highlighting the litter issue at residential meetings or via a letter drop to all the houses in the estate.

Failing to clean up after your dog in a public place is a litter offence as set out in Section 22 of the Litter Pollution Act 1997 as amended. This Section recognised that there was an increase in the level of dog fouling incidences over the last few years therefore various dog fouling initiatives have been carried out with the most recent campaign carried out in March of this year. This week-long campaign focused on 7 of the larger towns in Laois and involved an element of awareness, liaising with dog walkers and some monitoring of areas. In addition, dog fouling signs were erected and free merchandise distributed (i.e. doggie bag holders & bags, stickers, leaflets etc). If you wish to avail of some temporary dog fouling signs for installation in your estate, please contact the Environment Section (ref Colette). Also “responsible dog fouling” leaflets are available to distribute to all householders.

Please note that if a dog owner is witnessed and identified as committing a litter offence, please do not hesitate to contact the Environment Section on their freephone confidential hotline 1800 323230. Stray dogs should be reported to the Councils Dog Warden, Tristan Blundell, at [LaoisDogWarden@topmail.ie](mailto:LaoisDogWarden@topmail.ie) or 057-8734067.

***ANY OTHER BUSINESS***

Inspector Martin Harrington updated the Members in relation to aforementioned ongoing issue in relation to the parking of official vehicles outside the Courthouse at Main Street, Portlaoise. He advised that An Garda Síochána are currently working with the Courts Service to find a solution. It was noted that the Office of Public Works had surveyed the premises and have expressed a willingness to provide holding cells. In the interim an arrangement has been put in place, in co-operation with the Judge, whereby prisoners on remand are now first on the Court docket on Court days. He advised that Garda vans must be used at the Courthouse for health and safety purposes.

Mr. Charlie Flanagan T.D., requested again that all parties co-operate to ensure this issue is resolved to everyone’s satisfaction as soon a possible.

Chief Supt. John Scanlan reiterated his thanks to all local communities, particularly to community alert and neighbourhood watch groups for their assistance to An Garda Síochána in their work to combat and prevent crime in Co. Laois.

Cllr. James Daly thanked the members of the public who took part in the meeting.

The next meeting will take place in early 2013, a date and time to be agreed and forwarded to all members of the JPC.

This concluded the business of the meeting.

**Signed: Date:**

**Cllr. James Daly  
 Chairman**