**Minutes of Meeting of County Cavan Joint Policing Committee held in the Council Chamber, Cavan on 6th December 2019 at 3pm.**

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**Present:**

**Councillors:** Cllr Sarah O’ Reilly, Cllr John Paul Feeley, Cllr Clifford Kelly, Cllr Peter Mc Vitty, Cllr Paddy Mc Donald, Cllr Carmel Brady, Cllr Madeleine Argue, Cllr. Aiden Fitzpatrick, Cllr. Brendan Fay, Cllr. Criag Lovett, Cllr. Trevor Smith, Cllr. Patricia Walsh, Cllr. Philip Brady, Cllr. T.P. O’Reilly

**Executive**: Brendan Jennings, (Director of Services)

**Garda Officers**: Chief Superintendent John O’Reilly, Superintendent Gordon Englishby, Superintendent James Coen,

**Oireachtas Members:** Senator Joe O’Reilly, Deputy Niamh Smyth

**Apologies:** Cllr Shane P. O’Reilly, Deputy Brendan Smith, Senator Robbie Gallagher

**In Attendance:** Inspector Nial Mc Kiernan, Gráinne Boyle

Cllr. J.P. Feeley had been nominated as Chair and Cllr. P. Mc Vitty, Vice Chair, at a previous meeting of the JPC elected members.

**Welcome & Opening Remarks – JPC Chairperson**

Chair Cllr. Feeley welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked members for his re-nomination as JPC Chair. For the purpose of informing the new JPC members he went through matters which the JPC is unable to discuss at meetings, specially if it relates to:

* a criminal investigation or prosecution
* to the security of the State
* endanger the security of individuals or an individual
* Involves information received in confidence
* Would prejudice crime prevention/detection,

**Identify community based interests to be represented onto the JPC**

Cllr. Feeley explained that six community representatives are also to be invited to sit on the JPC. In doing this he referred to the following two documents which should be noted for consideration.

* Regard to relevant guidelines issued by the Minister for the Environment, Community & Local Government (these state that the PPN’s should be approached to seek community representation onto Local Authority Committees)
* Under the Department of Justice’s Migrant Integration Strategy “A Blueprint for the future”, Action 62, Local Authorities will take action to have migrant representation on all JPC’s (by 2020) The Migrant Integration Strategy has been developed as the Government's response to the challenge of promoting integration in a context of increased diversity. Department of Justice have been following up with JPCs to ensure this action is fully completed.

Chair Cllr. Feeley recommended advertising broadly to seek community nominations along with inviting the JPC to put forward community nominations. Once received the JPC Steering Committee will decide on the six community representatives to be nominated.

Referring to the JPC Guidelines Chair Cllr. Feeley said that the JPC’s needs to discuss and agree the main categories or most appropriate community-based organisations to be represented on the JPC. Community-based interests could include for example, farming community, Older People, Youth, Immigrant Communities, Business Community, geographical areas.

The following community-based interests were agreed:

* Disability Interests – proposed by Cllr. Kelly
* Youth Interests– possible projects Garda 365 / Bouncback, proposed, by Cllr. Walsh
* Older People Interests – proposed by Cllr. Feeley
* Business Interests – proposed by Cllr. Walsh
* Community Alert / Neighbourhood Watch – proposed by Cllr. Feeley. It was acknowledged that Muntir na Tire had representation on previous JPC’s and it would be good to see this continue as they have a good overview on developments in the area of community engagement.
* Immigrant Community Interests – proposed by Cllr. Fay
* Farming / Rural Community Interests – proposed by Cllr. O’Reilly
* Drugs & Alcohol – proposed by Cllr. O’Reilly

**Steering Committee – agree membership**

Cllr Feeley referred to the JPC guidelines and informed members that the JPC Steering Committee is to consist of the chairperson, a representative of An Garda Síochána and the Chief Executive or a person nominated by him.

He explained that the function of the steering group will be to facilitate the efficient functioning of the JPC and in particular to ensure that it retains a clear focus on strategic and collaborative actions. This was proposed by Cllr. Kelly and agreed unanimously.

**Approval sought for Community Groups Funding Applications for the Department of Justice’s Community Based CCTV Scheme**

Cllr. Feeley informed members that JPC approval is being sought to support funding applications for the Department of Justice’s Community Based CCTV Scheme for the following four community groups:

* Ballyjamesduff Community Council
* Ballyconnell Town & District Development Association
* Project Beltubet
* Ballinagh Community & Enterprise

He informed members that these groups had previously received letters of endorsement by Cavan County Council and the JPC but the Department of Justice has requested that these are re-submitted in light of the updating in legislation.

Cllr. Brendan Fay proposed this and Cllr. Sarah O’ Reilly seconded it.

Cllr. Mc Vitty stated that the CCTV monitors need to be placed within secure locations such as the garda stations if the scheme is to be successful. Cllr. Walsh agreed with this adding that garda stations are monitored 24 hrs, while council buildings for example are not.

Cllr Fay was happy to see Project Belturbet are in a position to submit their application and expressed his gratitude to Inspector Mc Kiernan for his assistance with the group in getting it to this stage. He acknowledged the issues around GDPR but said that the project is too valuable not to try and move forward with.

Chief Superintendent O’Reilly agreed with Cllr Fay’s comments in relation to moving applications forward. He believes a resolution is close at hand with the Local Authorities around the issue of data protection.

Chair Cllr. Feeley said that it is important the JPC continues to support these community group’s applications but realistically the projects cannot progress until the GDPR issue is fully resolved. There are other issues that community groups need to consider however beyond GDPR such as maintenance and operation of the cameras, he believes there is a large scale work load involved for groups who are applying to deliver these schemes within their communities.

Cllr. S. O’Reilly said that this issue had been put down as a motion for discussion at the next council meeting at which she hopes further clarification can be received.

B. Jennings stated that the Council wants to fully support community groups in making applications under the scheme but until some agreement is reached in relation to the GDPR concerns it is difficult to progress. He acknowledged Linda Mc Gavigan’s support in this area to date.

Chair Cllr. Feeley added to this by also acknowledging Inspector Kiernan’s support and Chair Cllr Feeley also wanted to acknowledge the work being carried out locally by community groups themselves.

It was proposed that a letter should be issued to the Department of Justice to convey Cavan JPC’s views on this issue.

**Crime Statistics for Quarter 3 2018 compared to Quarter 3 2019**

Crime figures were circulated to members. Cllr Kelly enquired if the statistics were confidential and Chief Superintendent O’Reilly replied that they are not as they do not identify anyone on an individual basis.

Chief Superintendent O’Reilly read through the figures.

Senator O’Reilly expressed his gratitude to the Gardaí for their work in this area pointing out that the number of assaults has fallen as well as drink driving for the Cavan Division.

In relation to the increase in numbers of people reporting domestic violence he suggested he asked if this is due to more people being willing to report it now than perhaps in the past. He suggested that the increase in the number of reports highlights the need for a domestic violence refuge centre to be available locally. He also welcomed elaboration from the Chief Superintendent in relation to the high levels in drug detections. Chief Superintendent O’Reilly agreed that more people are coming forward to report domestic violence as they feel more supported by the Gardaí to do so, once a report is made there are specific steps the Gardaí need to follow and they will return to the victim after seven days to check in with them. In relation to tackling drugs he said it is a constant battle, drug use has increased in rural areas, it’s not just an urban problem anymore. An increase in personal for the division will help tackle the problem as there will be more visibility on the ground as a result. He informed members that twenty four new probationary Gardaí have been recruited in the Cavan & Monaghan Division. Eight of these new recruits were assigned to Cavan and as a result of that, other Gardaí could be moved from Cavan to Ballyconnell and Ballingh. There has also been an increase in personnel in Bailieborough and Kingscourt. He said they are endeavouring to get back to the manpower they had in 2012/2013.

Chair Cllr. Feeley welcomed the news of the new recruits but said the case for additional Gardái still needs to be made.

Cllr. P. Brady enquired if people can be searched randomly for possession of drugs. Chief Superintendent O’Reilly replied that 27 searches were made in Cavan Town the previous week alone and under Section 23 Misuse of Drugs the Gardaí can search a person based on reasonable suspicion.

Cllr Fay enquired is there anything the elected members can do to support the Gardaí in the area of tackling drugs.

Chief Superintendent O’ Reilly suggested that that this could be further explored, he said that Sgt. Mick Kearney within the Cavan Drugs Unit provided a presentation at a previous meeting of the JPC, he could be asked to attend a future JPC meeting to provide an updated presentation. He said that if anyone has any concerns or suspicions, they should contact the Gardaí.

Deputy N. Smyth wanted to thank Superintendent English for attending a recent public meeting which took place in Bailieborough. She queried if the Cavan Drugs Unit is sufficiently staffed to tackle the large-scale cocaine problem facing the county. Chief Superintendent O’ Reilly replied that the Unit is supplemented by additional staff on a needs basis.

Cllr. C. Brady commended the Gardaí on the increased visibility of Gardaí due to the new Armed Response Unit in the Cavan Garda Station.

Cllr Lovett enquired if those charged with Drug Driving are investigated further once charged to see were their obtained their drugs, he suggested this would be an effective way of tackling the problem at source. Superintendent Coen replied that under the current legislation people are not obliged to provide this information, so it is not information they can easily obtain.

Cllr. Mc Vitty asked what the penalty for drug driving is and how often can the Gardaí search a premises. Chief Superintendent O’Reilly informed him that under Section 4 of the Roads Act, an offence of drug driving leads to disqualification from driving for up to a one year period. Drug driving and impaired driving can lead to disqualification for up to four years and a fine. In relation to carrying out searches he said they can carry out searches on any premises they wish but if this goes on on a continual basis they would need to serve a warrant.

Cllr. Kelly enquired if there is a garda confidential phone line. Chief Superintendent O’Reilly replied that there is and it is advertised widely through various methods including the side of their patrol cars.

Cllr. Walsh asked about whether individuals can be charged for obtaining obtaining drugs over the internet. Chief Superintendent replied that if the Gardaí can intersect a delivery before it is actually made, they can charge an individual. Cllr. Walsh suggested that this needs to be advertised more as there is often the perception that this is not possible. She also talked about the importance of Community Policing as a means of tackling the drugs issue, she believes that that building up a good rapport and trust with the local Gardaí makes it easier for people to come forward to report drug dealing. This is especially needed in urban areas with high levels of drug use. Superintendent Coen commented that he has been receiving some very positive feedback in relation to the Community Garda Seamus Herron who is based in Tullacmongan. However he believes that it the responsibility of every garda to build up a good rapport with the local community they are based in.

Cllr. Fitzpatrick commended the Gardaí on their work and said it is good to see crime figures mostly on the decrease. However he is saddened to see the issue of drug use still having a grip in County Cavan. He personally is seeing young people taking drugs brazenly in places such as schools and football matches. He stated the level of drug use amongst youths is only going to increase and he believes and it is up to communities to tackle this issue also not just the Gardaí. Chief Superintendent agreed but added it not just young people taking drugs, it is a widespread societal issue.

Chair Cllr. Feeley enquired about the proposed dedicated Arms Response Unit for County Cavan. He asked would there be many new recruits for the unit. Chief Superintendent O’Reilly informed members that a national advertisement went out two weeks previously for personnel for the unit, 250 – 300 applied for these posts. The interview process will get underway early in the new year. For those who are successful there will be an intensive 14 weeks training programme which they will need to go through, and he expects that the unit will be up and running by mid-2020. The unit will be staffed by five sergeants and twenty five Gardaí in total.

**In-Committee Session**

Chair Cllr Feeley proposed, as is provided for in the Department Circular and Standing Orders that the meeting go into committee to allow members the opportunity to express views on the on-going joint investigation between the PSNI and An Garda Siochána pertaining to incident in West Cavan/Fermanagh. This was agreed and those not members of the JPC were invited to leave the Chamber.

He advised members that as it was an on-going investigation and matters were before the Courts reference should not be made to individuals and comments should be general in nature. After a discussion the ordinary meeting resumed.

**AOB**

Cllr. S. O ’Reilly enquired if there were any further updates in relation to the Bailieborough Garda Station. Chief Superintendent replied that the OPW is currently managing this project however he reassured her that it is progressing.

Cllr. C. Brady asked if there was further news in relation to the Garda Dogs Unit. Chief Superintendent replied that it is looking like the unit will not be set up on a divisional basis but will serve the North West Region.

Cllr. Kelly enquired when the new arrangements in relation to the restructuring of An Garda Síochána Divisions will take place. Chief Superintendent O’Reilly informed him that he believes it will commence by February or March 2020. He expects that Cavan & Monaghan will be the last division to be changed but it is set to be amalgamated with Louth. He offered to provide a more informed presentation on what is proposed at the next JPC meeting.

Cllr. Kelly commented that it is a very bad decision to have the division’s headquarters so far away and hopes that re-consideration will be given. Cllr. Fay concurred with this and suggested a letter should be send to the commissioner in relation to this.

Chair Cllr. Feeley said that the Garda Commissioner is currently attending all JPC’s meeting around the country so this will offer the opportunity to do this. He said they will request that the commissioner attends a Cavan JPC meeting as soon as possible early in the new year as it is important that their views are made know.

In relation to the administration arrangements for JPC meetings, Chair Cllr Feeley asked if all members were happy for notifications and documentation is relation to meetings be e-mailed to members. All members concurred.

**Next Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting of the JPC will be arranged once a date is set to suit the Garda Commissioner.