**Minutes of Meeting of County Cavan Joint Policing Committee held on-line over Microsoft Teams, Cavan on 11th June 2021 at 3pm.**

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**Present:**

**Councillors:** Cllr Sarah O’ Reilly, Cllr John Paul Feeley, Cllr Paddy Mc Donald, Cllr Carmel Brady, Cllr Madeleine Argue, Cllr. Brendan Fay, Cllr. Trevor Smith, Cllr. Patricia Walsh, Cllr. T.P. O’Reilly, Cllr Shane P. O’ Reilly, Cllr Philip Brady

**Community Representatives:** Vanessa Clarke, John Magee, Stanley Nwaneri, Elizabeth Ormiston, Tony Mc Govern, Leanne Coyle

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

**Garda Officers**: Chief Superintendent Aiden Glacken, Superintendent Paudraic Jones, Superintendent Gordon Englishby

**Oireachtas Members:** Deputy Brendan Smith, Deputy Pauline Tully, Deputy Joe O’Reilly

**Apologies:** Deputy Niamh Smyth, Cllr. Aiden Fitzpatrick,

**In Attendance:** Inspector Nial Mc Kiernan (An Garda Síochána), Sgt Michael Duffy (An Garda Síochána), G. Boyle (CCC), Shelia Naughton (Northern Sound), Sean Mc Mahon (Anglo Celt)

Chair Cllr. J.P. Feeley welcomed everyone to the meeting. He reminded members that because the meeting is taking place on-line there will be no opportunity to go ‘in-committee’ and as always the case, no personal issues are to be raised for discussion.

Chair Cllr Feeley offered condolences to former Chief Superintendent J.O’ Reilly on the death of his wife and Deputy Niamh Smyth on the death of her uncle.

**Minutes & Matters Arising**

The minutes were proposed by Tony Mc Govern and seconded by Cllr. C. Brady.

**Crime Figures for County Cavan – YTD 2020 vs YTD 2021**

Chief Supt Glacken also wished to offer his condolences in line with Chair Cllr Feeley.

He talked through the crime statistics issued to members. Crime is down in general and the pandemic has had an impact on this. However he pointed out that there has been an increase in the figures in regards to the sale and supply of drugs with an increase of 38% recorded over the period. Domestic Violence has also been on the rise with a dramatic increase in the breach of court orders taken out by women against their partners. Five ‘coercive control’ cases are under investigation currently.

The newly established Community Engagement Unit is still in its infancy but will progress and grow over time. He asked all members to support An Garda Síochána in their efforts to do this.

Senator J. O’ Reilly said that the rise in breach of orders was very sad to hear but it was good to see that there are more coercive control cases coming under investigation. He welcomed the new Community Engagement Unit and congratulated the Garda on their recent successful operations in Stradone and Virginia.

Cllr. T.P. O’ Reilly also thanked the Garda for their very quick response in the Virginia incident and highlighted also the importance of the Senior Citizen’s Panic Buttons and the role it played in this situation. He wanted to pay tribute in particular to Garda Owen Flynn.

**Review of Community Text Alert Scheme within County Cavan**

* **Vanessa Clarke, Development Officer, Muntir na Tire**
* **Sergeant Michael Duffy, Crime Prevention Officer, Cavan County Council**

V. Clarke said that the District Meetings are taking place on line facilitated through Muntir na Tire. There will be a lot of work needed once the pandemic has finished to support Community Alert Groups in coming together again and re-energising. A large proportion of volunteers would be the older age grouping.

Muntir na Tire are currently focusing on putting together a document which will support community groups around data protection. They are also working on supporting groups to compile Vulnerable People’s Lists within their communities.

National Engagement Day is proposed to take place on the 11th October 2021, TBC.

Sgt. Duffy welcomed the setting up of the new Community Engagement Unit. Covid has led to a change of focus for An Garda Síochána and Community Policing is now more important than ever. He is hoping to see Community Alert Groups re-invigorated and new ones established with the support of the Community Engagement Unit.

Property Marking continues to be an area of focus which the Unit will also support in rolling out. They hosted a very successful Bicycle Marking Event in June with over 120 bicycles marked. Other areas the new Unit will have an impact on will be a higher visibility within the community with the new policing vehicles, increase use of social media and an increase in road safety activities.

The Text Alert System is under review. Community engagement under this is key, but information must be accurate and timely. Fundraising efforts has been greatly curtailed over the pandemic.

They are continuing to update the Garda’s Vulnerable Persons Register. The Gardaí have been linking in with those who are vulnerable over COVID, they will continue to develop this in conjunction with community groups. He empathised the importance of the Senior Alerts Panic Alarms and the new Community Engagement Unit will support in promoting these also.

Cllr B. Fay said that a lot of people have been asking about the Senior Alerts Panic Alarm. He asked if V. Clarke would contact him in relation to this. He would like to see more activity under Text Alert but acknowledged the impact the pandemic has had on this. He would like to see the Community Engagement Unit host a Property Marking Event within the Belturbet area.

T. Mc Govern also requested for the Community Engagement Unit to host a Property Marking Event within Swanlinbar also. He said they have an active What’s App group within their area around crime activity, he asked if the Gardai find this helpful or a hinderance. Sgt Duffy said the information would be useful however there has to be a way for the Gardaí to get information back out into the community, it should be a two way process.

**Deputy Brendan Smith – The urgent need for a comprehensive plan to deal with the scourge of illegal drugs in Cavan**

Deputy Smith first offered his condolences to J. O ’Reilly. He welcomed the Community Engagement Unit and acknowledged the great support provided through An Garda Síochána over COVID.

He stated that the sale and supply of illicit drugs is having a huge impact on families, individuals and the community at large. The State has to be ruthless in dealing with this issue. He paid tribute to Tim Murphy who set up the Cavan Drugs Awareness Project and who has now since moved on following its merger with Merchant Quay. He wished Zoe Wells who has taken over all the best in her new post. He stated all agencies and organisations need to have a serious focus on this issue and it will require an inter-agency approach to tackle.

He requested for Cavan Drugs Awareness to present to the JPC at their next meeting, along with Andy Ogle from the North Regional Drugs Task Force. These organisations are struggling to obtain the resources they need to carry out their work effectively. He said that the JPC needs to provide whatever support it can to them.

He wanted to acknowledge earlier comments in relation to the importance of getting information out to the public on the Senior Alerts Panic Alarms.

Cllr. Walsh also wanted to be associated with the sympathies. She seconded Deputy Smith’s request for the topic of Drugs & Alcohol to be focused on at the next JPC meeting.

Deputy Tully also offered condolences. She said drugs is a major problem within both urban and rural areas within the County. There is almost an acceptance towards them now. She also believes that alcohol abuse is just as an important issue to tackle. The National Drugs & Alcohol Strategy needs to be resourced and believes that Deputy Smith is well placed to push on this. Deprived areas in particular need extra support as individuals within these areas do not have the resources to help themselves. She also acknowledged the need for an inter-agency approach to tackling the issue.

Senator O’Reilly also agreed with the proposal for presentations from the drugs & alcohol organisations. Drug driving has become an endemic and he would like more information on how the Gardaí are tackling this. He suggested hosting a public meeting, perhaps twice a year, within the two garda divisions to focus on drugs & alcohol. The Gardaí have good connections with a wide variety of civic groups such as GAA, IFA, Trade Unions etc so are in a good position to obtain information from all these organisations. The timing is right for such activities to take place as it has become such a widespread issue that engagement would be easily obtained from the public. He agreed with Deputy Tully’s comments in relation to the need to focus on alcohol also.

Chief Supt Glacken agreed with all the comments received and would like to see presentations provided by the requested organisations at the next meeting. The new Community Engagement Unit will be working closely with the public on the issue of drugs & alcohol so this will provide a good opportunity for hear from them. He believes drugs & alcohol is a wider societal issue, everyone needs to be involved in tackling. He referred to a number of documents and developments taking place which will also support tackling the issue:

* Community Security & Community Safety Bill – will be coming out shortly
* Dept. of Justice Strategy – will present a consolidated approach between statutory and non-statutory organisations.
* National Drugs & Alcohol Strategy – ongoing implementation
* Anti-Intimidation Strategy is in place.
* An Garda Síochána’s Cavan & Monaghan Drugs Unit is established and fully operational

He said there has been a large increase in the number of Drug Driving detections and this can be down to the better equipment which the Gardaí have access to as well as the increase in usage of drugs amongst the general population.

He stated the drugs business is driven by greed. Silence needs to be broken and trust in the Gardaí needs to be had so that individuals feel confident coming forward.

**Correspondence**

Chair Cllr Feeley referred to the letter of response received from the Minister for Justice in relation to the Digital Recording Bill which all members had received. He said it will take some time for the bill to go through. He urged the Oireachtas Members to continue to highlight the importance of this issue.

**AOB**

Cllr B. Fay asked what the situation is on the four applications submitted under the Community CCTV Scheme. Inspector Mc Kiernan replied that Ballyjamesduff is still waiting to be called to present to the CCTV Advisory Committee, a meeting of this group is to take place in July following the current review which has been carried out on the scheme. The remaining three applications will follow this then also.

**Next Meeting**

The next JPC meeting will take place on the 3rd September at 3pm.