**Minutes of Meeting of County Cavan Joint Policing Committee held on-line over Microsoft Teams, Cavan on 26th March 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. Aiden Fitzpatrick, Cllr Philip Brady

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

**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

**In Attendance:** Inspector Nial Mc Kiernan (An Garda Síochána), Siobhan Mc Kenna (Tearmann Domestic Violence Services), Detective Sergeant Rose Mc Girl (An Garda Síochána’s Protective Services Unit), Gráinne Boyle (CCC), Eddie Butler (Norther Sound), Damian Mc Carney (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.

**Minutes & Matters Arising**

Chief Superintendent Glacken requested for the minutes of the previous meeting (4th December 2020) to be corrected to read that the crime figures under assaults do include Domestic Violence figures.

The minutes were proposed by Chief Superintendent Glacken and seconded by Vanessa Clarke.

**Crime Figures for County Cavan – Q1 2021 compared to Q1 2020.**

Chief Superintendent Glacken reported that crime figures are down generally due to COVID – 19 in the areas of assault, burglary, criminal damage and public order.

Changes to the garda roster enables Gardaí to be in frontline service which has also had an impact on the figures.

There had been a couple of recent significant drug seizures. There are concerns around the level of drug driving and the high figures under this category. An Garda Síochána are putting a lot of effort into this area.

They are working closely with the PSNI to address cross-border crime. There are joint operation activities taking place on an ongoing basis.

Chief Superintendent Glacken referred to the appreciation An Garda Síochána have for the general public for their co-operation and support over the COVID pandemic. They are currently expanding their Community Policing Service and are currently advertising for new full-time posts for County Cavan. Superintendent Jones said that this will be a very welcomed addition. Superintendent Englishby also welcomed this addition and availed of the public to engage with the newly appointed Community Gardaí once they are in place.

Chair Cllr. Feeley commended the Gardaí on their work over the pandemic to date and the news of the expansion of Community Policing personal. He asked if they will be additional personal.

Deputy B. Smith referred to the high number of Drug Driving Detections and said that it was alarming, he asked if the penalties imposed are adequate enough. In relation to cross-border activities and dealing with dissident groups, he enquired if a zero policy approach is needed and are their adequate resources to deal with these small groups.

Chief Superintendent Glacken replied that the Community Policing Personal are additional to their quota of existing personal. In response to Deputy Smiths questions, he responded that he believes due to the establishment of the Armed Unit, An Garda Síochána are in a good position to deal with dissident groups effectively. An Garda Síochána also have an excellent working relationships with their colleagues across the border to tackle this issue. In relation to the issue of drugs he believes that they are also better equipped to deal with this issue due to better legislation and technology. The main issue which needs to be addressed however in the perception by some members of the public that it is acceptable to purchase drugs and support this illegal activity. Intimidation is a big problem also. People need to trust An Garda Síochána by working and confiding with them so that they can deal with this issue within the community effectively.

Deputy O’ Reilly welcomed Chief Superintendent Glacken and Superintendent Jones to their new posts. He congratulated An Garda Síochána in their successful approach to the expansion in Community Policing. He was happy to see the reduction in crime figures in general but added that it was disturbing to see an increase in drug driving. He commended the Gardaí on the recent drug seizures and urged them to keep up the good work under this. He agreed with Chief Superintendent Glacken on the need to tackle the acceptance amongst some members of the public around drug taking. In relation to domestic violence he welcomed the recent introduction of the cohesive control legislation and asked if there are any cases under investigation within this division under this. He welcomed the expansion of Community Policing, adding that this has been the traditional model in Ireland and it works very well.

Cllr. P Walsh was happy to hear that An Garda Síochána are keen to address the issue around drugs and intimidation. She believed that the additional Community Gardaí will also be effective is addressing this issue as people will be able to build up a good rapport with these Gardaí making it easier to build trust.

Cllr. P. Mc Donald said that the Drugs Unit is doing great work to address the issue of drugs within the County. It is unfortunate to see the increase in drug driving however. He welcomed the increase in the community policing personal.

Chief Superintendent Glacken thanked members for their comments. He said that it is essential that the Gardaí receive the ongoing support and engagement of the public to effectively carry out their work. He responded to Senator O’ Reilly’s query informing him that three Cohesive Control investigations are underway.

Cllr. P. Brady welcomed both Chief Superintendent Glacken and Superintendent Jones to their new posts. He welcomed the expansion to Community Policing. In relation to Cavan Town he said that they do not see many Gardaí on foot patrols, he wondered if this was down to lack of Gardaí or an increase in paperwork. He said a lot of areas in Cavan Town do not have CCTV cameras and the Gardaí do not seem to patrol these areas and as a result they are hot spots for drug dealing and taking. He also enquired if it is necessary for new recruits to An Garda Síochána to take a drug test before being accepted into training in Templemore.

Cllr. Shane P. O’ Reilly welcomed the additional community policing personal, adding that there has been a big demand for this for a number of years now. He asked where the additional 8 personnel will be placed. He asked if An Garda Síochána had a deficit in Family Liaison Offers. He mentioned that members of Cavan Co Co recently passed a motion requesting that money which is obtained from CAB under seizures within the county be funnelled back in to support community & voluntary organisations operating within the county such as the Family & Support Agency and Cavan Drugs Awareness (now Merchants Quay). He concluded his comments by referring to some malicious damage to property which was carried out by young people within Ballyjamesduff. He said the community are extremally upset over this and the Gardaí may have to be vigilant around this.

Cllr B. Fay referred to the Garda Community Cars which were on patrol last year, he said that they were great in giving the community and in particular older adult’s peace of mind. He enquired if these cars will make a return. He also asked if there were any updates concerning the Community CCTV scheme.

Cllr A. Fitzpatrick said that the situation around drugs within the county is concerning, he thanked the Gardaí for their good work in tackling this as best they can. He said that the Drugs Task Force are hoping to open an office in Cootehill or Clones. He asked for the Oireachtas Members to support that funded in directed to support this development to take place in Cootehill as it is much needed.

Chief Superintendent Glacken responded to Cllr P. Brady’s question concerning the recruitment of garda personnel, he said that this takes place at the national level so he would not know if recruits are asked to take drug tests before entering training. In relation to the hotspots within Cavan Town for drug dealing he requested that any information know around these areas be shared with the Gardaí and they will act on it. Superintendent Jones commented that it is disappointing to hear that there hasn’t been a strong garda presence across Cavan Town as a specific effort was made to do this coming up to the Christmas period. He asked to be kept informed around any blackspots and he will ensure that they will be patrolled.

Chief Superintendent Glacken welcomed the motion passed by members of Cavan Co Co, he would very much welcome any additional resources available to tackle the issue of drugs within the county.

In follow up to the questions around the locations of the new community Gardaí he stated that 4 will be placed within the Cavan Division, 3 in the Bailieborough and one sergeant will supervise the work. Both the Protective Services Unit and the Armed Supports Unit are at full personnel levels. Superintendent Englishby said that the Community Guards will be placed in Mullagh/Ballyjamesduff, Bailieborough and Shercock/Kingscourt within the Bailieborough Division.

Chief Superintendent Glacken said that the Community Policing Cars will be continued, the previous cars were rentals but they have purchased new permanent cars now.

Superintendent Englishby informed members that he recently sent clarifications relating to the Ballyjamesduff CCTV application as requested by the Dept. of Justice and he hopes to see movement on this project now. Chair Cllr. Feeley asked had there been some decision made in relation to the Community CCTV Scheme as he believed the scheme was still on hold. Superintendent Englishby will seek further information before the next meeting.

Deputy Smith informed members that he raised a parliamentary question in the Dáil recently to the Minister of Justice concerning the current position of the Community CCTV Scheme. He was told that a review of the scheme is to take place in 2021, to be completed before the summer. This review will focus on how the Community CCTV scheme can be brought in line with new proposed legislation which is currently being drafted. This legislation will deal with all instances of overt use of recording devices by members of the Gardaí. This new legislation will provide clear criteria and standards for the use of recording devices, including CCTV, by An Garda Síochána.

Deputy Smith proposed that the JPC issue a letter to the Department requesting that the legislation be brough forward as soon as possible so that the review can be carried out as soon as possible. Cllr B. Fay thanked Deputy Smith and agreed that a letter be issued to the Department on this.

Cllr B. Fay asked if the Garda Confidential Help-Line could be changed to a local number as the current number provided is off-putting to locals, they believe they will not get through to a local garda to speak with if they call it.

**Domestic Violence Presentations –** **Detective Sergeant Rose Mc Girl, An Garda Síochána’s Cavan / Monaghan Protective Services Unit & Tearmann Domestic Violence Services – Siobhán Mc Kenna**

**Detective Sergeant Rose Mc Girl, Cavan/Monaghan Divisional Protective Services Unit**

Detective Sergeant Mc Girl thanked members for the opportunity to present to them.

Cavan/Monaghan DPSU was formally established on the 29th July 2020 and is based in two centres, Virginia, Co. Cavan & Clones, Co. Monaghan. DPSU Cavan Monaghan has one Inspector, Inspector Niall Mc Kiernan and each centre operates with one Detective Sergeant and five Detective Gardai.

DPSU has been set up to professionalise the standards of investigations into all sexual crime and serious Domestic incidents and is very much a victim centred unit with a focus on maintaining the following objectives

* To create the optimum environment for victims of sexual crime and Domestic coercive control to disclose their experience
* To ensure the delivery of a consistent Divisional response to the investigation of such crimes
* To ensure that vulnerable victims of crime are placed at the centre of the Garda Service
* Development and improvement of relationships with key strategic partners during the investigation of crimes, as well as the provision of support to victims

Detective Sergeant Mc Girl went on to provide information on:

* The Referrals Process to the service
* The type of investigations which are covered: - sexual, online child exploitation, child sexual abuse, historical sexual abuse, domestic violence
* Support provided through the service for the victim

**Tearmann Domestic Violence Services – Siobhán Mc Kenna**

Siobhán Mc Kenna thanked members for the opportunity to present to them.

Her presentation covered the following:

* The various types of domestic abuse
* How to recognise the signs of the various abuse
* Tactics used by perpetrators.
* The effects on women from living in abusive relationships
* The reasons women often stay in abusive relationships
* The current context of domestic abuse in Ireland today
* The introduction of Coercive Control Legislation
* The signs of Coercive Control
* Disclosure
* What research is saying

Chair Cllr Feeley thanked both presenters, commenting that they are both dealing with some very challenging issues which need to be dealt with carefully and sensitively. He enquired if there has been any movement towards the development of a Domestic Violence Refuge Centre for the region.

Deputy Smith complimented the presenters. It is an exceptionally difficult area to work in, he has linked in with Tearmann over the years and their support is always very appreciated. The lack of refuge accommodation in the Cavan and Monaghan counties is very concerning and he has been pushing this at the national level with the Minister for some time now.

Deputy Tully thanked both presenters for their work and support to vulnerable women. She believes that a multi-agency approach is needed to tackle the issue of domestic violence. She enquired if the recently advertised post for a support worker within Tearmann has been filled and if the worker will be covering Counties Cavan and Monaghan also. She echoed previous calls for the need for a Refugee Centre for the area.

Siobhán Mc Kenna responded that there is a review currently being conducted by the Dept. of Justice on the location and need for Refuge Centres nationally, nothing will happen until this review is completed. She replied that their new support worker will cover both Cavan and Monaghan. She informed members that Tearmann is currently merging with Safe Guarding Ireland and they will be managed through this organisation going forward. She is hopeful that this will be a positive move and will lead to access to better resources for them.

Detective Sergeant Mc Girl said that they welcome the assistance and support they receive through community projects, this is not an area the Gardaí can deal with on their own.

Vanessa Clarke informed members that on a wider basis, Muntir Na Tire are seeing a lot of abuse of the rise, including Elder Abuse. She is currently organising a webinar on this issue on the 29th April focusing on this issue.

Cllr. S. P O’Reilly supported previous call for a Refuge Centre and welcomed the establishment of the DPSU. He also wanted to raise the point that domestic violence also happens to men. He asked if Detective Sergeant Mc Girl and her staff have been offered all the relevant training needed for continuous professional development.

Cllr. T.P. O’Reilly complemented them both on their work. He also backed the call for a Refuge Centre.

Siobhán Mc Kenna replied that Tearmann have also supported men, although not officially. 300 people were supported last year, 10 of which were men. They would advise these men on men’s specific services they need to link in with.

Chief Superintendent Glacken complimented the presentations. He felt that any abuse in any form is not acceptable. He encouraged members of the public to come forward and report, silence only leads to further suffering. On a strategic level a multi-agency approach is needed to tackle this issue.

Detective Sergeant Mc Girl replied to Cllr. S. P. O’Reilly’s queries. She said that COVID has put a halt to their training but all the personal appointed to the DPSU have the necessary skills to carry out their roles. Training will recommence when possible. Staff do receive mandatory Psychological Supports.

**Next Meeting**

The JPC Steering Committee agreed the following JPC meetings dates for 2021:

* 11th June
* 3rd September
* 3rd December

All meetings will take place at 3pm.