

**Minutes of Meeting of County Cavan Joint Policing Committee – Council Chamber, Courthouse, Farnham Street, Cavan on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2022 at 3pm.**

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**Present:**

**Councillors:** Cllr. Carmel Brady, Cllr. John Paul Feeley (Chair), Cllr. Paddy Mc Donald, Cllr. Madeleine Argue, Cllr. Brendan Fay, Cllr. Clifford Kelly, Cllr. Patricia Walshe, Cllr. Peter Mc Vitty, Cllr. Philip Brady

**Community Representatives:** Stanley Nwaneri (New Communities), Elizabeth Ormiston (Farming / Rural Community Interests), John Magee (Youth Affairs), Tony Mc Govern (Farming / Rural Communities)

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

**Garda Officers:** Chief Superintendent Alan Mc Govern, Superintendent Gordon Englishby

**Oireachtas Members:** Senator Diarmuid Wilson, Deputy Pauline Tully, Deputy Brendan Smith,

**Apologies:** Deputy Niamh Smyth,

**In Attendance:** Deirdre Donnelly (CCC), Siobhán Sheils (CCC), Sergeant Karen Coughlan (An Garda Síochána), Inspector Ann-Marie Lardner (An Garda Síochána), Ciara Brady, Road Safety Promotion Officer – Road Safety Authority, Damien McCarney (Press).

Chair Cllr. Feeley opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He wished Deirdre Donnelly (CCC) all the best with her new role as administrator.

## **Minutes & Matters Arising**

The minutes were proposed by Cllr P. McVitty and seconded by Cllr C. Kelly.

### **Matters Arising**

Senator Diarmuid Wilson updated the meeting on the pending legislation in relation to vaping / e-cigarettes. He stated that the legislation was now at an advanced stage. The legislation will mean that vaping / e-cigarettes will be illegal for persons under the age of 18. There will be restrictions on the type of retailers allowed to sell them and also restrictions on advertising them near schools, on public transport, etc. Cllr. Carmel Brady thanked Senator Wilson for the update as she had raised the issue at the last meeting. She continued to say that schools are under immense pressure trying to control this issue and that it is great to hear about progress being made.

### **Presentation on ‘Road Safety’: Ciara Brady, Road Safety Promotion Officer – Road Safety Authority**

Ciara Brady gave a very informative presentation on road safety and the wide range of work carried out by the Road Safety Authority. Part of their work involves research, educational awareness, driving tests and licenses, road statistics, etc. Ms. Brady gave statistics in relation to road fatalities and information on trends. She stated that there have been 148 fatalities on Irish roads to date, which is an increase of 27 fatalities from the previous year. She explained how trends appear to be reverting back to pre-covid times. During covid restrictions the ‘most dangerous’ time on our roads was a Tuesday between 2pm and 10pm. Now that establishments have reopened and a sense of normality has returned, the ‘most dangerous’ time on our roads has reverted to a Friday between the hours of midnight and 4am. Ms. Brady highlighted that the Road Safety Authority aims to reduce road fatalities by 15% by 2024, by 50% by 2030 and have zero fatalities on our roads by 2050.

Chair Cllr. Feeley thanked Ms. Brady for such an informative presentation. He stated that he has noticed an increase in people out walking and cycling late in the evening with no high-visibility items on them. He went on to say that the more visible the better and the simple things could be most effective to help improve our safety.

Cllr. Peter Mc Vitty asked what the current position was on legislation in relation to e-scooters. He stated that they are becoming more and more popular, and he has witnessed people on e-scooters with no lights, no high visibility clothing, and even collecting children from school on them. He also stated that they are on the footpaths moving at a fast pace and that it's so dangerous for members of the public coming out of shops and walking along the streets.

Cllr. Peter Mc Vitty also raised the issue of speed limits on back roads set at 80km/hour and that this shouldn't be the case and that he would like to see some kind of review carried out.

Cllr. Philip Brady complimented Ciara on a great presentation. He said that he seen an article lately stating that Cavan and Monaghan are among the most dangerous counties in Ireland when it comes to road deaths per head of population. He went on to say that with less policing on our roads, accidents and fatalities could be on the rise, especially with the 'most dangerous' times returning to the hours between midnight and 4am.

Deputy Pauline Tully raised her concerns in relation to waiting times for driving tests and reports that she has received that tests are cancelled by the test centre at very short notice. She also stated that it is worrying that road fatalities are at 148 for 2022. She continued to say that there is a lot of intimidation on our roads at the moment, and that it's worrying to see that so many people are in such a rush while using our roads.

Cllr. Brendan Fay agreed with Cllr. Peter Mc Vitty's concerns in relation to the increasing use of e-scooters. He stated that there was an incident recently where a lady was hit by an e-scooter and that legislation needs to be introduced urgently. He agreed with what Chair had said in relation to some people refusing to wear high-visibility clothing while out in the dark evenings and asked

if there was any programme available that provided free safety wear. He continued to commend the Road Safety Authorities aim to reduce road fatalities to zero by 2050 and asked what strategy would be in place to help achieve this statistic. He also reiterated that he has witnessed a lot of people texting while driving and that there is not enough policing on our roads.

Ciara Brady from the Road Safety Authority stated that the National Driving License Service deals with the driving tests and the waiting lists, so she couldn't comment on that issue as it is not part of her role. She said that e-scooters were a matter for the gardaí. She stated that their Christmas campaign launched at the end of November and that it focuses primarily on Mandatory Intoxicant Testing i.e. detecting those who drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs. She stated that the issue raised in relation to speed limits on secondary roads is an issue for the Gardai and Cavan County Council. In relation to free high-visibility clothing, Ms. Brady said that such items can be ordered from the RSA website and are all free of charge. She did say that there are limitations to the stock levels and that if anyone was looking for a large supply to contact her directly. The Chair Cllr. Feeley asked Ms. Brady to find out about the waiting list for driving tests and revert with an update. Ms. Brady agreed that she would try and get information on this matter.

Chief Superintendent Alan Mc Govern reiterated the importance of high-visibility clothing while out on our roads at this time of year. He continued to say that awareness is very important and that they are continuing to raise awareness for the Christmas period with their 'Be Safe Be Seen' Campaign. He said that e-scooter legislation is under consideration at the moment and that there are concerns for young people using these as their mode of transport. He also stated that the Gardai are appealing to parents to not buy these for their children.

Chief Superintendent Alan Mc Govern referred to the queries in relation to policing numbers and stated that they have a pool of resources and that every member of An Garda Síochána is responsible for road safety. He said that the

Gardaí are appealing to the public and reminding them that it's the small changes that we make that help to save lives.

Cllr. Peter McVitty asked Ms Brady if the Road Safety Authority had fed into the legislation for e-scooters. Ms Brady stated that the research department within the Road Safety Authority would have been involved. Senator Diarmuid Wilson stated that legislation on the use of e-scooters was published in October of this year, and that it will be next year before it becomes law. He also said that there is a visible increase in the use of these scooter for school goers. Senator Wilson then made reference to electric bikes and stated that in his opinion they are even more dangerous than electric scooters. He said that some of them are as heavy as a motorbike and are being used on footpaths. He said that they also could do serious damage to pedestrians and that's it's in the interests of the general public that the legislation is brought in without delay.

Chief Superintendent Alan Mc Govern welcomed Inspector Ann Marie Lardner to the meeting and commended both Inspector Lardner and Sergeant Karen Coughlan who was also in attendance for their dedication to their roles.

### **Presentation on 'Community Engagement with Older People' - Inspector Ann Marie Lardner**

Inspector Ann Marie Lardner (An Garda Síochána) gave a presentation to the meeting on the work carried out by the Community Engagement Unit with Older People in the Community.

Inspector Lardner informed the meeting about the gift/information pack designed to assist people living alone, which was put together in conjunction with Age Friendly in Cavan County Council and Muintir na Tíre. An Garda Síochána are linking in with many of the Community Alert Groups who have come on board to assist. These packs will be delivered to those people in communities who may be living alone, and who are isolated with little to no visitors.

Inspector Lardner went on to mention other initiatives that are taking place, such as the delivery of Christmas cards and selection boxes to vulnerable children in our communities. Deliveries were made to the Holy Family School in Cootehill, including sensory toys for those who could not have selection boxes due to allergies, etc. Selection boxes were also donated by Supervalu and sent to Tearmann Domestic Violence Services Monaghan & Cavan. Mince pies were sent to some of the nursing homes and alternatives were also sent for those with special dietary needs. Inspector Lardner thanked the students at Cavan Institute for helping them with this project.

Inspector Lardner also referred to meals on wheels and community clinics that took place during the year. She stated that An Garda Síochána engaged with the IFA and held very successful property marking events at some of the marts in County Cavan during the summer.

Cllr. Brendan Fay thanked Inspector Lardner for her presentation and also for the great work of An Garda Síochána. He said that the Community Gardaí are making the vulnerable people feel more secure again and that he has received phone calls from older people complimenting the Gardaí on their efforts. He said that the presence of An Garda Síochána is felt and appreciated.

Chief Superintendent Alan Mc Govern acknowledged the support of those present in relation to these initiatives he asked that if people are being missed that An Garda Síochána are made aware of them.

Cllr. Patricia Walshe commended the Gardaí on their good work. She said that she knows all too well about the venerable people in communities, and that if one good thing came out of the pandemic, it's that people came together to help others. She also stated that she noticed that there is a change in people attitudes and that this is a result of the Gardaí going into houses and building a rapport with the people.

## **Crime statistics for County Cavan – Year to Date 2022 v Year to Date 2021**

Chief Superintendent Alan Mc Govern presented the Crime Statistics for the Year to Date 2022 versus Year to Date in 2021 and also included some pre-covid statistics from 2019 to compare the figures with pre-covid times.

Cllr. Paddy McDonald referred to the sale and supply of drugs in the county and the increase in driving while under the influence of drugs. He asked if the Drug Unit was halved or if there is any truth to this. He continued to state that there are more drugs in all communities in recent times.

Cllr. Clifford Kelly asked what the public order offence figures were prior to the pandemic.

John Magee (Youth Affairs) stated that criminal damage was unacceptable. He encountered a mother who was very upset as a grave had been vandalised. The grave belonged to a deceased member of An Garda Síochána and the opinion was that this was a targeted attack.

Cllr. Patricia Walshe asked if the Drugs Unit was still active. She expressed her concerns in relation to drugs in our towns and villages and stated that it is a serious problem.

Chief Superintendent Alan Mc Govern said that Cavan is no different to anywhere else, and that drugs are a big problem everywhere. He stated that they had applied for additional resources for this area and that drug use is the responsibility of all members of An Garda Síochána, not just armed support / plain clothes unit. He continued to say that Public Order offences had increased from this time last year, but that this was due to the lifting of Covid19 restrictions.

Cllr. Peter McVitty asked if there were any figures available on domestic violence cases. Superintendent Gordon Englishby said that the figures had reverted to pre pandemic rates and that the issue hadn't gone away. He said that An Garda Síochána have a very rigid callback policy when they receive reports of domestic violence.

Deputy Pauline Tully asked what the reasons were for the increase in shop thefts. She enquired if this was due to the difficulties in relation to the cost of living. Chief Superintendent Alan Mc Govern replied that the reasons were varied but that it was mainly alcohol and personal items that were being stolen.

### **Road Collision & LA16 Statistics**

Director of Services, Brendan Jennings, stated that there was one fatality on the Cavan Road in Bailieborough since the JPC had last met. A pedestrian was knocked down and later passed away from their injuries. Chair Cllr. Feeley offered his condolences on behalf of the JPC to the family involved.

Chief Superintendent Mc Govern reported the following road collision statistics for 2022. There were 5 fatal collisions, 22 serious injuries compared to 20 in the same period in 2021, 62 non serious injuries (79 for same period in 2021) and 703 material damages (560 for same period in 2021).

### **AOB**

Chair Cllr. Feeley asked the meeting if there were any issues to be discussed under A.O.B.

Elizabeth Ormiston (Farming / Rural Community Interests) made an appeal for dog owners to control their animals at all times. She stated that there are approximately 1000 flocks of sheep in the county and that people are out walking their dogs and don't have them under control. She also stated that she lost a charolais heifer due to a dog attack some time ago. Chair Cllr. Feeley stated that unfortunately the behaviours of dogs were in the new headlines the last couple of days.

Cllr. Paddy McDonald enquired if there were any further updates in relation to Bailieborough Garda Station. Superintendent Gordon Englishby told the meeting that the back of the building was now at road level and that a lot of



work was carried out prior to this below ground level. Chief Superintendent Alan Mc Govern stated that the station is due for completion in December 2023 and that the town needs it. He stated that there are no major problems that they can foresee and that hopefully the proposed completion date can be achieved.

Chief Superintendent Alan Mc Govern proceeded to thank Cavan County Council for the recent Civic Reception to mark 100 years of An Garda Síochána. The Commissioner asked him to pass on his appreciation for the Civic Reception also.

Cllr. Brendan Fay asked if there was any update in relation to the CCTV Scheme. Superintendent Gordon Englishby informed the meeting there is ongoing work taking place between An Garda Síochána and the CCTV Advisory Committee. He stated that when the GDPR issues are resolved that An Garda Síochána and Cavan County Council will have talks to reach an agreement. Cllr. Brendan Fay asked about a timeline for same, Superintendent Gordon Englishby said that he would find out and provide an update at the next meeting.

Cllr. Peter McVitty enquired about the legislation in relation to large dogs in public areas. Chief Superintendent Alan Mc Govern stated that the Control of Dogs Act provided legislation for the control of certain breeds of dogs. He said that this area was dealt with by the Dog Warden in the Local Authority and that perhaps it could be beneficial to have a presentation on this matter.

Cllr. Carmel Brady stated that there was a reduction of Garda presence in Cootehill and that the effects were starting to show. Superintendent Gordon Englishby acknowledged the struggles within our communities and Chief Superintendent McGovern explained that additional resources have been sought.

Cllr. Philip Brady stated that he heard reports of members of the Gardaí were leaving the force and gaining employment elsewhere. He also made reference to some not graduating from Tullamore and leaving before they had completed

the training. He asked if something could be done to attract people to the Gardaí and perhaps reduce the paperwork and in turn help increase the force. Chief Superintendent Alan Mc Govern stated that this was an excellent point and continued to explain that people have more choices these days. He stated that in time all members of the Gardaí will have devices to allow them to check Pulse rather than having to go back to the station, which will increase efficiencies and the increase in digitisation will also increase the potential to become paperless. He confirmed that retention is an issue at the moment for the force and that this is something that is being looked at.

Deputy Pauline Tully told the meeting that there is a house in Kilnaleck that used to be home to a member of An Garda Síochána years ago. She said that it was recently renovated but that it is still vacant. She recommended that given the current housing crisis, that this property should be used to house members of the force or utilised in some way rather than having it vacant. Chief Superintendent Alan Mc Govern agreed that this was an excellent point and that the Office of Public Works (OPW) were exploring options for this building. He also made reference to policing numbers in Cootehill and said that they are looking at putting more of a presence in towns.

Tony Mc Govern (Farming / Rural Communities) enquired if the OPW intended to sell the Garda Station building in Swanlinbar. Chief Superintendent Alan Mc Govern said that he wasn't aware of this but that he would enquire further.

### **Meeting Schedule for 2023**

**The Chair informed those present that the meeting schedule for 2023 would be as follows**

- 3<sup>rd</sup> March
- 2<sup>nd</sup> June
- 1<sup>st</sup> September

- 1<sup>st</sup> December

All meetings above will take place at 3pm in the Council Chamber.

The JPC Public Meeting will take place on Monday the 16<sup>th</sup> of January 2023 in the Townhall Cavan

Chair Cllr. Feeley concluded the meeting by wishing Cllr. Paddy McDonald a belated happy birthday.