

## COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

### Minutes of the County Galway Joint Policing Committee Meeting held on Monday 4th September 2023 in Áras an Chontae

#### I LÁTHAIR:

**Council Members:** Cllr. Jim Cuddy (Cathaoirleach)  
Cllr. Liam Carroll  
Cllr. Michael Moegie Maher  
Cllr. Andrew Reddington  
Cllr. Declan Geraghty  
Cllr. Peter Roche  
Cllr. James Charity  
Cllr. Shelley Herterich Quinn

**An Garda Síochána:** Chief Supt. Gerard Roche  
Supt. Paudie O'Shea  
Supt. Finbarr Philpott  
D/Supt. Shane Cummins  
Insp. John Conway  
HEO Olivia Maher  
Sgt. Michael Walsh  
Sgt. Sinead Heaney  
EO Joanne Dillon

**Community Reps:** Mr. Aodán Mac Donncha  
Mr. Gerard Costello  
Ms. Aileen Heverin

**Oireachtas Members:** Deputy Catherine Connolly

**Oifigigh:** Mr. Kieran Coyne (Attending on behalf of Alan Farrell, A/ Director of Services)  
Ms. Úna Ní Eidhin, Meetings Administrator

**Other Officials:** Ms. Elizabeth Hoffman, Corporate Services

**Apologies** Deputy Seán Canney, Oireachtas  
Cllr. Mary Hoade  
Cllr. Gerry King  
Cllr. Joe Byrne  
Cllr. Karey McHugh Farag  
Comh. Pádraig Mac an Iomaire  
Mr. Gerard Larkin  
Mr. Martin Ward

## **Item No. 1 – Adoption of Minutes of the Galway County JPC Meeting held on the 19<sup>th</sup> June 2023**

On the proposal of Cllr. Michael Moegie Maher and seconded by Cllr. Liam O Carroll, it was agreed that the Minutes of the County Galway JPC Meeting held on the 19<sup>th</sup> June 2023 in the Council Chamber, be adopted.

### **Matters arising:**

Cllr. Declan Geraghty raised the issue of the decrease in the number of Gardaí. He asked the advice of the committee as to what steps could be taken to improve the overall numbers of An Garda Síochána and suggest that a letter might be sent to the Minister for Justice if the committee thought it was worthwhile. He informed the committee that the Garda car in the Dunmore area had finally been replaced, after the previous vehicle was off the road following an accident. However he stated that the car was only replaced with one pre-owned car, not two as was expected.

Chief Superintendent Roche responded that most are aware of the difficulties in recruiting new staff but informed the Committee that another unit will be coming on line on the 6<sup>th</sup> November. He stated that this will help relieve the pressure on the current units to do overtime. He commented that the new policing model has changed how resources are distributed, that it is more centralized. Chief Supt. Roche went on to also explain that it is difficult to acquire Garda vehicles, as they breakdown a lot due to the milage the cars cover and being in operation 24 hours a day.

Cllr. Shelly Herterich Quinn raised the topic of extending the cutoff age for entry to An Garda Síochána, to allow older members of the public to apply, stating that the country obviously does not have the resources needed to police properly. She also queried if the resources were being allocated correctly or if this needed to be reviewed.

Cathaoirleach. Jim Cuddy pointed out that if they increased the entry age to 50 years, that recruits could retire again 10 years later. He also highlighted the issue that training recruits only receive €185 a week, which is not enough to live off given our current economic climate.

Chief Supt. Roche responded that he has not received any official information in relation to increasing the age limit for new recruits. He said that they are looking at all avenues and alternatives to attract new recruits, as well as looking at the current UK model which includes rehiring retired staff with a lot of experience, to occupy admin roles, thereby releasing staff to patrol the streets. He pointed out that most entry level jobs are a lower pay and that there will always be a turnover, as a career in An Garda Síochána is not for everyone and that they have to assign resources where they believe they are needed.

Deputy Catherine Connolly queried if there was any update on the staffing of the Connemara stations and whether there was any interaction between the An Garda Síochána and Galway County Council in relation to the housing situation for Gardaí there.

Chief Supt. Roche responded that resources are very stretched and that it was important to get the right people into the right area. He commented that a number of people with Irish language skills are on temporary assignment in the control room and that once others are trained to take their place, that he hopes to move them out to Conamara. He continued that there is an Irish Language Strategy group working with the HR department in relation to housing for staff in Connemara.

Cathaoirleach Cuddy stated that the number of personnel is down overall and that is needed to be addressed to try and get the numbers up again.

Cllr. Liam Carroll suggested that more mature officers would make fantastic community Gardaí, as they have a lot of experience dealing with the community via local clubs etc. He also expressed the belief that joining An Garda Síochána is a vocation and that very few people become a Garda for the money.

Cllr. Peter Roche stated that a lot of Gardaí wish to come back to Galway or to relocate here, however that there is a chronic problem trying to get transfers.

Chief Supt. Roche explained that the transfer process can take up to 5 years and that even then, staff might not be transferred to the area that they had hoped for. He confirmed that staff need to reapply every 2 years.

Cllr. Declan Geraghty thanked the Chief Supt. for his honesty in explaining the difficulties retaining recruits but pointed out that most employers are also facing problems in relation to recruitment and retention of staff and suggested that An Garda Síochána might need to look at changing the job specs to entice employees to stay.

## **Item no. 2: Report from An Garda Síochána**

Senior Analyst HEO Olivia Maher presented the Garda Statistics Report (circulated to the full committee prior to the meeting).

### **Questions/Observations from the Committee**

Cllr. Reddington raised a concern in relation to the increase in lurching and trespassing on farmland. He said that farmers have now taken to sleeping with their guns in their bedrooms and that Gardaí need to take the matter seriously.

Cllr. Peter Roche echoed Cllr. Reddington's concern in relation to lurching and pointed out that it was important to differentiate between people who are hunting and lurching/trespassing. On a separate topic, he stated that the biggest issue at every meeting was drugs and congratulated the Gardaí on their recent success in Drug seizures and arrests around the county.

Chief Supt. Roche addressed the issue of lurching and trespassing and informed the committee that they had met with the IFA to discuss the growing problem. He pointed out that they are confined by the law, that trespassing is a civil row but not a criminal offence. No arrests can be made unless it can be proven that the trespasser showed cruelty to animals, used threatening behaviour, committed assault or damaged property.

Sgt. Michael Walsh stated that An Garda Síochána have a large amount of work done to address the concern and fears of landowners and to inform them how they can protect their land. Safety is key. With this in mind, they have also worked with the IFA to produce a leaflet about Safety First for landowners. He also referred to other mechanisms such as property marking.

Chief Supt. Roche reiterated the importance of Community Alert and Neighbourhood Watch coming into the shorter days and asked that anyone with concerns to contact him or Joanne Dillion in the Community Liaison and Coordination Office at [GA.Communityliaison@garda.ie](mailto:GA.Communityliaison@garda.ie) He addressed the statistics on the Misuse of Drugs and Related Crime and said that excellent resources had been put into this section which has yielded great results, due to improved methods of testing and more stops.

Cathaoirleach Cuddy stated that the figures show the effectiveness of the local drugs squads.

Cllr. Liam Carroll offered his condolences to the families and friends of those who lost their lives in traffic collisions. He commented that it was imperative that the war against drugs continue.

Cllr. Michael Moegie Maher congratulated the Gardaí on all they have done so far to fight the drug war. He said that it was so important to get the message out to young people that if and when they are caught with drugs, it will affect them, for example they will not get a J1 visa and cannot travel the world with a drugs conviction.

Cllr. Shelley Herterich Quinn referred to road fatalities and suggested that more engagement was needed on the ground. She mentioned that the previous practice, where Galway County Council staff, including the area engineers, met with the Gardaí to discuss black spots following fatal collisions, should be reintroduced. Chief Supt. Roche pointed out that few of the fatalities this year could have been prevented by better policing or roads and that unfortunately nearly all were a result of poor driving behaviour and that pedestrian behaviour is also becoming a major issue.

Cllr. James Charity stated that the use of Heroin is at epidemic levels in certain areas of the city and that there is a fear that it will spread to the county. He also queried what the cause was for the increased level in drug driving and wondered if it was mostly illegal drugs or prescription drugs? He concluded by referring to the rise in burglaries again following Covid.

Chief Supt. Roche confirmed that Cocaine was the number one drug found as a result of drug driving testing, with cannabis in second place. He also stated that heroin was indeed spreading. In relation to the increase in burglaries, D/Supt Shane Cummins referring to the travelling gangs and that new multiagency operations were set up throughout the summer.

Cllr. Roche referred back to the issue of trespassing and proposed that we write to the Minister for Justice seeking a review of the law pertaining to trespassing, to be able to arrest someone when they are on your land. The proposal was seconded by Cllr. Reddington.

Cllr. Geraghty welcomed Supt. Finbarr Philpott to his new role in Ballinasloe. He also referred to the Community Alert Groups, how important they are and stressed the point that they should be supported and funded accordingly.

### **Item no. 3: Updates for Subcommittees**

#### **An update from the Waste Management and Enforcement Subcommittee was presented by Cllr. Michael Moegie Maher – Illegal Dumping and Littering**

Cllr. Maher thanked Ann Dolan and her team for all their work to date. He confirmed that over 300 inspections carried out so far this year and that we have begun issuing fines to non-compliers. He also confirmed that the Waste Enforcement Unit had multiple cases going through the courts during July and August, with a €2000 being imposed in one case and €500 in another. He also referred to new anti-dumping initiatives for 2023, the Litter Management Plan 2023 – 2025 adopted by Galway County Council with effect from 26th July 2023 and informed the committee that a lot more work is going on behind the scenes.

Cllr. Maher also informed the committee that there was unfortunately no update in relation to the use of CCTV to combat illegal dumping and that without it, illegal dumping would continue throughout the county. He asked again for Oireachtas Members to highlight and push this issue.

Cllr. Carroll raised the issue of Road Safety, encouraging all road users to wear high visibility clothing. He stated that e-scooters were becoming an increasing problem as they can travel up to 25 mph and are being used on all roads and pavements while often weaving in and out of traffic with no consideration for their own safety or that of other road users.

#### **Item no. 4: Regulation of Unlicensed Outdoor Events in the context of the role of An Garda Síochána in responding to ‘pop-up’ events.**

Sgt. John Conway gave a brief overview of regulations in relation to pop-up events and explained to the committee that a license is required for attendances exceeding 5000 people.

Chief Supt. Roche explained that various rules and regulations were brought in via the JPCs in relation to unlicensed events and that this could be looked at for County Galway. Lack of

insurance, traffic regulation, etc seem to be the biggest issues. He commented that there are gaps there and that there are some things An Garda Síochána cannot do. He stated that it is important for the event organisers to follow the rules to avoid unnecessary difficulties or even injury to the public. He also pointed out that for every 1000 people at a public event, there must be a Garda on duty, the cost of which is covered by the organiser. He concluded that it is Galway County Council who informs the Gardaí of any upcoming public events.

**Item no. 5: Regulation/Policing of Public Parks and Open Spaces**

Cathaoirleach Cuddy explained that the topic of Regulation/Policing of Public Parks and Open Spaces was raised at the June Plenary meeting earlier this year, with an indication that in the absence of bye-laws regulating parks and open spaces, An Garda Síochána were not in a position to regulator behaviour in these areas. There was a proposal for Galway County Council to develop bye-laws and it was agreed to bring this to the JPC committee in the first instance, to consider with An Garda Síochána to inform the approach to developing bye-laws if deemed necessary.

Chief Supt. Roche confirmed that he believes that Bye-laws should be drafted, similar to what other local authorities have in place. He stated that An Garda Síochána will be more than happy to advise as required and that the Council may send a draft them for review and input in relation to same if they wish.

**Item no. 6: Agree Dates for 2024 meetings**

The following dates for 2024 meetings of the JPC were proposed and agreed at the meeting:

**12<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

**29<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

**8<sup>th</sup> July 2024**

**30<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

**18<sup>th</sup> November 2024 (Annual Public Meeting in MD)**

**Item no. 7: AOB:**

Cllr. Reddington queried if the two extra Gardaí stationed in Headford could have their contracts extended. Chief Supt. Roche stated that the situation there was due for review but that the hefty cost of the overtime, which had allowed them to remain there, is unsustainable.

Cllr. Cuddy asked the committee to readdress the issue of attending the JPC meetings remotely. Cllrs. Reddington, Roche and Geraghty stated that in person meetings were preferable. It was agreed to continue to hold the meetings in person only.

Cathaoirleach Cuddy concluded the meeting.  
Chríochnaigh Cathaoirleach Cuddy an cruinniú ansin.

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