

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

Minutes of the Galway County Joint Policing Committee Meeting held on Monday 9th May 2022 via MS Teams

I LÁTHAIR:

Council Members: Cllr. Jim Cuddy (Cathaoirleach)
Cllr. Mary Hoade
Cllr. Karey McHugh Farag
Cllr. Andrew Reddington
Cllr. Liam Carroll
Cllr. Gerry King
An Comh. Dáithí Ó Cualáin
An Comh. Padraig Mac an Iomaire
Cllr. Peter Roche
Cllr. James Charity

An Garda Síochána: Superintendent Damien Ó Flannagáin
Inspector Declan Rocke
Inspector Brian Ryan
Sgt. Sinead Cunniffe

Community Reps: Mr. Aodán Mac Donncha

Oifigigh: Mr. Michael Owens, Director of Service
Ms. Úna Ní Eidhin, Meetings Administrator

Other Officials: Ms. Noreen Moughty, Corporate Services
Ms. Ann Dolan, Environment Section

Apologies: Cllr. Michael Maher
Cllr. Joe Byrne
Cllr. Shelley Herterich-Quinn
Deputy Catherine Connolly

Item No. 1 – Minutes of the JPC Meeting held on the 7th February 2022

On the proposal of An Comh. Ó Cualáin and seconded by Cllr. Carroll, it was agreed that the Minutes of the Meeting held on the 7th February 2022 be adopted.

Matters arising:

Staffing levels in An Cheathrú Rua and the reduction of same was raised by An Comh. Ó Cualáin. He stated that it is a serious matter that needs to be addressed urgently, as that Gardaí based in Salthill are responding to calls which causes delays and that it is clearly

evident that the current policing plan isn't working. An Comh. Ó Cualáin proposed that an invite be issued to the Garda Commissioner again, to attend the next meeting of the Galway County JPC and this was seconded by Cllr. Hoade. Cathaoirleach Cuddy confirmed that an invite had already been sent prior to Covid and that this could be reissued.

In response to an Comh. Ó Cualáin, Superintendent Ó Flannagáin advised that staffing levels were a matter for the Chief Superintendent to reply to. However he stated that he could confirm that the Chief is actively looking for man power for the area and that Irish is a requirement.

Inspector Ryan advised that if the garda on duty in the area have an existing operational commitment then Gardai will be sent from Salthill but that the garda presence in An Cheathrú Rua, Ros Muc, Leitir Móir is 24/7. Hopeful that additional resources will be deployed - no date on this as of yet but some movement.

An Comh. Ó Cualáin welcomed these comments. He stated, however, that it was worrying that Gardaí were being assigned from other areas and that there are huge areas to cover. He also noted that it is a health and safety issue for Gardaí as well.

Cllr. Reddington thanked Cathaoirleach Cuddy who attended a meeting in Headford in relation to policing. He also thanked Gardaí for organising the event and Sergeant Michael Walsh in particular for information about how to protect your home, etc. He praised the Gardaí for often answering calls in their personal time and stated that the Gardaí in Headford need to be supported. He welcomed the fact that community alerts are up and running again, as we all have a job to do to support the Gardaí. Cllr. Reddington also supported the invite to be issued to the Garda Commissioner to attend the next meeting.

Cllr. Hoade wished to be associated with the acknowledgement and expression of appreciation and she stated that Gardaí are doing what they can within the resources available to them. Cllr. Hoade raised a query regarding the Irish language requirement - what process is in place? Are guards being transferred from other parts of the country?

Cllr. Hoade also raised a concern regarding rural break-ins, stating that the public are in fear. She noted that the community alerts are very important, given the limited resources available to the Gardai but that we do need extra resources.

Cllr. Karey McHugh-Farag expressed her support for an Comh. Ó Cualáin, stating that the Irish language is highly important and asked if Gardai were to move out to the Gaeltacht areas, would resources be available to them to upskill in relation to the Irish language?

Superintendent Ó Flannagáin confirmed that they are bound by the Official Languages Act and legislation and that there is a policy in an Garda Síochána as well to improve Irish and that he believes that it is improving all the time.

Cllr. Roche agrees with what has been said and wished to thank the Gardaí. He stated, however, that he believes that break-ins are still going to occur no matter what resources are available and that no policing method is going to tackle the issue fully. He stated that in his opinion that a lot of it is drug related activities. He also referred to community alerts and how they have the community mobilised.

Superintendent Ó Flannagáin thanked Cllr. Roche for his input and stated that the Gardaí always need the public.

Cllr. Charity disagreed with Cllr. Roche and stated that the idea that the increase in rural burglaries is related to drug related activities doesn't sit right with him. He went on to state that some of the break-ins seem to be of a professional nature, that they are not crimes of opportunity but organized crimes. Garda stations are being closed down, Corr an Dola in particular. Garda resources are stretched, and the resources aren't there to keep it open. Loughgeorge is not open constantly. What are the policing arrangements there now?

In response to Cllr. Charity, Superintendent Ó Flannagáin stated that the burglars tend to target bigger commercial premises and that things can be done to prevent the opportunist burglar. In relation to Loughgeorge, the Superintendent stated that there are 3 Gardaí there, that it was never a 24/7 station and that it won't be. He stated that they are doing their best and trying to keep improving but that the Gardaí cannot be everywhere all the time.

Cllr. Reddington expressed that he believes that there is a business case for more Gardaí in rural areas. Superintendent Ó Flannagáin confirmed that he would bring this to the Chief Superintendent for his attention.

Item no. 2. Report from an Garda Síochána

Superintendent Ó Flannagáin read out the Garda Report (circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting).

Cllr. K McHugh-Farag raised the issue of online fraud and the number of false pages that are being set up, particularly smaller community pages. The Superintendent responded stating that online fraud is nothing new, that it has always been an issue and to warn people to be vigilant.

Cllr. Carroll thanked Gardaí for their report and referred to the speeding statistics as very worrying, as they have risen drastically. He stated that he was surprised there hadn't been more accidents due to the speed of some motorcycles. He requested clarity as to the number of motorcyclists detected speeding? Superintendent Ó Flannagáin confirmed that the speeding figures are higher as they are conducting more checkpoints. In relation to the motorcyclists figures, he confirmed that this breakdown isn't available, as it is not just motorcyclists. Every road user needs to be careful, especially coming up to the summer months.

Cllr. Reddington queried what time period the statistic in relation to cocaine related to? He stated that there are a lot of issues out there with cocaine, particularly amongst young people and that we really need to start using the Planet Youth model. Superintendent Ó Flannagáin confirmed that the cocaine figure given is from January to March. He also asked that the Councillors tell people to come to them for support. He confirmed that as of next week, four extra people will be assigned to the drugs unit.

An Comh Ó Cualáin queried was Salthill Garda station not deemed a Gaeltacht garda station in the past? In relation to the report, he stated that it was clearly evident from the report that the focus is on roads policing units. In relation to Cocaine, he referred to a quote that was overheard that Galway City and County were snowing with cocaine. He raised the question have we adequate resources in relation to this issue? Superintendent Ó Flannagáin advised that Salthill is a breacghaeltacht and that the Gardaí in the station don't need to be fluent. In relation to be cocaine concern, he again asked any people who have worries to come to the Gardaí.

Cllr. Roche stated that most urban centers have an increase in population. He asked what drives the gardaí resources - is it population or land mass? Superintendent Ó Flannagáin responded stating that it is both population and land mass.

Cllr. King asked if there are any figures included in the report in relation to texting and mobile phone usage and accidents? Are they recorded? The Superintendent confirmed that a breakdown isn't available. He stated that it is something that is looked into for fatal road traffic accidents but that it is not something that they keep figures on.

An Comh. Ó Cualáin queried if there would be statistics in relation to fixed charged penalty notices? Superintendent Ó Flannagáin stated that the original query was to do with traffic accidents.

Item no. 3: Reports for Subcommittees

Litter report – Presented by Cllr. Hoade

There has been a substantial increase in the level of enforcement carried out in the second half of 2021 and the first quarter of 2022. This has come about as additional resources have been assigned to enforcement which has been funded by the Dept

There has been an increase in the number of warning letters and notices issues in Q1 2022 compared with Q1 2021. In Q1 2022, some fines were issued following household waste presentation by-law inspections. These are the first fines to be issued under these bylaws and came about as a result of a house-to-house campaign started in Q4 2021 in Ballinasloe. Additional inspections were carried out in Tuam and it is hoped to start inspections in Loughrea in the next quarter and in the other towns in the county during the rest of the year.

In addition, in Q1 2022, a number of fines were issued under the waste collection permit regulations. There has been an increase in the number of prosecutions initiated in Q1 2022. All of this shows that the waste enforcement unit is detecting more illegal activity and taking the appropriate enforcement action to deal with the issues arising.

The enforcement team is building relationships with the Gardaí and a number of checkpoints have been carried out as a collaborative approach. It is hoped to continue this throughout the year. Cllr. Hoade confirmed that she had met with Garda Mick Walsh.

In terms of the Circular Economy, Waste Management (Amendment) and Minerals Development (Amendment) Bill 2022 was published on Friday the 29th of April and the second stage was scheduled for this week in the Oireachtas. There is no date set for Committee stage yet.

The Circular Economy bill will make provision for the use by Local Authorities of closed-circuit television and mobile recording devices in certain circumstances and for that purpose amend the Waste Management Act 1996 and the Litter Pollution Act 1997.

Education and Awareness Subcommittee report presented by Cllr. Gerry King

A copy of the report was circulated to the committee prior to the meeting.

Cllr. King stressed that there was a need for more campaigning, especially on no texting and driving – arrive alive.

Cyber fraud crime - gardaí have really responded as best they can but use of internet for fraud is getting easier and easier - can do crash courses online to learn how to commit fraud.

Item no. 4: A.O.B

An Comh Ó Cualáin asked if there was any date for when An Spidéal Garda station is going to be built? Superintendent Ó Flannagáin advised that he cannot answer this yet but that a sergeant and two Gardaí would be going into the Unit. Inspt Ryan stated that he spoke with the OPW and that works are due to start in An Spidéal during the summer and that gardaí will be based in Indreabhán in the interim.

An Comh Ó Cualáin also queried in relation to the number of vehicles that were provided during covid 19 on lease and what will happen going forward? The response from Superintendent Ó Flannagáin was that the vehicles are their vehicles and that are not going back. There are issues with finance but so far, vehicles are being held.

Cllr. Roche complimented the reports given. In relation to the Data commissioner, he asked when will the CCTV systems that were in place, be mobilised again? Has the data commission moved on this and if we have a Deadline to be operational to give clearance to GCC to obtain footage?

An Comh. Mac An Iomaire expressed his delight to hear about the CCTV systems as well but he queried when exactly is this going to happen? Cllr. Hoade stated that the Bill is going through the stages of the Dáil/Seanad at the moment, that she didn't have a date yet but that the process had started. She advised that we would have a further update at the next meeting. Cllr. Roche proposed that we write to the Justice Minister on behalf of this forum to ask what can be done to expedite this and to ensure this happens in an effective manner. This was seconded by Comh. Mac an Iomaire.

Comh. Mac An Iomaire also stated that he concurs with an Comh. Ó Cualáin in relation to the need for more Gardaí. He stated that there was 6 Gardaí in An Cheathrú Rua a number of years ago and that those numbers have now reduced.

On a separate matter, Comh. Mac an Iomaire asked if we are allowed to overtake cyclist on a continuous white line? Superintendent Ó Flannagáin confirmed that you can only overtake if you do not cross the continuous white line and pass safely.

Cllr. Charity raised the issue of the burning of the stretch of land by the N84 and asked where does the responsibility lie with the investigation? He informed the committee that a huge amount of waste is being discarded there as well - incidents of illegal dumping – and that there needs to be a renewed focus on this stretch of road. In his response, Superintendent Ó Flannagáin confirmed that the fires are being investigated and that they are asking the public for any information that they may have.

Cllr. Roche expressed his thanks to an Garda Síochána on how they assisted with the funeral of Kate Moran and supported the community. Superintendent Ó Flannagáin stated that it was an honour to assist at the funeral.

Cllr. McHugh-Farag sought clarification on requests from gardaí in relation to transfer process. However Superintendent Ó Flannagáin informed that it could not be discussed at this forum.

Cllr. Roche asked for the next meeting to be held in the chamber. Cathaoirleach Cuddy hopes that this will be the case, all going well covid related, and that it would be a good opportunity if the Garda Commissioner agreed to attend as well.

The next meeting is due to be held on the 5th September 2022.

Chríochnaigh an cruinniú ansin.