

COMHAIRLE CHONTE NA GAILLIMHE

**Minutes of the Galway County Joint Policing Committee Meeting held in Áras an Chontae,
Prospect Hill, Galway on Monday, 14th September 2020 via MS Teams**

I LATHAIR:

Council Members: Cllr. Jim Cuddy (Cathaoirleach)
Cllr. Mary Hoade
Cllr. Michael Maher
Cllr. James Charity
Cllr. Joe Byrne
Cllr. Andrew Reddington
Cllr. Shelley Herterich-Quinn
Cllr. Liam Carroll
Comh. Dáithí O Cualáin
Cllr. Gerry King
Comh. Pádraig Mac an Iomaire
Cllr. Karey McHugh Farag
Cllr. Colm Keaveney
Cllr. PJ Murphy

Deputies: Deputy Anne Rabbitte
Deputy Catherine Connolly

An Garda Síochána: Chief Supt. Thomás Curley
Insp. Georgina Lohan
Insp. Declan Rocke
Insp. Peter Conlon
Sgt. Mick Walsh
Sgt. Sinead Cunniffe

Community Reps: Mr. Aodán MacDonncha
Mr. Martin Ward
Mr. Pat Flanagan
Mr. Gerard Costello
Mr. Thomas Madden

Oifigigh: Mr. Alan Farrell, A/Director of Service
Ms. Marian Donohue, Meetings Administrator, Corporate Services.

Other Officials: Ms. Una Ní Eighin, Corporate Services.
Ms. Noreen Moughty, Corporate Services.

Apologies: Cllr. Peter Roche
Mr. Gerard Larkin
Deputy Noel Grealish
Ms. Aileen Heverin

Cllr. Cuddy welcomed all to the Virtual Meeting.

Item No. 1 – Minutes of the JPC Meeting held on 15th June 2020:

On the proposal of Cllr. Maher, seconded by Cllr. Hoade, it was agreed the Minutes of Meeting held on 15th June 2020 be adopted.

Matters arising from the Minutes:

In reply to Comh. Ó’Cualain, Chief Supt. Curley explained that he was actively seeking staff with required level of Irish for the Garda stations at Leitir Mór and Recess. He said these stations were currently being covered by personnel from An Cheathrú Rua. He outlined a business case had been made to the Garda HQ HR Department, under the new Garda Division Operational Model, for additional Garda Inspectors and it would be the intention that an Inspector would be appointed for the An Cheathrú Rua area.

Cllr. King expressed concern that there was no Superintendent in the Clifden area.

Item No. 2 – Update from the Galway County Council Sub Committees

Education & Awareness Sub Committee

Deputising for Deputy Anne Rabbitte, Chair of the Education & Awareness Sub Committee, Cllr. Shelley Herterich-Quinn outlined to the meeting, an update on the Education and Awareness initiatives, which included, social media Road Safety messages:

‘Drinking & Driving’ and ‘Don’t Drive and Drive’ – Messages which were promoted during the summer months as people were on holidays.

A ‘Back to School’ road safety message was promoted where the Sub-Committee reminded motorists, cyclists and children to take extra care on Galway roads as schools returned. Cllr. Herterich-Quinn said the aim of this message was to remind the public that traffic would increase, buses would be picking up / leaving off children, children would be walking and cycling to and from schools, and parents would be driving their children to school before heading to work. She said the advice given was to ‘SLOW DOWN’ when travelling near a school as it is never more important for drivers to slow down and pay attention than when children are on the roads and to always expect the unexpected.

Cllr. Herterich-Quinn thanked Deirdre Caulfield, facilitator of the Sub Committee (Galway County Council), and Sgt. Ryan and the members of the Sub Committee for their participation and assistance to achieve the Sub Committee’s goals.

Illegal Dumping & Litter Awareness and Crime Prevention & Personal Safety Sub Committee

The Chair of the Illegal Dumping & Litter Awareness and Crime Prevention & Personal Safety Sub Committee, Cllr. Michael Maher, updated the meeting on the Sub Committees work and concerns.

Cllr. Maher expressed frustration that CCTV footage could not be used to prosecute illegal dumpers. He explained that members of the Sub Committee met with the DOS Environment Section and A/DOS Corporate Services to relay their concerns. He clarified the Council was awaiting a report from the Data Protection Commissioners office on the implications for GDPR on the use of CCTV footage. He said the Sub Committee was requesting an amendment to the Litter Pollution Act 1997 so as to insert provisions providing a specific lawful basis for the use of recording devices in the prevention, detection and enforcement of litter regulations.

Cllr. Herterich Quinn concurred and advised that funding was available to community groups by the Department of Justice and Equality for community based CCTV but the method to apply was prohibitive and the local authority was not in a position to support these schemes.

Mr. Ward said it was disappointing that the use of evidence gathered from CCTV footage was GDPR prohibitive and said fines should also be levered to fit the crime.

Cllr. Byrne concurred and suggested Household Waste Prevention Byelaws be adopted and households who are not complying be dealt with in accordance with legislation.

Cllr. Hoade said during the COVID 19 pandemic, there had been problems with dumping at bottle banks and the non-use of CCTV footage was hampering the Councils work.

Cllr. Charity suggested that perhaps the concern with the Data Controller regarding CCTV footage had arisen where the footage was being used for a purpose other than what the initial purpose the CCTV was set up.

In response, Mr. Farrell concurred that CCTV was an important tool and the Council was eager to use CCTV footage but it was a complex situation.

He explained that the Council was awaiting a report from the Data Protection Commissioners office on the implications for GDPR on the use of CCTV footage by the local authority. He said the Council had a clear desire to use CCTV as a tool to tackle illegal dumping but said current legislation does not enable the use of CCTV footage in respect of illegal dumping. In reply to Cllr Keaveney, Mr. Farrell said that this issue was being examined by local authorities and other bodies at a national level and further guidance was awaited.

Mr. Farrell explained to the Meeting that there were two types of CCTV systems; the Gardaí (State) CCTV maintained by the Gardaí and the community based CCTV operated by the local authority, where the local authority was the Data Controller. He explained that the introduction of community CCTV was onerous where careful consideration was needed regarding the Data Controller role, the resources required (financial and human), and the requirement to be compliant with legislation.

In reply to Deputy Rabbitte, Mr. Farrell explained that each Local Authority had been audited and while some local authorities had received their audit findings, Galway County Council was still awaiting their audit findings report.

Cllr. Cuddy said CCTV was a necessary tool for the detection and deterrent of illegal dumping and said amendment to the relevant litter Acts should be sought so the evidence can be used in court proceedings.

In reply to Cllr. McHugh, Mr. Farrell said that Section 55 Dereliction Notices were still being served by the Environment Section.

Item No. 3 – Report from An Garda Síochána:

Chief Supt. Thomás Curley outlined the Garda Report for the period 1st January 2019 to 31st August 2020, in comparison to the 2019 year. Chief Supt. Curley advised that while crime across the county and city was down, Galway Gardaí had never been as busy since the start of the Covid pandemic.

In response to Cllr. Charity, Chief Supt Curley advised that complaints had been received about the difficulty in accessing the Garda Station on the 091-538001 and 091-538002 phone numbers. He explained that under the new Garda Division Operational Model rollout, the Galway Division would be in a position to have one unique phone number for a number of 24 hour stations. He explained that all '999' calls for the North-West Division were answered at the Galway HQ at Murrough and the call answering times were closely monitored.

In reply to Cllr. McHugh and Herterich-Quinn, Chief Supt. Curley acknowledged that there had been several dog thefts in Galway but explained it was not as significant as other areas. He explained that 7-8 dog thefts were reported in Galway but numerous calls were made by persons reporting 'marks on walls' without actual thefts taking place. In reply to Cllr. Charity, Chief Supt. Curley said that Gardaí deal with all investigations, there was not one Garda member dealing with theft of dogs. He said the Gardaí were aware of these crimes and the Galway Garda Division worked very closely with other Garda Divisions and with National Officers to put in place operations to counteract this type of crime.

Cllr. Herterich-Quinn expressed concern regarding burglaries in the Athenry area, especially coming into the winter months. In reply, Chief Supt. Curley said the Garda statistics showed while burglaries increased in the first three months of the 2020, there was a % decrease in the last six months. He said the Crime Prevention Officer was currently examining alternative ways, due to Covid19, to get the message out to the public, in co-operation with Community Alert/Neighbourhood Watch Groups, to be vigilant during the winter months.

Chief Supt. Curley expressed disappointment to hear of a noted decreased Garda presence in the Athenry area. He advised that during the pandemic, the Garda roster was reduced from five units to four units which allowed for an additional 20% Garda presence on the ground. He explained there was also an extra eight Garda cars within the Division and said whilst staff had to take annual leave, Regional resources provide cover if any gaps arose in an area.

Cllr. Reddington thanked an Garda Síochána for the extra policing on the N84. Cllr. Hoade concurred and said elderly people living on that stretch of road were living in fear with the ongoing issue of drivers driving with speed and 'doing donuts' on that stretch of road. In reply, Chief Supt. Curley said the Roads Policing Unit would investigate any reported incidents and deploy extra patrols if needed.

Cllr. Herterich-Quinn expressed concern re the response rate in relation to domestic violence. Chief Supt. Curley advised that domestic violence calls were given priority and he would examine the concerns raised.

Mr. Ward referred to the Palace Grounds Park and expressed concern with the amount of people that were using the Park for underage drinking and drug use. He suggested the implementation of a closing time for the Palace Grounds to aim to curb anti-social behavior. He suggested the Tuam Area Elected members request a Bye-law be introduced that would close off the Park from 10pm in winter and 11.30pm in summer months. In reply, Chief Supt. Curley said that he was made aware of anti-social behavior in the Palace Grounds and confirmed that Garda patrols within the area had increased. He suggested that continuing anti-social behaviour should be reported to the local Inspector and it would be further examined. Cllr. Keaveney expressed concern re the enforcement of the suggested Bye-Law and said caution was required as the Park was a legal pedestrian right-of-way.

In reply to Mr. MacDonncha, Chief Supt. Curley advised speed vans were not operated by An Garda Síochána but an independent company who decide on the timeframe and location of the speed vans.

Cllr. Keaveney raised the issue of cyber-crime. Chief Supt. Curley advised that a national recruitment competition had recently been held for the appointment of 1 Detective Sergeant and 4 Detective Gardaí to head up the new specialised Regional Cyber Crime Unit in the

Galway Division. The setting up of this Unit was welcomed by the JPC members with Cllr. Keaveney commending the Gardaí on their commitment to prevent hidden personal crime commercial crime and bullying and said it would go some way to protect young people who are suffering poor mental health due to crimes connected with the use of technology and social media.

Chief Supt. Curley advised that Galway Gardaí responded to some 600 house-party related incidents from the period 1st July to 8th September 2020. He explained this placed a huge drain on Garda resources and with Galway's Covid numbers rising in recent weeks, he said there was an onus on everyone, including public representatives, to use their influence to 'Engage, Educate, and Encourage' people on COVID Government Health Guidance. He said everyone needed to be on board and be careful, with the Garda Síochána using as a last resort the 'Enforcement' option.

Members of the Galway County JPC Committee expressed the exemplary role undertaken by An Garda Síochána throughout the Coronavirus crisis to protect lives. They acknowledged the increased presence on the ground and the manner they undertook their role in these challenging times.

Mr. Farrell thanked the work of An Garda Síochána, the PPN, local authority staff, community reps and all community and voluntary groups throughout the county who provided assistance through the COVID response. He said this was a critical piece of work and could not be achieved without the co-operation of all parties and showed the strong community ethos within the County, where the coordinated community response enabled all voluntary statutory agencies to collaborate in support of communities and particularly in support of the most vulnerable members across the County.

Item No. 4 – Any Other Business - Correspondence

Ms. Donohue outlined to the meeting the correspondence received which included:

- Correspondence received by Cllr. D. Cualáin from the Chief Officer, Community Healthcare West, Merlin Park, Galway dated 29th July 2020 which stated that there were no plans to reopen the Addiction Treatment Centre at Merlin and the development of a network of community-based addiction services would be considered a higher priority.

Cllr. D. Cualáin said he would follow up on this reply as he said an Alcohol and Drug Addiction Treatment Centre was vital in Galway.

- Reply from Environment Section in response to question raised at 15.06.20 JPC Meeting – Clarification on figure of 1221 complaints registered on the Environmental Complaints Database for Year 2019.

- Correspondence from the Policing Authority with regard to engagement with Joint Policing Committees on priorities for policing. Ms. Donohue advised that closing date for completion of the exercise was 25th September 2020.

Next Meeting: 2nd November 2020 – Venue / Meeting type to be determined.

The Chair, Cllr. Cuddy informed that meeting that the next Meeting was due to be the public meeting but Government Guidance was awaited with regard to COVID restrictions in relation to indoor gatherings and notification would issue in due course re this meeting.

CRIOCHNAIGH AN CRUINIÚ ANSIN.

Signed: _____

Cathaoirleach County Galway Joint Policing Committee

Date: _____