

## **Joint Policing Committee**

### **Minutes of Meeting**

**11.00 a.m., July 2nd, 2021 (Held Online).**

**Present:** Cllr. Al McDonnell, Cllr. Michael Kilcoyne, Cllr. Neil Cruise, Cllr. Gerry Coyle; Cllr. Michael Loftus, Cllr. Michael Burke, Cllr. Christy Hyland, Cllr. Damien Ryan, Cllr. Mark Duffy, Deputy Rose Conway Walsh TD, Alan Dillon TD, Deputy Dara Calleary, Ms. Edith Geraghty MTSG, Mr Keelan Moran, PPN; Mr Kevin Kelly, Chief Executive, Mayo County Council, Acting Chief Superintendent Joe Doherty, Superintendent Joe McKenna,

**In attendance:** Superintendent Thomas Calvey, Superintendent Gabriel Moran, Superintendent Paudie O'Shea, Deirdre Finnerty, Maura Murphy, Michael Galvin.

#### **1. Welcome**

Cllr. Al McDonnell opened the meeting and welcomed everyone present. He warmly welcomed Kevin Kelly, the new Chief Executive of Mayo County Council to his first JPC meeting and he wished Chief Superintendent Tony Healy well in his retirement and wanted to acknowledge all the great work Tony did for the betterment of the County of Mayo and his professionalism and experience would be a great loss to the people of Mayo. He wished him and his family good health and happiness in his retirement.

Everybody present wished to be associated with these remarks.

#### **2. Minutes of Previous Meeting and matters arising**

**Proposed:** Cllr. Damian Ryan      **Seconded:** Cllr. Ger Deere

In proposing the minutes of the meeting Cllr. Ryan wanted to extend a vote of gratitude to Chief Superintendent Tony Healy on his retirement from the force and said his contribution in tackling Drugs Crime in Mayo was a massive success and he hopes it will continue into the future.

#### **3. Matters arising.**

Cllr. Kilcoyne referred to the correspondence that issued from the Housing Department about new Anti-social Behaviour Strategy, he questioned how many submissions had been received and what stage is that draft at (This also covers Question 3 the Advanced Questions section).

Cllr. Cruise supported Cllr. Kilcoyne in his request. He also emphasized importance of citizens reporting any issue's / problem that cause concern for the public to the Gardai first. It was highlighted by Cllr. Kilcoyne that an estate in Castlebar that has had numerous reports of ASB but yet has not had an ASBO issued.

Cllr. Hyland asked when orders are served and at what stage do they end up in Court.

The issue of 999 calls was raised by Cllr. Burke and recent reports of calls not being answered.



#### 4. Reports from An Garda Síochána

Superintendent Joe McKenna updated the meeting on crime figures in the Mayo Division. With the exception of drug crime most crime figures had reduced from last year. However, there has been a very large increase in smishing and phishing crime both locally and nationally; Supt. McKenna strongly advised that people should not engage with unsolicited texts or emails.

The value of drug seizures in Mayo to date amounted to €713K and cash to the value of €68k being seized. Operation Tara was launched nationally yesterday (1<sup>st</sup> July 2021). The aim of the programme is tackling drug dealers and to dismantle and disrupt their business. Cocaine has now overtaken cannabis as the number one drug in usage terms. There has been an increase in drug detections in Co Mayo thanks to the cooperation of everybody.

In relation to anti-social behaviour there have been 101 anti-social behavior orders issued in the last five years. An Anti-social Behaviour Order (ASBO) is issued under Section 114 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006. It is in place for three months, failure to comply can lead to a fine or court hearing

Supt. McKenna also addressed earlier query regarding the recent controversy surrounding the handling of 999 calls. It was reported by Supt. McKenna that there were eleven cases in Mayo; all of which have since been contacted by AGS.

Figures to date:-

<b>Crime</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>Change</b>
Burglary	39	Down 4
Minor Assault	108	Down 7
Theft	100	Down 5
Theft from Shops	108	Up 9
Theft from Cars	24	Down 7
Public Order offences	234	Down 39
Criminal Damage	161	Down 16
Drugs for sale or supply	52	Up 18%
Drugs -Simple	138	Up 6%
Sexual crime- Rape	11	Up 6
Sexual crime – Assault	28	Up 9

Superintendent Thomas Calvey gave an update on the road traffic figures.

887 speeding offences  
 429 for using a mobile phone when driving  
 38 for not wearing a seat belt  
 65 careless driving  
 58 drunken driving

Supt. Calvey also reported that AGS have been engaged in boy/girl racer operations twice a month with the Road Safety Authority, with a view to look exclusively at “boy-racers”. AGS also engage with the customs and excise and Noel Gibbons, Road Safety Officer, Mayo County Council about road safety education. In recent operations targeting boy/ girl racers the following were detected:-



- 7 Speeding Offences including one of 174 KMPH
- 11 Using mobile phone while driving
- 2 with no insurance
- 2 Drink Driving
- 2 False Drivers Licenses
- 8 Cars were seized.
- 13 fines for “boy-racers” with passengers

There have been 3 fatal Road Traffic accidents, 34 non serious RTA's and 317 with moderate damage to date. A total of 1144 Check Points have been carried out in that time.

### **Policing Reports**

Superintendent Paudie O'Shea reported that there has been two road fatalities in the Castlebar Area, AGS have been engaging with all Secondary Schools in conjunction with Noel Gibbons, Road Safety Officer, MCC.

Crime figures are down overall.

Westport has had an influx of tourists since the lifting of restrictions and there has been very good cooperation with the business sector and the Vintners Association.

Anti-social Behavior - there have been three anti-social behavior orders issued in the Castlebar Area and two in the Westport area. AGS have re-engaged with the Residents Associations that had lost contact due to COVID. AGS anticipate by re-engaging it will get more people reconnecting which will empower and strengthen communities and send out message to the minority that anti-social behavior will not be tolerated.

Superintendent Gabriel Moran reported to meeting that anti-social behavior was a problem in Ballinrobe, Claremorris, Swinford and Charlestown and several adult warning notices have been issued. The problem with the legislation is that witnesses are required, and evidence is needed to get a criminal prosecution.

There has been an increase in public order offences from 30 up to 52; prosecutions and detections have also increased; property crime figures are also increasing particularly shoplifting due to the reopening of the economy, however, detection rate is also increasing. Drugs crime has also increased. There has been one fatal road traffic accident. AGS are also working on the ongoing issue of boy/girl racers in conjunction with Local Policing Unit.

Acting Chief Superintendent Joe Doherty reported for the Ballina/Belmullet area. There have been 2,321 coastal watch patrols over the last 12 months, 150 patrols per month approx., 115 fixed charge penalty notices issued for breaking COVID guidelines, e.g. movement of people outside zones. 661 people have been listed on the vulnerable persons map, 4% are considered “high risk” and require more regular visits from Gardaí and AGS are continuing with the “message in a bottle” initiative.

A new initiative has been introduced in the Bangor Erris area; some essential phone numbers are put on mugs; these mugs are being distributed to 1200 houses in the area.

AGS are also continuing their work in conjunction with the Litter Warden and the Dog Warden from Mayo County Council. AGS with MCC are taking a zero-tolerance approach to illegal parking in disabled parking spaces. Property crime is down 9% and criminal damage is up 17%, drug searches have increased by 53%. Currently 14 Gardaí are being trained up as First Responders in conjunction with the HSE.



The Chair thanked the members of AGS for their reports and thanked former Chief Superintendent Tony Healy for all his work and wished him well in his retirement, all speakers wished to be associated with these remarks.

The following queries and issues were then raised:-

Cllr. Ger Deere congratulated AGS on their successes in fighting drug crime and complemented the work of the Community Police and Garda Mick Tolan in particular. Cllr. Deere raised concerns about CCTV in towns and whether they are working. Cllr. Deere requested a report on same for next JPC meeting. He also expressed concern around e-scooters, they are popular but dangerous, and is there any legislation in place around their use?

Cllr. Damien Ryan welcomed Operation Tara congratulated AGS on their success and said the drug crime should be the number one priority. Boy/girl racers are a major road safety issue and it is all about enforcement and education.

Cllr. Michael Loftus said a two-year extension was requested for Chief Superintendent Tony Healy to continue but the Commissioner did not agree to it and this was a retrograde step for Mayo as he had been doing an excellent job.

Deputy Rose Conway Walsh, TD said the four Mayo TDs had campaigned to try and get the retirement age increased to 65 but the Commissioner did not see it as being useful. When will the new Chief Superintendent be appointed in the amalgamated new division?

Cllr. Mark Duffy said phishing and smishing were issues we all face and wanted to know could AGS do something with mobile phone operators to blacklist and monitor the numbers used. On Illegal dumping he complimented the Mayo County Council little warden and welcomed the work being done in collaboration with AGS and the communities.

Cllr. Christy Hyland said he wished to withdraw his advanced question regarding the use of alcohol outdoors and could deal with his advanced question regarding drugs now. He wanted to draw attention to illegal parking causing obstruction in places like Old Head beach and called for more Garda patrols of these areas. While he welcomed the new Garda station in Westport, he expressed disappointment at Westport and Belmullet not having a Superintendent. He raised questions around the new pilot programme of "Smarter Policing" what the strength of the Garda numbers in Mayo now and how many was there in Mayo before the pilot scheme was introduced.

He pointed out that CCTV is a vital assistance to AGS, and it should be ensured that all cameras are working.

Cllr. Michael Burke complimented AGS on the drug crime fight in South Mayo and said there should be a zero-tolerance policy in relation to drug crime.

Cllr. Michael Kilcoyne complained about high level of anti-social behavior in communities, his question was how many Anti-social Behavior orders have been issued in Mayo. He pointed out that in some cases CCTV footage was unable to show images due to cameras being blocked by trees.



Keelan Moran asked what the statistics on domestic abuse incidents were during the COVID lockdown. Mr. Moran also highlighted that the new 60 kilometers per hour speed limits along the N 5 construction sites are being totally ignored and asked for increased monitoring of these stretches of roads.

Deputy Rose Conway Walsh TD agreed that her advanced question regarding boy / girl racers could be taken at this point. All initiatives that may save lives would be welcomed regarding the ongoing issue of boy /girl racers.

Deputy Walsh also made comment on retirement age within AGS, it was disgraceful our justice system is in breach of the retirement law forcing Gardai to retire at 60. It makes no sense and it is an inequality within and an inequality where some can stay but others are not. A case of inequality could be taken against the state.

Regarding the issue of Domestic Violence calls – Deputy Walsh asked if all calls answered and dealt with properly in Mayo and are all callers being treated with confidentiality and professionalism?

Cllr. Neil Cruise thanked AGS for installing a new Sergeant in Foxford Garda Station and congratulated them all their initiatives especially in trying to combat speeding.

Deputy Dara Calleary agreed with Cllr. Michael Burke that there should be zero tolerance in relation to drug crimes and he supports Cllr. Damien Ryan's call to revisit the community alert systems. Ballyhaunis has huge concerns about the lack of visibility of Gardai in the town.

Cllr. Gerry Coyle said anybody caught using or dealing in drugs should be immediately disqualified from driving for life. There should be some flexibility around the issue of young drivers not being accompanied as they are waiting on a very long list for a driving test.

Acting Chief Superintendent Joe Doherty replied that there were 511 domestic violence incident cases in 2019, 583 in 2020, and 301 so far to date in 2021. These incidents are dealt with daily and 90% of complainants get a call back within seven days.

CCTV is a huge asset to AGS as it reduces public order incidents and it is mainly cost neutral as most defendants pleaded guilty. CCTV needs to be addressed nationally with a streamline approach to funding, access and maintenance.

There will be a new Chief Superintendent appointed to the Mayo \ Roscommon\ Longford region on the 9<sup>th</sup> July.

On the question of staffing numbers, he will have to revert with an answer after he contacts the HR department.

He will liaise with the Road Policing unit regarding the speeding near the N 5 construction sites, and the parking issues mentioned.

Interaction with the schools is very important to AGS there are currently involved with the National Youth awards scheme.

In dealing with anti-social behavior AGS are taking a multi-agency approach.

Superintendent Tom Calvey reported that scooters are covered under the 1961 Road Traffic Act and guidelines regarding their use and permitted speeds are currently being issued; MPV's are not covered by either driver license or insurance requirements at present.

Cllr. Michael Kilcoyne proposed that figures regarding anti-social behavior be included in the AGS report at each JPC in the future and this was seconded by Cllr. Gerry Coyle.

## **5. Establishing of Sub-Committees**

This item was deferred.

**Proposed:** Cllr. Michael Kilcoyne      **Seconded:** Cllr. Michael Loftus / Gerry Coyle

## **6. New Community Safety partnership**

Cllr. Michael Loftus said that the new community safety partnership would bring about changes to the structure of the JPC.

Superintendent Gabriel Moran stated the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland was a proposal put to the Department of Justice not by the Gardaí or the Commissioner. It's new role is to update the functions of the JPC; Supt. Moran asked members of the Oireachtas to discuss it with the Department of Justice.

Deputy Dara Calleary replied they were working with the Department of Justice to get more information and proposed we defer this item and regather and have another meeting before the end of July to discuss it. This was seconded by Cllr. Michael Kilcoyne.

Cllr. Michael Loftus said page 45 of the document on the Future of Policing in Ireland referred to the JPC and members should read this report before the next meeting.

Cllr. Al McDonnell said we should arrange a meeting before the end of July and asked Dara Calleary and Deputy Rose Conway Walsh to do research on it and come back to us by the end of the month.

## **7. Drone Regulation update**

This item was deferred.

## **8. Advanced questions:**

These were dealt with under agenda item number 4.

Deputy Rose Conway Walsh TD:

Update on measures taken by An Garda Síochána in conjunction with Mayo County Council to address the issue of 'Boy/Girl-racers' to ensure their safety and the safety of others.



**Cllr. Christy Hyland:**

How many drug cultivation houses have been found in the West of Ireland over the last twelve months. Will discretion be considered when the Gardai are dealing with consumption of alcohol that takes place outdoors.

**Cllr. Michael Kilcoyne:**

How many ASBO's have been issued in Co Mayo over the past 5 years and how many of these were in the Castlebar Municipal District? In what circumstances were they issued

**9. AOB.**

It was agreed that a further meeting of the JPC would be called to address two outstanding items, i.e. No. 6 New Policing Safety Partnership and 7 Drone Regulations.

There were no other items, and this concluded the meeting.

**Next JPC meeting 24<sup>th</sup> September at 11 a.m. (Teams)**

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