

## COMHAIRLE CHONTAE NA GAILLIMHE

### Minutes of the County Galway Joint Policing Committee Meeting held on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2023 in Áras an Chontae

#### **I LÁTHAIR:**

**Council Members:** Cllr. Jim Cuddy (Cathaoirleach)  
Cllr. Mary Hoade  
Cllr. Liam Carroll  
Cllr. Gerry King  
Cllr. Michael Moegie Maher  
Cllr. Andrew Reddington  
Cllr. Declan Geraghty  
Cllr. Peter Roche  
Cllr. Pádraig Mac an Iomaire  
Cllr. Joe Byrne  
Cllr. PJ Murphy

**An Garda Síochána:** Supt. Paudie O'Shea  
Supt. Damien Flanagan  
Insp. Declan Rock  
Insp. Adrian Queeney  
HEO Olivia Maher  
Sgt. Michael Walsh  
Sgt. Sinead Heaney

**Community Reps:** Mr. Aodán Mac Donncha  
Mr. Gerard Costello

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

**Other Officials:** Ms. Elizabeth Hoffman, Corporate Services  
Ms. Ann Dolan, Environment Section

**Other attendees:** Mr. Peter Gohery  
Mr. Ken Fox  
Mr. Gerry Cummins  
Mr. Martin Moran  
(members of the Galway Disability Forum and Disabled Drivers Association Ireland)

**Apologies** Deputy Catherine Connolly, Oireachtas  
Cllr. Karey McHugh Farag  
Cllr. James Charity  
Mr. Gerard Larkin, Abbey Muintir na Tíre  
Mr. Aileen Heverin, Older Person Council

## **Item No. 1 – Adoption of Minutes of the Galway County JPC Meeting held on the 3rd April 2023**

On the proposal of Cllr. Michael Moegie Maher and seconded by Cllr. Gerry King, it was agreed that the Minutes of the County Galway JPC Meeting held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2023 in the Council Chamber, be adopted.

**Matters arising:** Cllr. Declan Geraghty queried if there was an update in relation to the extra Garda being sanctioned for Dunmore and surrounding areas. He expressed his concern that two of the Gardaí that are leaving the Tuam district are being replaced by Gardaí from the Dunmore Garda Station. Supt. Paudie O'Shea reassured the Committee that a new batch of An Garda Síochána Hyundai squad cars would be delivered shortly.

### **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), which also referred to the Annual Work Plan for 2023.

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

The Cathaoirleach Cllr. Jim Cuddy queried if the 300% increase in the incidents of Possession of Drugs for Sale or Supply was due to an increase in the use of drugs or an increase in the detection of drugs. Supt. O'Shea responded that it is mainly due to detection, following an increased number of Gardaí currently working within the Drugs Squad.

Cllr. Byrne stated that it was great to see a garda presence, however that it is alarming the amount of people who use phones while driving.

Cllr. Maher, Cllr. Reddington, Cllr. Hoade and Cllr. Roche all expressed their concern at the increase and prevalence throughout the county of the misuse of drugs, stating that all levels and ages of society are abusing drugs.

Cllr. Reddington indicated that he believes the current main method of ordering drugs is on Snapchat, due to the fact that the messages disappear once they have been read, making it almost impossible to trace or prove. He questions whether An Garda Síochána have the resources or IT capabilities to monitor or track the use of the App to order and sell drugs. Supt. O'Shea informed that he could not go into specifics due to operational reasons but that drugs do have to be stored somewhere and that they are focusing on this.

Cllr. Mary Hoade highlighted the increase in local crime and urged people to mark their property, use a tracker if possible or make their property identifiable. Cllr. Hoade also mentioned the issue of people driving while using their mobile phones and that we need a very important campaign on this, linking with schools in particular. Supt. O'Shea agreed that messaging was extremely important.

Cllr. Roche also raised the issue of cyber fraud and text message scams. He suggested that a nationwide campaign is needed to discourage anyone from interacting with them. He also stated that he was surprised at the statistics regarding property crime, given the amount of business premises protected by CCTV and continued that it is evident that people are not scared of being caught on CCTV.

Cllr. Declan Geraghty raised a query with the Senior Analyst, if the statistics for Speed were mostly based on figures from detection by An Garda Síochána or from GoSafe vans. HEO Olivia Maher informed him that the statistics were gathered by both Intercept (Garda) and Non-intercept (GoSafe) vehicles. However she stated that the bulk of the work on speed detection is done by the GoSafe vans. Cllr. Geraghty also queried if a breakdown could be provided of what the offences were but Ms. Maher explained that, as with Seat Belt offences where there are different fixed charges depending on whether it is a front seat passenger or back seat passenger, it is the same with speeding - it depends on where they were speeding, how much they were speeding by and so on. Cllr. Geraghty continued by highlighting the very worrying 59% increase in theft from shops included in the report and urged the Committee to do all they can to restore at least one Garda squad car for the Dunmore area as this would act as a deterrent to crime in the area.

Supt. O'Shea advised a degree of caution when looking at theft figures, as location can have a huge influence e.g. if you're close to the motorway and youth crime in an area can also drive figures.

Cllr. PJ Murphy raised the issue of animal thefts and dog attacks on livestock and queried if the Gardaí have a role in monitoring during the night when the Community wardens are not on duty and whether or not a collaboration between Galway County Council and An Garda Síochána to assist the wardens was something that could be possible. Supt. O'Shea informed Cllr. Murphy that he is involved in a working group to try and combat this crime under the Control of Dogs Act and that there is a medium to long term plan in place to tackle the issue, including a recommendation to the Department to increase the number of Dog Wardens.

Cllr. Pádraig Mac An Iomaire stated that at times, there are no Gardaí on duty for the entire Connemara area and that when you phone, the calls go to Oranmore, who then in turn forward them to Clifden, where you might be told that someone will call you back. Cllr. Mac An Iomaire said that often, no call-backs are received. He also notes that when the calls were being put through to the Salthill station previously, that this never happened. Supt. O'Shea acknowledged the frustration with teething issues that the new 'Garda Safe' high-tech system for logging calls was causing but reassured that no matter where the call goes to, it would be transferred to the relevant garda in the relevant area. He also asked that any problems with the call system be brought to his attention.

Cllr. Mac an Iomaire also queried what 'Domestic Dispute-No offence Identified' in the report entailed. Supt. O'Shea confirmed that sometimes when the Gardaí are called to an address, the occupants do not wish to say anything or report the abuse, even if there is clear evidence of assault. When there is no complaint filed or if the person does not disclose details of the assault, then it is registered as 'No offence identified'. He reassured Cllr. Mac an Iomaire that there is always a call back within seven days and if there is a pattern of calls from a particular home, that plain clothes officers in an unmarked squad car will contact the individual privately.

Cllr. Andrew Reddington expressed his wishes for the two extra Gardaí, that have been stationed in Headford for the last 6 months, to have their contracts extended in this area. He believes that there has been a significant increase in crime in the area over the last few years and that it is imperative that Headford Station retain the extra officers. Supt. O'Shea confirmed that a recruitment campaign has commenced and that a lot of work was being done. He could not, however, confirm if the two extra Gardaí stationed in Headford, would be staying in that area.

Cllr. Michael Moegie Maher raised the issue of an increase in vehicle collisions involving deer. He continued that farmers are having a very difficult time in keeping them out of their land and suggest that a cull might need to take place. Director of Service Michael Owens explained that the issue of wildlife and deer on our roads, is a national issue. However, Mr. Owens also advised if there was a particular road where the deer were causing an issue, to report this to the council's Infrastructure and Operations Section, so that they could examine the potential to provide appropriate advisory signage at the location in question.

Cllr. Declan Geraghty expressed his concern at the unrealistic work schedule and shift hours of the current Gardaí, pointing out that there is a serious shortfall in the number of current Gardaí for the entire county. He stated that a number of Gardaí have expressed their desire to leave the force, as they do not have enough support or help. Cllr. Geraghty stated that he believes it was the job of the committee to speak up on their behalf, to promote their good work and to try and get extra resources for them. He believes the job of the Gardaí is becoming more and more difficult and that it was important for the message to be relayed that something needs to be done immediately to help them.

### **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 confirmed that a total of 4,282 tonnes of tyres were removed in a recent operation by the Environment Unit. He complimented the work of the Community Wardens and thanked An Garda Síochana, as their checkpoints were proving successful as a deterrent. Cllr. Maher continued that he believes the perpetrators need to be 'Named and Shamed' and that the use of CCTV footage would be vital to stop Illegal Dumping and Littering. He informed the

Committee that the Legislation was currently before the Dáil and pointed out that none of the Oireachtas Members, who sit on the JPC, were present at the meeting and that it was up to them to do their best to push the legislation through.

Director of Services Mr. Michael Owens confirmed that there are 3 positions available for Oireachtas Members on the Joint Policing Committee and that Deputy Catherine Connolly currently holds one of those positions. He advised that following the earlier resignation of both Minister Rabbitte and Deputy Grealish, 'expressions of interest' requests had been sent out to all the Oireachtas Members for Galway and that Senator Aisling Dolan had expressed an interest in joining. However, as she currently sits on the JPC for Roscommon, she is prohibited from taking a position as sitting on more than one JPC is not allowed, under the Standing Orders. Mr. Owens informed the committee that Deputy Sean Canney has also expressed his interest in joining. Mr. Owens committed to further follow-up in relation to the expressions of interest with a view to reverting to the next meeting of the JPC to fill the vacant positions.

**The Education and Awareness Subcommittee update was presented by Cllr. Gerry King.**

Cllr. King highlighted the need for the "Drive on the Left" campaign to be rolled out again and that painting arrows on the roads were one of the most effective ways to avoid collisions.

He also raised the issue of owners parking their cars wherever they want, to be near the beaches. With the crowds increasing as a result of the summer weather, cars and other vehicles park on footpaths and on double yellow lines impeding the passage of traffic through the area and in some cases completely blocking emergency vehicles from getting to the scene of an emergency. Cllr. King stated that a need for high visibility signs and an increased Gardaí presence and a social media campaign to encourage the public to park responsibly.

**Item no. 4: Brief Presentation by members of Galway Disability Forum and the Disabled Drivers Association of Ireland**

Mr. Peter Gohery, Chairperson of Galway Disability Forum, and Mr. Ken Fox, Chief Executive of the Disabled Drivers Association of Ireland, addressed the Committee to highlight the current difficulties that face people with physical disabilities in the County. They highlighted the importance of the Disabled Parking Bays for blue badge holders and the fact that more enforcement is required to eradicate illegal parking in Disabled Parking Bays.

Mr. Gohery emphasized the importance of clearly marked Disabled Parking Bays. He noted that Galway County Council had recently repainted Disability Parking Bays in 3 large towns in the County in a slip-resistant blue paint and that was a step in the right direction. Mr. Gohery confirmed that a walk around audit was also undertaken with GCC officials Ms. Mary McGann and Mr. Gerard Haugh in Portumna, Gort and Loughrea, where they identified the areas that Disabled Parking Bays were needed the most.

He also raised with the importance of displaying the Blue Disabled Badge correctly and ensuring that the actual owner of the Badge is present, not just family members or friends. Mr. Gohery believes that more enforcement is needed and called for both members of the Gardaí and the Traffic Wardens to check that the Blue Badge holder is present.

Mr. Ken Fox continued with the presentation and explained to the Committee that they, the Disabled Drivers Association of Ireland, are responsible for issuing the Disabled Permits. He stated that communication and engagement between Galway County Council and the Disabled Drivers Association was poor in comparison with other Local Authorities.

Cllr. Maher suggested that a presentation be given to the newly appointed Traffic Wardens and also believes that the judicial system needs to change and that the fine amounts need to be increased.

Cllr. Roche suggested that the presentation be given to the full Plenary, which was supported by Cllr. Cuddy and Cllr. Hoade.

Cllr. Reddington also proposed that Galway County Council should have a designated Disabilities Officer, which was seconded by Cllr. Roche. He agreed to follow this up with Directors of Services Eileen Ruane and Derek Pender.

Cllr. Geraghty stated the problem was a recurring one and that it mainly related to staffing issues, as more wardens and Gardaí are needed to enforce the rules. He also noted that it was necessary to educate and communicate the issues faced by people with disabilities, to the general public.

Cllr. Mac an Iomaire stated that the public should take on the responsibility of reporting misuse of a badge or parking illegally in a disabled parking bay.

Director of Services Michael Owens welcomed the presentation and attendees, noted the importance of the issues raised and responded that a recruitment campaign was ongoing for Community Wardens and that this provided an opportunity to increase awareness of the issues raised by way of induction. He committed to bringing the concerns raised to the attention of Director of Services Derek Pender and to the Council availing of the opportunity to work more closely with the Disabled Drivers Association.

**Item no. 5: A.O.B.**

**Presentation on National Community Engagement Week 2023**

A short presentation was given by Sgt. Michael Walsh on National Community Engagement Week, which ran from the 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> May. The topics covered during the course of the week were Community Safety, Road and Pedestrian Safety, Burglary and Theft, Heritage Crime, Personal Safety and Wellbeing and Farm and Rural Safety.

Community Representative Mr. Gerard Costello thanked An Garda Síochána and Galway County Council for organising the events and for giving the opportunity to showcase the services available. He reminded everyone that Community Alert month was this coming October.

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Chríochnaigh Cathaoirleach Cuddy an cruinniú ansin.