



***Miontuairiscí / Meeting Minutes  
County Meath Joint Policing Committee***

***Date: 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024 @ 2.35 p.m.***

***Venue: Conference Room, Buvinda House, Navan, Co Meath***

**In Attendance:**

**Presiding:** Cllr Francis Deane

**County Council Members:** Cllr David Gilroy, Cllr Noel French, Cllr Gillian Toole, Cllr Helen Meyer, Cllr Paul McCabe, Cllr Padraig Fitzsimons

**Oireachtas Members:** Senator Shane Cassells, Deputy Darren O'Rourke, Senator Sharon Keogan

**An Garda Síochána:** Chief Superintendent John Dollard, Superintendent Martina Noonan

**County Council Officials:** Kieran Kehoe, Fiona Fallon, Brian Hora

**Guests:** Inspector Peter Gilsean, Inspector Brian Dunne, Inspector Valerie Gahan, Sergeant Catherine Davitt, Michael Finnegan, Former Road Safety Officer, Meath County Council

**Co-Ordinator:** Angie Mitchell

**Apologies:** Minister Helen McEntee, Deputy Peadar Toibin, Deputy Damien English, Deputy Thomas Byrne, Deputy Johnny Guirke, Senator Annie Hoey, Senator Regina Doherty, Cllr Maria Murphy, Cllr Alan Tobin, Cllr Yemi Adenuga, Cllr Deirdre Geraghty Smith, Cllr Tom Behan, Cllr Edward Fennessy, Cllr Trevor Golden, Cllr Alan Lawes, Tinu Achioya, Bill Comerford, Conor O'Leary, Ronnie Owens, Bernard Kenny

**1. Chairpersons Opening Remarks**

The meeting commenced at 2.35 p.m.

**Cllr Deane** welcomed everyone to the meeting including Senators Cassells and Keogan and Deputy O'Rourke and noted apologies from Cllr Maria Murphy. He advised that this would be the second last meeting of the Committee before the Local Elections. He stated that Michael Finnegan had been invited to join the Committee at 4 pm as the Committee wanted to do a presentation to him as a token of their appreciation for all the work he had done during his time as Road Safety Officer for Meath County Council and also for his work on the Joint Policing Committee subcommittee on Road Safety and Improved Driver Behaviour.

**Cllr Deane** advised that there were no items of correspondence for discussion.

## 2. Confirmation of Minutes of Meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023 were confirmed on the proposal of **Cllr Toole** and seconded by **Cllr McCabe**.

**Cllr Toole** raised three questions arising from the minutes. She questioned 1) If the Gardai had any update in relation to whether products containing HHC only were being sold in vape shops in Meath 2) If a new Road Safety Officer has been appointed 3) If there are any more Probationer Gardai coming to Meath.

**Inspector Dollard** advised that only products containing HHC are being sold in vape shops and that this is not a controlled substance and is therefore not covered under the Misuse of Drugs Acts. He stated that 24 Probationer Gardai in total had been allocated to Meath in 2023 including 5 new Probationers to Navan in November 2023. He expects the next allocation of Probationers to arrive in April 2024 and more after that but did not have specific dates.

**K Kehoe** advised that a new Road Safety Officer would be commencing in the Transportation Section of Meath County Council on 26<sup>th</sup> February who will have the full support of Engineering staff to deal with all matters in relation to Road Safety.

**Cllr Toole agreed to contact the Health Products Regulatory Authority and the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland and follow up with them regarding the sale of HHC in vaping products.**

## 3. To discuss the Louth/Meath Policing Border Realignment

**Chief Superintendent John Dollard** gave an overview on the new Garda Síochána boundary realignment between Louth and Meath which came into effect on 28<sup>th</sup> January and presented a map showing the border realignment. He advised that the new boundary would expand the geographical areas policed by Louth South Community Engagement Area, Louth South Crime Area and Louth South Roads Policing, to include a portion of the town of Drogheda that was previously part of the Ashbourne District. He noted that the new boundary lines takes the following route out of Drogheda Town: Marsh Road (R150), Right turn onto Mill Road, Right turn onto Colpe Road, First exit on the Roundabout at Southgate Shopping Centre onto the R132 South, Right onto Beabeg Road, Continues to M1 Flyover and to the existing County Louth boundary line at Mary McAleese Bridge. He added that this is good news for Meath as it includes the Drogheda Retail Park, Deepforde Housing Estate, Grangerath Housing Estate and Southgate Shopping Centre which will take the burden of policing those areas off the Meath/Westmeath Division policing staff. He complimented Inspector Valerie Gahan of Laytown Garda Station in engaging with stakeholders, schools, and local business in advance of the realignment.

There was a question from **Senator Keogan** regarding the shaded area of this map. This was answered by **Inspector Gahan** who noted that the feedback so far from business owners and citizens regarding the boundary realignment had been very positive.

**Senator Keogan** asked for an update on the site for the new Laytown Garda Station and asked if the site would have room for expansion.

**Chief Superintendent Dollard** advised that site visits had taken place at various locations to identify the most suitable site and a package of 7 sites, one of which is a new site have been identified and have now gone to the Garda Housing Section and will then be sent to the Office of Public Works. He hopes to have a further update by the end of 2024 or early 2025. He noted that the OPW would determine if the site had room for expansion.

4. **Garda Síochána Overview of Crime Statistics and Report on fatal accidents in Co Meath for Q1 of 2024 in line with Circular RW18 of 2020 – LA16 Collision Reporting and Evaluation Procedure**

**Chief Superintendent Dollard** sent apologies from **Inspector Dorrigan** who was not available today to give the presentation to the Committee on the Crime Figures. He noted that the presentation looked different to past presentations due to the new Garda Operating Model in Meath. **Chief Superintendent Dollard** presented the policing report with relevant provisional statistics to 28<sup>th</sup> January 2024, giving a verbal breakdown of these provisional figures in relation to the following categories for both Meath North C.E. Area covering Navan & Kells and Meath South C.E. area covering Ashbourne & Trim: ***Property Crime, Public Order Crime, Burglary (non-aggravated), Theft from Vehicles, Theft/UT of Vehicles, Theft from Shop, Theft of Other Property, Crimes against the person, Drugs (Sale & Supply), Drugs (Possession)***. He also gave an update on current Garda Resources for Meath as follows:

**Resources – Meath Division**

- 303 Sworn Garda Members (All Ranks)
- 118 Ashbourne District
- 101 Navan District
- 35 Kells District
- 49 Trim District
- 13 Roads Policing Unit
- 15 Reserve Members
- 43 Garda Staff
- 16 Garda Stations

**Chief Superintendent Dollard** stated that incident rates were relatively small and noted a decrease in incidents of property crime in Navan & Trim and an increase in incidents of property crime in Kells and Ashbourne Areas. He advised there has been a decrease in Theft of cars in all areas except Ashbourne and the majority of those vehicles stolen in Ashbourne had not been fitted with immobilizers.

**Cllr Deane** opened to the floor for question in relation to crime statistics and garda resources:

There were questions raised by the following committee members: **Cllr Meyer, Deputy O'Rourke, Cllr Gilroy, Senator Keogan & Cllr McCabe** in relation to –

- *Recovery of vehicles stolen from the Ashbourne Area*
- *Theft from Shops*
- *A query in the Detection rates in relation to “theft from Shops in the Kells Area” stated on the presentation*
- *Staffing of Kells Garda Station*
- *Text Alert in the County*
- *What Garda Stations in Meath are open 24/7*
- *Opening hours of Laytown & Duleek Garda Stations*
- *Ransacking of vehicles in Ashbourne Area*
- *Recent number of Burglaries in the Kells Area*

**Cllr Fitzsimons** joined the meeting at 3 p.m.

**Cllr Toole** left the meeting at 3.06 p.m.



**Responses to all questions and concerns raised were provided by:** Chief Superintendent Dollard, & Superintendent Noonan.

**Amongst the points made were as follows:**

- *The majority of vehicles that were stolen were stolen from the Ashbourne area and were used mainly for joyriding and were not high in value but were easy to break into due to lack of immobilisation devices*
- *The majority of theft from shops was in the Navan Area and was mainly caused by youths who had fled the scene by the time the Gardai arrived. There is one Sergeant and 2 Gardai assigned to deal with theft from shops in Navan Area and crime figures have come down. There was one patrol car in Navan but there are now 2 cars patrolling on a daily basis.*
- *There was an error on the presentation in relation to theft from shops in the Kells Area. There were actually 4 incidents reported to 28/01/24 and 0 detections. The presentation stated 0 incidents and 4 detections and Gardai acknowledged this was an error.*
- *Gardai stated that Kells and Navan Garda Station Staff cover each other in the event that a Garda is absent in either station and resources are used as best the Gardai can.*
- *The following Garda Stations are open 24/7 - Kells, Navan, Trim, Laytown & Ashbourne.*
- *Smaller stations that are not open 24/7, deliver a 24/7 service and are covered by the bigger stations that are open 24/7 and if anybody wants to report a crime they must ring 999*
- *A fleet of electric cars have been purchased by An Garda Síochána for use in the smaller villages of Nobber, Summerhill, Dunshaughlin and Duleek*
- *Athboy Garda station now has a new Sergeant with experience in Community Policing and a garda member*
- *There are Garda Detectives who deal specifically with issues of crime*
- *Text Alert updates must be assessed and sent out by a Sergeant*
- *Laytown Garda Station is open to the public from 10 am – 12 noon each day but is operating on a 24/7 basis with four core units allowing for handover briefings and exchange of information between units*
- *Duleek Garda Station opening hours are from 10 am – 12 noon each day*
- *Vehicles that were ransacked in Ashbourne were ransacked because of citizens leaving their vehicles unlocked*
- *Theft of other property was mainly drive offs from Petrol Stations, some of which were genuine mistakes by customers and others were investigated using CCTV by Criminal Intelligence officers*
- *Garda are following a definite line of enquiry into the recent spate of burglaries in the Kells Area*

**Inspector Gilsenan** gave a verbal report on the roads policing figures (provisional) to 28<sup>th</sup> January 2024 below and noted that there was no increase in fatalities from 2023 and 2024 year to date, and a decrease in non serious collisions, driving while intoxicated incidents and MIT checkpoints. He stated that a large number of vehicles had been seized because drivers had no insurance, no NCT and displayed out of date Tax discs. He advised that there were 5,466 detections for speeding in the Meath/Westmeath Division for 2023 between An Garda Síochána and the Go Safe Vans and 5,690 in 2022. There was also and a large number of fines issued to learner drivers for driving unaccompanied and for not displaying their “L” plates.



## Meath Roads Policing

Category	Feb 2023 – Jan 2024	2024 YTD
Fatalities	7	1
Serious Injury Collision	64	3
Non-serious injury Collisions	145	14
Dangerous Driving Incidents	182	5
Driving while intoxicated incidents	259	14
MIT Checkpoints	838	46
Vehicles Seized (S41, RTA)	686	62

*\*Data (provisional) as on 31/01/2024*

Cllr Deane thanked Inspector Gilsenan for his report and opened to the floor for discussion:

**Questions were raised:** by Cllr Gilroy, Deputy O'Rourke, Senator Keogan, Senator Cassells & Cllr McCabe in relation to –

- *The availability of prosecution rates for all crimes*
- *Confirmation of Roads Policing Garda Resources Figures for Meath*
- *Clarification on the figures for the current Policing resources in Meath and for additional Gardai assigned to Meath in 2023*
- *What are the Meath Garda Division doing in the quest for more Garda resources for Meath*
- *Figures in relation to the % of current Gardai assigned to the Meath Division who are on long term leave such as Long term sick leave, suspension, career break, assigned to UN duties*
- *How many Meath Garda personnel are due to retire in 2024*
- *Figures in relation to prosecutions in relation to drug seizures*
- *How many Garda personnel are assigned to the Drugs Unit in Kells Area*

**Responses to questions raised were provided by:** Chief Superintendent Dollard, Superintendent Noonan & Inspector Gilsenan.

**Amongst the points made were as follows:**

- *Offenders aged under 18 are referred to the National Juvenile Office and Gardai don't have figures to hand in relation to prosecution rates for those Offenders*
- *If an adult is a first-time offender, they will receive an adult caution which will go on the Garda file but will not affect their future applications for Garda vetting*
- *A large backlog of summons' that were issued pre covid and which were therefore delayed through the courts will be processed in the coming weeks with Court Dates commencing specifically for this purpose at the end of April 2024. This will mean the summons systems will be freed up by the end of the Summer*
- *Roads Policing Gardai now have better technology and can issue a summon off their new devices which speeds things*
- *Gardai plan to run a competition to recruit new Community Policing personnel as soon as possible as this was delayed due to the merger of the Meath/Westmeath Division*



- *The 3<sup>rd</sup> Roads Policing Unit that was recently set up in Devlin interlinks the two other Roads Policing Units of Dunshaughlin and Moate and provides the link in the planning of Roads Policing Operations across the divisions and has proved to be impactful in relation to detection rates and there has been good feedback from the public*
- *There are 13 Gardai assigned to the Roads Policing Unit in Meath and 16 assigned to the Roads Policing Unit in Westmeath*
- *There are currently 303 Sworn Gardai assigned to the Meath Division and new Probationers are due to arrive in Meath at the beginning of April who will be assigned to the busier stations and will therefore increase resources*
- *In redeploying Gardai within the Meath Division, Gardai seek expressions of interest from existing Gardai and also match to skillsets of Gardai to the relevant vacancies*
- *There are no career breaks being approved for existing Gardai in Meath at present only in exceptional circumstances*
- *Meath have the lowest amount of Gardai per head of population, however resources are being used effectively and better tools and technology are aiding in the delivery of a better service*
- *The Meath Garda Division have been allocated a significant number of probationer Gardai in 2023 and will expect a similar allocation in 2024 which will increase overall Garda numbers*
- *Meath Gardai have made strategic changes in order to enhance the delivery of services such as the making of Laytown Garda Station into a 24 hour station, the creation of the Community Policing Hub in Duleek and the recent boundary realignment between Meath and Louth*
- *The introduction of a new Investigation Management System, Garda Safe System and the recent introduction of the new Garda Operating Model will ensure that Gardai can spend less time on paperwork and more time among communities.*
- *The Garda Síochána website provides a breakdown per County of Garda Resources by Division*
- *There was never 330 Gardai assigned to Meath Division. This figure was given in error in a previous presentation to the JPC. 320 was the maximum number of Gardai assigned to the Meath Division in recent years*
- *A estimate in relation to % of current Gardai assigned to the Meath Division on long term leave is: 1-2% on long term sick leave, 1% on suspension, 5% on career break, 0% assigned to UN Duties. These figures are only an estimate*
- *Gardai advised that 5 Gardai retired from the Meath Division in 2023 and it is expected that the same amount of Gardai will retire from the Meath Division in 2024*
- *There have been a number of substantial drug seizures in Meath however these cases take a lot of time to get through the court system therefore prosecution figures may seem low*
- *There is 1 Sergeant and 4 Gardai assigned to the Drugs Unit in Kells Area with assistance from Junior Members, Day to Day Gardai from the Kells Unit and from the Drugs Unit based in Slane*

**Michael Finnegan** joined the meeting at 15.55

**Cllr Fitzsimons** left the meeting at 15.55

## **5. To receive an update on the 3 JPC Sub Committees**

**A Mitchell** gave an update on the 3 subcommittees confirming the dates of their recent meetings and the details of their workplans for 2024.

Cathaoirleach thanked A Mitchell for her update and opened to the floor for questions.

**Senator Keogan** advised that there is a Property Marking Training Session in Duleek at 11 am on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2024.

## 6. To approve the JPC Annual Report 2023

**F Fallon** advised that the Annual Report for 2023 had been circulated in advance of the meeting and gave a brief overview of its contents. She added that if it is approved today that it will go to full Council for approval at their March meeting.

The JPC Annual Report 2023 was approved on the proposal of **Cllr McCabe** and seconded by **Cllr Gilroy**.

## 7. AOB & next meeting date 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024

**Cllr Gilroy** acknowledged the great work that is being carried out by the Meath Division Garda Personnel with limited resources. He asked if the Meath JPC would consider implementing an initiative that had been undertaken by Wicklow JPC in recognition of the work that was carried out by its Garda Members. He added that under that initiative, an awards night had been held to acknowledge all the Garda Members from Wicklow, each of which were given an award on the night and welcomed the views of the Chief Superintendent in replicating such an initiative.

**Chief Superintendent Dollard** suggested that if such an initiative was to be agreed, that he would rather seek nominations for recognition of Garda work from the Community rather than nominations being given by the Gardai themselves.

**F Fallon** agreed to contact Wicklow JPC to enquire about their initiative and will liaise with the **Chief Superintendent** on this matter prior to the next JPC meeting.

**Cllr McCabe** queried 1) If Go Safe Vans could be added to more locations in Kells Area where serious speeding is occurring, 2) If there were plans for a CCTV scheme in Kells Town and 3) What are the opening hours of Kells Garda Station.

**Inspector Gilsenan** advised Cllr McCabe to send any suggestions relating to the location of Go Safe vans to him and he will look into this but he might need to get the permission from the Landowner. Inspector Gilsenan offered to give his email address to Cllr McCabe after the meeting.

**Chief Superintendent Dollard** stated that he will organise a meeting with the new Inspector of Community policing in Kells Garda Station in relation to Community Policing in Kells Area.

**Senator Keogan** asked Gardai to provide a full report on the CCTV Scheme in Duleek from 2017 – 2023 to show how many times it was used and how many detections and prosecutions were made. She added that the Community want to know if the scheme is working.

**Inspector Gahan** agreed to provide these details to Senator Keogan.



**Cllr Meyer** queried if Go Safe Vans could locate at schools where there are traffic calming measures in place.

**Inspector Gilsenan** advised Cllr Meyer to contact the Gardai detailing such locations and they will add those locations to their lists.

**Deputy O'Rourke** questioned the date of the next JPC Meeting which is dated on the agenda as 15<sup>th</sup> May which is a Wednesday.

**F Fallon** advised that JPC meetings are usually on a Monday and that calendar invites had already been issued and the date of 15<sup>th</sup> May was an error on the agenda.

**Cllr Deane** thanked all Committee members for their attendance and welcomed Michael Finnegan former Road Safety Officer to this meeting and advised that the Committee would like to present Mr Finnegan with a plaque as a gesture of thanks for his time and commitment both as Road Safety Officer and as member of the JPC Subcommittee on Road Safety and Improved Driver Behaviour.

Words of thanks and gratitude were expressed to Mr. Finnegan by **Deputy O'Rourke, Senator Keogan, Senator Cassells, K Keogh and Chief Superintendent Dollard** for his common-sense approach, his time, commitment, knowledge, communication skills, extensive experience and competency in getting matters of road safety resolved. All agreed that Mr. Finnegan will be a big loss to the County and wished him the best of luck in his retirement.

**M Finnegan** thanked all the members including Elected Representatives, Members of the Oireachtas, Management of Meath County Council, Community Representatives and Members of an Garda Síochána for their kind words, and for their assistance over the years in helping to making the Roads of County Meath Safer.

**The meeting concluded at 4.20 p.m.**



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Cathaoirleach Cllr Francis Deane

Date: 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024