



Mayo Joint Policing Committee - Public Meeting

Minutes of the Meeting

Friday December 9th, 2022, at 11.00am (Online and in-person in MCC Aras Chambers).

Present: Cllr. Al McDonnell (Chair), Cllr. Neil Cruise, Cllr. Michael Loftus, Cllr. Christy Hyland, Cllr. Damien Ryan, Cllr. Ger Deere, Cllr. Mark Duffy, Cllr. Gerry Coyle, Alan Dillon T.D., Senator Paddy Burke, Kevin Kelly, Chief Executive, Mayo County Council, Chief Superintendent Ray McMahon,

In attendance: Superintendent Gabriel Moran, Superintendent Gary Walsh, Insp. David Tiernan, Mary Gildea, Assistant Principal Officer, Insp. Denis Harrington, Deirdre Finnerty MCC, Maura Murphy MCC, Michael Galvin MCC.

Apologies Dara Calleary T.D., Cllr. Tom Connolly, Cllr. Michael Kilcoyne, Superintendent Joe McKenna,

1. Welcome

Cllr. Al McDonnell opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the 2022 Public JPC meeting.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting and matters arising

Proposed by: Cllr. Damian Ryan

Seconded by: Cllr. Christy Hyland

3. Presentation from Sergeant Paul Maher – “Digital Mapping Older Persons Register for the Ballina/Belmullet Community Engagement Area”

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

4. Reports from An Garda Síochána

Chief Superintendent Ray McMahon reported that while 2022 had been a very busy year; it also marked the Garda centenary year which included many celebratory events. An event was held in Newport on August 17th, 2022, to celebrate Mayo man Michael Staines, the first Commissioner of An Garda Síochána. Chief Supt. McMahon thanked the public and the members of this committee for their support in keeping the people of Mayo safe in 2022.

Inspector Denis Harrington reported on behalf of Superintendent Joe McKenna:

Inspector Denis Harrington updated on crime figures in the Mayo Division. There had been a slight decrease in crime figures over the past two years due to Covid 19, but figures are now returning to pre-pandemic levels.

There are several criminal gangs operating throughout Ireland. AGS had made a significant detection of €60k worth of drugs and €27k in cash, in Mayo. The total monetary value of drug seizures in Mayo to date amounts to €2.3 M, €30k in counterfeit currency and cash of €213k being seized.

The Criminal Assets Bureau are providing training, targeting assets of criminals.



Drug intimidation has increased. Demanding money is a criminal offence.

If anyone is experiencing difficulties, they can seek help from GP's, HSE, Hope House and Mindspace.

Fraud has also increased dramatically in recent years with activities such as Phishing, Vishing and Smishing now common occurrences. He advised that Financial Institutions do not send e-mails and people should never click on any links or callback any unrecognised telephone numbers.

Figures reported to date:

Crime	Total	Change v 2021
Burglary	143	Up 31%
Serious Assault	70	Down 4%
Minor Assault	311	Up 23%
Theft from Shops	304	Up 33%
Theft from Car	40	Down 7%
Theft from Person	7	Up 16%
Theft – Ordinary	215	Up 10%
Public Order offences	320	Up 43%
Criminal Damage	297	Down 36%
Sexual crime – Assault	46	Up 35%
Drink Driving	221	Up 127%

Superintendent Gary Walsh – Ballina / Belmullet Area

Superintendent Walsh gave an update for the Mayo North area.

Three serious incidents have been dealt with recently. In September there was a multi-agency search and rescue operation on Downpatrick Head which thankfully had a positive outcome.

In September there was a fatal road traffic accident on the N17 which is currently under investigation. This brings the total of fatal road accidents in Mayo to four this year.

There is an ongoing operation into the sale and supply of drugs and in November a large quantity of drugs and cash was seized in the Ballyhaunis area.

Superintendent Gabriel Moran – South Mayo area

Superintendent Moran also reported increase of crime levels by 11%; crime levels are rising now that society is returning to post pandemic normality.

Travelling criminal gangs are back in operation and last weekend the Text Alert system was utilised in the Aughagower area when a vehicle acting suspiciously was noticed.

He commended the continuing support from public which was helping to detect and prevent crime.



Assaults are up on 2021 levels but are showing a decrease when compared to 2019 figures.

Inspector David Tiernan - Roads Policing

Inspector Tiernan informed members that the Christmas and New Year Road Safety Campaign is now underway. It is anticipated that this campaign will help reduce the number of people driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol. There have been 148 road traffic accident deaths and 600 serious injuries in Ireland in 2022 with four fatalities in County Mayo.

There is a new roadside breath test for drug detection where a swab can be taken, and results are returned between 2 and 8 minutes. Arrests can be made if tests turn out to be positive.

AGS will be out of force over the Christmas period with multiple checkpoints in operation. The most common offences are the use of mobile phones while driving and not wearing a seat belt. The most common cause of collisions is poor and worn tyres.

There have been 181 Life Saver offences in November and 15 arrests made for drivers under the influence of intoxicants.

Cllr. McDonnell thanked all the Gardai for their reports. Comments from members of the JPC included:

Cllr. Neil Cruise:

Welcomed the Drugs Roadside test initiative. The digital mapping app is an excellent tool and he urged people to look out for their neighbours particularly over the Christmas period.

Cllr. Damien Ryan:

These figures show that AGS are excelling at their job. CAB is a fantastic mechanism for the big criminals, but it should also be worked down to the lower-level criminals too.

Cllr. Christy Hyland:

Congratulated AGS on the excellent figures despite the lack of resources which is the fault of the Government. Young recruits are leaving the force early and this coupled with retirements and resignations means they will not be able to recruit fast enough to replace them. He suggested that Chief requests that staff from AGS due to retire are asked to remain on until resources are increased. AGS should be responding to calls within 10 / 20 minutes, it is time to stand up to the Department of Justice and make representations.

Cllr. Gerry Coyle:

Thanked the AGS and all the agencies involved in the recent successful search and rescue operation at Downpatrick and particularly Superintendent Gabriel Moran who led the operation. He also thanked the Gardai in Belmullet for the work on arresting burglar who has since pleaded guilty.

Senator Paddy Burke:

There is a very high level of drug use in all sections of Irish society, and he welcomed the introduction of the Roadside Drugs Test; questioned would random drug testing be introduced to AGS and public representatives. Mental Health issues are directly linked to the abuse of drugs which are too freely available in everyday society.



Cllr. Michael Loftus:

Suggested that more local policing Fora be established as per section 36.2 of the Garda Síochána Act. He also suggested this JPC writes to both the Policing Authority and Commissioner Drew Harris to invite them down to explain the plans for JPC's going forward.

In response Chief Superintendent Ray McMahon thanked everyone for their comments and said CAB were looking closely at how they can be used at local levels. There will unfortunately always be assaults on Gardai due to the nature of the job. Resource levels are constantly monitored, and they utilise all resources to help in any areas that require a quick response.

He thanked JPC members and members of the public for their co-operation throughout 2022 and wished everyone a safe and happy Christmas and urged everyone to drive safely and be conscious of vulnerable road users.

5. Update from Sub-Committee's

• Crime and Drugs – Cllr. Christy Hyland (C):

Cllr. Hyland updated on the first meeting of the Crime and Drugs sub-committee of which he was honoured to be elected Chair. The group have drafted an action plan to align with the JPC Strategic Plan. This first suggestion is to invite a member of the Western Region Drug and Alcohol Task Force to make a presentation to the JPC.

• Community Engagement – Cllr. Michael Loftus (C)

Cllr. Loftus said he was delighted to be elected Chair of this sub-committee. They had a very productive and well organised meeting and will now begin working on the following:

1. Presentation of the Digital Mapping Older Persons Register App to Age Friendly Alliance and Older Persons Council
2. Assisting community groups with CCTV applications
3. Ballyhauins Social Services Christmas Card distribution via the Community Gardai
4. Education of younger people on fraud/scams
5. A Mental Health/ Suicide - pilot scheme where a HSE nurse will assist AGS

Mayo JPC invite the Policing Authority to hold one of their meetings in Mayo, preferably on a day a Mayo JPC is being held in order that invitation can be extended to Garda Commissioner to attend both meetings.

Proposed by: Cllr. Michael Loftus

Seconded by: Cllr. Christy Hyland

6. Advance Question

Cllr. Christy Hyland:

- How many Gardaí have left the force over the last three years, i.e. the number of Gardaí who left before they were due to retire.
- The number of crimes committed by people on bail over the last three years.
- The number of Gardai on sick leave over the last two years due to being assaulted on duty.

In response Chief Superintendent Ray McMahon said he would have the bail figures at the next meeting. He also suggested for AGS to present on the process involved in AGS reacting to public complaints.

Mary Gildea reported the number of Gardai assaulted while on duty in Mayo in 2021 was nine, and in 2022 it is thirteen.

Advance Questions from the public:

- **When there will be an Animal welfare officer appointed to Mayo?**

In response Deirdre Finnerty, Head Of Community and Integrated Development, Mayo County Council said the Environment Department of Mayo County Council has provided grant funding of €35,000 annually as ex-gratia payments to Voluntary Organisations providing services that are targeted at animal welfare and assist the Council in the provision of the dog and horse control services.

However, the Council is not required statutorily to nominate Authorised Officers for animal welfare. The remit in this area has been given to The Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals who are funded to provide the service.

- **Regarding the rise in crime in the Ballinrobe District by 43% since 2017, in conjunction with the above the Garda Barracks is only open for 4 hours weekly and closed to the public on Friday/Saturday/Sunday evenings and night time.**

In response Superintendent Gabriel Moran advised he was unaware of which particular crime the recent newspaper article referred to when it stated a 47% increase in crime figures in the Ballinrobe area; overall core crime figures are down 19% when comparing 2021 to 2022. When compared to pre pandemic figures of 2019 overall core crime levels are up 4%.

The Ballinrobe Station opening hours have been reviewed and it is now open four evenings during the week. Claremorris Station is open 24/7 and Garda call outs can also be facilitated.

- **There should be stiffer sentences for repeat offenders. Free legal aid should be limited to one crime only. More visible signs of Gardaí on the streets and encouraging crime reporting. Maybe promote the Crimestoppers phone number. Seek more powers to deal with Anti-social behaviour.**

In response Chief Superintendent Ray McMahon said that as well as the Crimestoppers phone number (1800 250 025) members of the public can report crime online and there is also the See Something-Say Something campaign which is a new confidential text service that allows people to report incidents to Gardai.

- **What plans are in place to ensure law and order is maintained in Westport**

In response Superintendent Gabriel Moran said that Westport is a very busy town and the night time economy has increased post pandemic. At night, two additional Gardai patrol the streets in a van and concentrate on busy areas to ensure a prompt response to any situations. He will speak to the questioner in person regarding his concerns after the meeting.



7. Dates for 2023 JPC Meetings:

The following dates were set for the 2023 JPC meetings:

24th March 2023

23rd June 2023

22nd September 2023

1st December 2023

Cllr. McDonnell thanked Chief Superintendent McMahon and all the members of AGS, the staff of Mayo County Council, members of the press and the public for all their contributions. He wished everyone the best of health and a Happy Christmas and New Year.

**This concluded the business of the meeting, the next JPC meeting is on
24th March 2023, at 11.00 a.m.**

DRAFT

X *McDonnell*
