



Mayo Joint Policing Committee

Minutes of the Meeting

Friday March 24th, 2023, 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. Gerry Coyle, Cllr. Tom Connolly, Cllr. Michael Kilcoyne, Alan Dillon T.D., Senator Paddy Burke, Louise Glynn, PPN; Mick Baynes, PPN; Rosaleen Lally, PPN; Kevin Kelly, Chief Executive, Mayo County Council, Chief Superintendent Ray McMahon.

In attendance: Superintendent Gabriel Moran, Superintendent Gary Walsh, Detective Superintendent Tom Colsh; Insp. David Tiernan, Mary Gildea, Assistant Principal Officer, Detective Insp. Denis Harrington, Sergeant Paul Maher; Garda Thomasina McHale; Deirdre Finnerty MCC, Maura Murphy MCC, Michael Galvin MCC.

Apologies Dara Calleary T.D., Superintendent Joe McKenna,

1. Welcome

Cllr. Al McDonnell opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the first JPC meeting of 2023. He expressed gratitude to Superintendent Tom Calvey for his extraordinary contribution to this committee and to the County of Mayo and wished him well in his retirement. He welcomed Detective Superintendent Tom Colsh to his first JPC and wished him well in his new position. He also welcomed new PPN members Rosaleen Lally and Mick Baynes.

Cllr Loftus welcomed Stephen Silvers conviction for the murder of Garda Colm Horkan and congratulated Chief Superintendent Ray McMahon, former Chief Superintendent Tony Healy and John Costello and all the team that worked on the investigation and hoped it would bring closure to the Horkan family and the Gardai for this heinous crime. Everyone present wished to be associated with these comments.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting and matters arising

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

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

Sergeant Paul Maher gave a detailed presentation on the Digital Mapping Register.

Cllr McDonnell thanked him for his excellent presentation which was then discussed by the group.

4. Reports from An Garda Síochána

Detective Superintendent Tom Colsh reported on behalf of Superintendent Joe McKenna: Detective Superintendent Tom Colsh gave an update on crime figures in the Mayo Division from the start of the year to date. There has been no major change in crime figures since the start of the year.

Ten prolific offenders have recently been arrested and are before the courts. Cybercrime has reduced mainly due to the Awareness Campaign that has been running for the past year.

There has been €227k worth of drugs seized to date and €80k worth of cocaine. One grow house was detected and there has been eleven arrests for possession of drugs. There have been 48 drug seizures to date compared to 59 for the corresponding period in 2022.

Figures reported to date:

Crime	Total to date	2022 Comparison
Burglary	39	32
Serious Assault	15	13
Minor Assault	61	53
Theft from Shops	64	32
Theft from Car	1	4
Theft from Person	2	2
Theft – Ordinary	31	38
Public Order offences	85	118
Criminal Damage	48	41
Sexual crime – Assault	16	22
Drug Offences (simple)	19	18

Superintendent Gary Walsh – Ballina / Belmullet Area

Superintendent Walsh gave an update for the Mayo North area. He said that crime figures in the Mayo North area are on a par with those reported by Detective Superintendent Tom Colsh and have generally returned to pre-covid levels. Residential burglaries are significantly down but there has been a number of petrol station burglaries carried out by travelling criminal gangs who are targeting cash and cigarettes. Night shift patrols have been increased as a result of this.

The St Patrick Day celebrations went well with just the usual public order and traffic issues. Theft from cars figures are low at present but in advance of the forthcoming tourist season he advised caution and appealed for people not to leave cars unlocked and not to leave valuables visible.

Supt. Walsh requested a letter of approval from the JPC to proceed with the community CCTV scheme which is in the process of being re-certified.

Proposed by: Cllr. Christy Hyland
Seconded by: Cllr. Michael Kilcoyne



Superintendent Gabriel Moran – South Mayo area

Superintendent Moran reported that general crime figures in the South area have been stable or down on a pro rata basis. There has been an increase in assaults and residential burglaries which is linked to travelling gangs from outside the division. Shop lifting also increased and repeat prolific offenders are going before the courts as a result.

It has been a very difficult three months in the area with three fatalities/missing persons, six Road Traffic Accidents fatalities and one murder. He offered his condolences to all the families affected in these incidents.

He acknowledged the help and support received in the area from the Fire Service, Civil Defence, Coat Guard, Ambulance Service and the Gardai in dealing with these very difficult situations. There are four major factors involved which are considered “lifesaving offences” and they are Drink and Drugs, Speeding, use of mobile phones and not wearing seatbelts.

The St Patrick Day celebrations went well without any major incidents.

Inspector David Tiernan - Roads Policing

Inspector David Tiernan reported the following Life Saver offences to date:

Speeding Offences detection	1526
Use of mobile phone detection	1024
Drink Driving arrests	186
Not wearing seat belts	66
Cars seized	254
Check points	2500
Mid check points	1426

He appealed to people to be mindful of the “lifesaver offences” which are Drink and Drugs, Speeding, use of mobile phones and not wearing seatbelts which are the major causes of most accidents/fatalities. He also said it is essential to ensure all vehicles are road worthy and safe to drive.

The Roadside Policing Operation carried out during the St Patricks Day festival period will be repeated for the Easter period.

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

Cllr. Damien Ryan:

Acknowledged the great achievements of AGS and the cross-jurisdiction co-operation and welcomed the open-door policy in Claremorris Garda Station. He said that drugs was the number one priority and increased resources due to the increase in drugs use in society and drugs should be an Agenda item for the next meeting. We previously asked for a JPC delegation to meet the Minister, but this should now be changed to ask for a delegation to meet the Party Leaders.



Cllr. Michael Loftus:

Is the decrease in crime detection figures and drug seizures as a result of the decrease in manpower and the lack of Gardai on the streets?

The CCTV system in Ballina will need to be replaced especially with the imminent visit of the President of the USA in April. The system should be taken over by the Dept of Justice.

He asked if there was a Road Safety Officer in Mayo County Council?

Cllr Michael Kilcoyne:

The shortage of Gardai in Mayo should be brought to the attention of the Taoiseach. The Roscommon/Longford/Mayo Division covers a huge part of the Country and is too big for one Garda division.

The Governments decision to end the eviction ban will mean more pressure on Garda Stations as the homeless will have to go to the Gardai who do not have the resources to accommodate them. He asked if AGS had been called to any incidents in Breaffy House Hotel and if there were any drugs found or arrests made?

Cllr. Gerry Coyle:

Congratulated AGS on the great detective work that lead to a burglary ring being brought to book. He asked if roadblocks were set up and if alerts were sent when criminals were discovered travelling in the areas and he proposed setting up cameras that can read car registration numbers on access routes to towns.

Cllr. Christy Hyland:

Thanked Inspector Marie Hayes for the excellent work in organising the safe visit of Prince Albert to Newport and welcomed the fact Detective Inspector Harrington is staying on in Westport GS. He said despite the Commissioners promise of an increase in the number of Inspectors they spend most of their time doing administration and compliance work. Six Superintendents have been gotten rid of and over one hundred of the force are under suspension. Gardai are not being paid enough to meet the increased cost of living.

He also questioned the decision over the past two years to appoint Assistant Commissioner and Deputy Commissioners from outside the jurisdiction.

Senator Paddy Burke:

Senator Burke welcomed the extra one thousand Gardai being recruited and said a further one thousand would be recruited in three months' time. He queried the Drug seizure figures for Mayo and asked if it is due to an decrease in usage or a decrease in detection?

In response Chief Superintendent Ray McMahon thanked everyone for their comments and said the fight against drugs is a priority despite the decreasing numbers and they are constantly monitoring the unit with transfers in and out. They take a cohesive approach with several different agencies involved not just AGS.

No homeless persons have approached AGS yet, but they would not turn them away.

Only one minor incident in Breaffy House Hotel has been reported to AGS.

AGS would welcome legislation going through the Dail that would enable the placement of cameras in appropriate locations to help identify/prevent crime.

He thanked Superintendent Tom Calvey, who retired in March, for his excellent dedicated service and on behalf of AGS wished him a happy and healthy retirement. He will be replaced by Superintendent Deirdre Gill. A Sergeant will be appointed to Achill in due course.

5. Update from Sub-Committee's

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

The Group discussed what this sub-committee can promote / implement with the JPC, based on actions under the Strategic Plan. Presentations (specifically for information at JPC) at last meeting were identified as follows:

- Michéal Durcan (Co-Ordinator of Western Region Drugs and Alcohol Task Force) to update JPC on Planet Youth Project AND the DRIVE (Drug Related Intimidation and Violence Engagement)
- Invite new Crime Prevention Officer Seán Cunnane to present on various Community Scheme's, e.g. "Neighbourhood Watch", "Community Alert and Text Alert Schemes". It would be also useful to bring same presentation to Mayo's Older Persons Council AGM.
- Raise awareness around the many programmes operated by AGS to reduce crime, e.g. Operation Thor – aimed at reducing burglaries. A report / presentation from AGS on the programmes operated to reduce crime, e.g. Operation Thór.

Community Engagement – Cllr. Michael Loftus (C)

- The Group is currently working on an initiative to increase community interaction between elderly / vulnerable / those living alone and the Gardaí. An example of an intergenerational project around the cost of living was discussed.
- This idea of an intergenerational project will be explored further with Age Friendly Mayo and Comhairle na nÓg. A recruitment drive for young people promoting AGS recruitment campaign as a career was also highlighted.
- Also, the gap between primary care and acute care for those with mental health was discussed. The Community Access Support Teams (CAST), is a pilot programme in Limerick. It is intended to create a specialist uniform garda unit, which will work with health professionals to provide a rapid and integrated round the clock response to people with mental health issues. Invite Gerry Roache to present on progress of programme in Limerick.

Advance Question

• **Cllr. Christy Hyland:**

How many crimes were committed by people on Bail for the years, 2021 and 2022?

• **Deputy Alan Dillon:**

To ask the Chief Supt Raymond McMahon if he will reverse the decision to re-locating the Immigration Office from the Mayo/Roscommon/Longford Division Headquarters in Castlebar to Ballyhaunis Garda Station where there is inadequate public transport available to access appointments; these immigrants have no mode of transport and I would call on the Chief Supt. to outline the rationale for making this decision following the huge influx of immigrants into Mayo and surrounding areas over the past 12 months with Westport and Castlebar the main hubs for migrant refugees.



- To ask the Crime Prevention Officer and Community Policing Unit if they will promote the purchase of a Property Marking Machine, which can punch the EIRCODE or other identifying information onto household or farm property. Mayo and Kerry are the only two counties without a property marking machine and I would call on the JPC Chairperson and Superintendents to write to Mayo County Council CEO Kevin Kelly requesting the local authority to purchase a property marking machine to be used as part of a community led safety programme. It will also support An Garda Síochána to reunite lost or stolen items with their owners.
- To ask the Chief Supt Raymond McMahon to outline the number of Gardaí in Mayo compared to a year ago, why is Mayo not adequately resourced, the reason for a reduction in Garda numbers despite a notable increase in population and crime in the County.
- To ask the Chief Supt Raymond McMahon who is replacing Superintendent Joe McKenna in the Divisional HQ Garda Station in Castlebar dealing with serious crime and if he will confirm that Castlebar Garda station will not be left without a Superintendent for this important hub.
- To ask the Chief Supt Raymond McMahon why he is not permanently based in Castlebar at the Mayo, Roscommon/Longford divisional headquarters following the amalgamation of the Mayo and Roscommon/Longford Garda Divisions to oversee the modernisation of the new policing model following the retirement of Chief Supt Tony Healy.

In response Chief Superintendent Ray McMahon said that 9.3% of crimes committed were by people on bail. A total of 678 crimes over a three-year period were committed were by people on bail.

He said the decision to centralise the Immigration Office was made on operational grounds, which he could not go into in more detail, but they are looking at making any necessary visit to it a once of year requirement. They are also looking into the provision of an Outreach Facility.

Regarding the Castlebar Superintendent, Superintendent Moran will cover the Mayo South Area. There has been a reduction of eight Garda in Co Mayo which is in line with the national trends. The upper age limit for joining AGS is 35.

AGS would support the purchase of a property marking machine and will write to Mayo County Council to see if we can progress this.

7. AOB

There was no item under AOB.

**This concluded the business of the meeting, the next JPC meeting is on
23rd June 2023, at 11.00 a.m.**

Signed: Cllr Al McDonnell