

COMHAIRLE CHONTAE DHUN NA nGALL

Oifig Riarthóir na gCruinnithe
Aras an Chontae
LEIFEAR
11 Deireadh Fómhair, 2013

FOGRA CRUINNITHE

Beidh Cruinniú Speisialta den Comhairle Chontae Dhún na nGall ar siúl De hAoine 18 Deireadh Fómhair, 2013 ag 2.00 i.n. le plé a dhéanamh ar na hábhair atá sa Chlár leis seo.

Mise, le meas

Liam Mac a'Bhaird
Riarthóir Cruinnithe Gníomhach

DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

Office of Meetings Administrator
County House
LIFFORD.

11th October, 2013

NOTICE OF MEETING

A Special Meeting of Donegal County Council will be held on Friday 18th October, 2013 at 2.00pm in the County House, Lifford.

TO EACH MEMBER OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

Dear Councillor

You are summoned to attend this meeting of the Council. The Agenda is attached.

Yours sincerely

Liam Ward
Meetings Administrator

AGENDA

To discuss the recent spate of break-ins and thefts in Donegal.

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL,
HELD IN THE COUNTY HOUSE, LIFFORD ON 18th OCTOBER, 2013**

C/480/13 MEMBERS PRESENT

Clrs. Ian Mc Garvey, Mayor, L. Blaney, J. Boyle, J. Campbell, P. Canning, M. Doherty, M. Farren, M.T. Gallagher, M. Harley, D. Larkin, F. Mc Brearty, M. McBride, P. McGowan, B. Mc Guinness, Jack Murray, S. O'Domhnaill, M. Quinn, and T. Slowey.

C/481/13 MEMBERS JOINT POLICING COMMITTEE PRESENT

Lawrance Mc Manus, Patrick Sweeney, Lorraine Thompson Detective Superintendent Andrew Archbold, (Buncrana Division) representing the Chief Superintendent, Terry Mc Ginn and Garda Sean Mulroe.

C/482/13 OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Liam Ward, Director of Corporate and Housing/Meetings Administrator, Mr. Michael Heaney, Director Community, Culture and Planning, Ms Aideen Doherty, Administrative Officer, Community, Culture & Planning, Mr. Charles Sweeney, Administrative Officer, Community Culture & Planning, Ms. Ann Marie Conlon, Communications Officer, Ms Anne Marie Crawford, Staff Officer, Corporate Services.

C/483/13 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from the following who were unable to attend the meeting:-

Clr. David Alcorn, Clr. Sean Mc Eniff, Clr. Noel Mc Bride, Clr. John Ryan, Deputy Joe Mc Hugh, Senator Brian O' Domhnaill, and Chief Superintendent Terry Mc Ginn, Mr. Seamus Neely, County Manager, Mr Joe Peoples, A/Director Water & Environment, and Mr. J. Mc Laughlin, Director Roads & Transportation.

C/484/13 DISCUSSION ON RECENT THEFTS AND BREAK-INS IN DONEGAL

Mr. Liam Ward, Meetings Administrator responding to queries regarding the format of the meeting, confirmed that the Members of the County Donegal Joint Policing Committee would be permitted to address the Council and engage in the discussion as appropriate.

He then called on Detective Superintendent Archbold, to outline his role in the proceedings.

DS Archbold thus informed Members that he was the Superintendent in charge of the Buncrana Division and was representing the Chief Superintendent, Terry Mc Ginn who was unable to attend because of a prior commitment. His role, he said, was to listen to the issues and concerns raised by the Members of the Council and the Joint Policing Committee and convey same to the Chief Superintendent for her attention. This, he affirmed, would assist with the preparation of various strategies and the Policing Plan going forward. He advised that he was not in position to make a presentation or discuss individual cases, but would assist with the discussion where appropriate.

A lengthy debate ensued during which Members alluded to the county-wide extent of the problems and the fact that many sections of the community were now living in fear because of the spiralling increase in thefts and burglaries.

Some concern was expressed that the Joint Policing Committee had little or no power, and was at this juncture nothing more than a talking shop. The need for greater accountability was highlighted.

Clr. Mc Brearty said he was of the opinion that Senior Garda Officers needed to be more accountable for community policing and that JPC Members themselves should be able to converse and direct questions as appropriate to senior personnel.

It was imperative, he added, that the Joint Policing Committees had an input into the overall policing plan for Donegal.

Concern was expressed in relation to recent correspondence issued by the Chief Superintendent outlining the current status of the Drugs Taskforce in the County. Whilst there was no confirmation that the Task Force was being disbanded, there was some consternation as to whether or not it was actually being reduced. Members took exception to the interpretation in the letter that emigration within the 18-30 age-grouping had led to a reduced need for the Taskforce.

Clr. Quinn advised that the situation in Donegal was at crisis level. He referred to a number of statistics which had been included in

the Donegal North & East Sinn Féin “Impacts and Attitudes towards Crime Survey” and advised of the following:-

- 59% of people interviewed believed that the level of crime and anti-social behaviour had risen over the past five years.
- 50% of persons interviewed believed that the Garda presence in their community had markedly decreased over the past five years.
- 79% of persons interviewed would like to see an increase in Garda Patrols.
- 92% of persons interviewed did not belong to Community Alert or Neighbourhood Watch Schemes.
- 86% of persons interviewed would like to play a greater role in assisting Gardai.
- 26% of persons interviewed did not feel safe in their own community.

Subsequent recommendations had, he confirmed, highlighted the need for an increase in Garda numbers, the ending of the staff embargo, a protracted move towards the process of civilianisation so as to free up fully trained Gardai, raised Garda visibility in areas of high crime, and an input of additional resources into supporting and expanding Community Alert/Neighbourhood Watch schemes.

The report, he advised, had been submitted to the Chief Superintendent for inclusion in the Policing Plan for 2014.

Clr. Mc Guinness, responding to a call for a meeting with the Garda Commissioner said that Members needed to be updated in relation to a number of key statistics before any such meeting could take place. These included:

- Details of the number of serving Gardaí in Donegal for the past 10 years.
- Statistics for various areas in the County so as to analyse ongoing trends.
- The number of Community Gardaí based in Donegal over the past 10 years.
- The number of Community Alert Areas and plans if any to establish more across the County.

A variety of issues it was acknowledged had contributed to the current crisis. These included:-

1. The closure of Garda Stations and District Headquarters.
2. Diminishing manpower and resources on the ground.
3. Lack of recognition for Donegal's cross-border position.
4. Diminished Garda representation at Community Alert/ Neighbourhood Watch Meetings.

A number of suggestions were made with regard to the possible enhancement of security measures throughout the County. These included:-

- 1) Placing of cameras at strategic locations and the necessity of setting aside monies at Budget time for a " Camera System" which could be installed in houses occupied by elderly residents.
- 2) Automatic number plate recognition.
- 3) Promotion of Community Alert/ Neighbourhood Watch Programmes, and increased Garda representation at these meetings.
- 4) Interim measures needed to deal with the increasing number of Repeat Offenders.
- 5) Need for dedicated Gardai to establish links with local communities and maintain a visual presence on the ground.
- 6) The need to amend current legislation regarding the regulation of "Cash for Gold" outlets , Scrap Yards etc on the basis that recent statistics showed a marked increase in the robbery of jewellery, metals, cabling etc.
- 7) The possible amendment of the scope of the "Elderly Persons Grant" in 2014 to include funding for security cameras and sensor lighting.
- 8) Need to employ new methods of detection including the use of super camera technology.
- 9) Use of On the Spot Fines as a deterrent measure.
- 10) Provision of unmarked cars for Garda personnel.

The community in general it was acknowledged needed to be kept updated in relation to resource issues. It was noted that the North West Region Cross-Border Group could possibly provide an effective forum for cross-border interaction, and that this link could be progressed with the assistance of the Chair of the Joint Policing Committee, Clr. Noel Mc Bride.

A number of Members alluded to excellent work carried out by An Garda Síochána in Donegal and advised of the fact that not all criminal activity was cross-border in nature. It was noted that a number of Community Alert Committees were working extremely well and that in such instances there was little need for a Garda presence.

Mr. Patrick Sweeney, Member of the County Donegal Joint Policing Committee advised that in his opinion the committee had become merely a talking shop. He welcomed the call to meet with the Garda Commissioner and outlined the necessity of setting up a Special Taskforce to deal with the current issues. It was important, he added, that Neighbourhood Watch Committees received adequate assistance from the Gardai and that a concerted effort was made to promote the use of the Neighbourhood Texting System.

Mr. Lawrence Mc Manus, Member of the County Donegal Joint Policing Committee advised of the serious implications, arising from reduced Garda Resources in the Pettigo Area. He called for a reversal of the recent budgetary cuts in the Elderly Persons Telephone Allowance.

Ms Lorraine Thompson outlined the need for a planned systematic approach to crime prevention. The punitive approach, it was noted, was not working and that there was a need for further appraisal of other methods of reparation, including victim impact resolution.

Superintendent Archbold thanked all concerned for their contribution. He advised that An Garda Síochána had not been immune to cuts or the embargo on recruitment. The current situation, he added, presented many challenges and necessitated the constant redeployment of resources.

He alluded to the excellent work carried out by the Crime Analysis Service and its contribution to crime prevention thus ensuring the provision of an adequate response in dedicated locations. He applauded the valuable work carried out by Community Alert/ Neighbourhood Watch Schemes, and confirmed that these initiatives would be further enhanced by the operation of the new Text Alert Policy. There were, he noted, many challenges to be faced and that greater flexibility was required to ensure the maintenance of existing services. He acknowledged the ongoing

collaboration between the Gardai and the Joint Policing Committees in the County.

After some discussion it was resolved on the proposal of Clr. Mc Gowan, seconded by, Clr. Canning, that a meeting be sought with the Garda Commissioner to discuss the situation in Donegal.

Clr. Larkin, proposed, seconded by, Clr. Mc Garvey, that consideration be given to establishment of an Estate Monitoring Pilot Scheme in Letterkenny.

Clr. M. Mc Bride thanked all who had contributed to the meeting, advising that the important issue going forward was continued collaboration with An Garda Siochana. The many issues raised, he confirmed, only served to highlight the concerns that existed in the community as a whole. It was imperative, he added, that there was adequate follow-up in relation to the issues as highlighted.

Members concluding the debate called on Superintendent Archbold to convey their concerns to the Chief Superintendent with regard to recent comments on the status of the Drugs Taskforce in the County. The Mayor thanked all who had attended the meeting. He acknowledged the serious nature of the debate and advised of the need to convey the message to the general public that Donegal was still a safe place to live in.

This concluded the business of the meeting.