



**Letterkenny
Chamber**
Advancing business together

GARDA RESOURCES DONEGAL

A DOCUMENT OUTLINING CONCERNS FROM THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY ON TOWN CENTRE SAFETY AND INADEQUATE GARDA RESOURCES

SENT TO:

JUSTICE MINISTER
GARDA COMMISSIONER
CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT
ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES

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27th February 2025

Urgent Need for Increased Garda Resources in Letterkenny, Co.Donegal

I am writing to you on behalf of concerned members, business owners, and workers in Letterkenny regarding the alarming increase in criminal and anti-social behaviour in our community. Over the years, we have repeatedly called for additional Garda resources, yet these requests have been met with insufficient long-term action or planning. We believe that public safety is at a critical juncture, and urgent measures must be taken to restore order and security in our town.

Retail and security personnel are being subjected to daily threats, intimidation, and violent behaviour, including incidents involving knives. Theft in shops has escalated, creating a climate of fear for staff and customers, and damaging Letterkenny's reputation as a safe and welcoming place to live and work.

The current Garda presence is inadequate to address these challenges. Response times are reported as unacceptably slow. The centralised call system is inefficient, often leaving urgent matters unresolved or severely delayed. The 999 emergency service is overwhelmed, and local calls to the Garda station are frequently unanswered or not responded to due to a lack of available officers.

Key concerns include:

- **Lack of Garda presence:** We know from experience that regular high visibility policing works. The level of patrols is clearly insufficient at present to deter crime, safeguard the community or establish a community connection. Gardai need to be freed up from administration and other duties to create a presence.
- **Limited resources:** We are aware that on a **good day** (with overtime) Letterkenny Garda Station operates with only two cars for despatch.

Letterkenny is a town of 20,000 people with an additional 15000 coming here for work each day. Letterkenny is consistently the busiest district in the Northern Region yet the Gardai are expected to operate on less than half the resources of towns similar in size and with similar levels of reported crime. We find this situation astounding and it is now time to redress this imbalance.

- **Absence of a Community Policing Unit:** Previously, community policing officers played a vital role in crime prevention and local engagement, but as far as we can see they have not been replaced.
- **No permanent Superintendent:** Over a year has passed since the last Superintendent retired, leaving a leadership vacuum that must be addressed immediately.

- **Diversion of Garda resources:** Officers are frequently pulled away from core policing duties to attend court, deal with mental health cases, organising a doctor to get a referral to psychiatric unit and then supervising the person until they are taken into a unit. They are also involved in the Tusla Children's system. There must be another solution other than stretching Garda resources even further.
- **Excessive administrative tasks:** From our understanding a lot of Garda time is taken up with paperwork and administration of cases due in court. This further reduces availability of gardai to respond to incidents and lessens its visibility in the community.
- **Failure to plan for future growth:** With Letterkenny's population set to expand significantly over the next 15 years. We can see no evidence of a corresponding plan to increase Garda resources. An increased population will bring increases in crime and societal issues and there will have to be a robust plan in place to deal with this.

We cannot continue to accept a reactive policing model that merely 'firefights' incidents rather than preventing crime. Without intervention, there is a serious risk that ongoing anti-social behaviour will escalate into more violent attacks. A structured approach, such as the 'Small Area Policing Initiative' that was successfully implemented in Dublin, could offer a viable solution for Letterkenny.

We have met with Gardai to voice our concerns in the past and they have facilitated short term solutions, such as patrols in the weeks following the meetings. However these patrols are not sustained and not consistent due to resources and it is of the utmost importance that a long term solution is implemented. The increase in frequency and violence is escalating and reaching crisis point and we are not expecting things to improve as there is simply a lack of resources. The system for protecting the community and preventing anti-social behaviour is broken and something needs to change.

We urge you to:

1. **Advocate for an immediate increase in Garda numbers and resources in Letterkenny.**
2. **Advocate for an increase in visibility and Garda patrol in Letterkenny**
3. **Support the re-establishment of a dedicated Community Policing Unit.**
4. **Ensure the appointment of a permanent Superintendent to lead local law enforcement.**
5. **Review the efficiency of and overhaul the centralised call system and response times.**

6. **Address the diversion of Garda resources into non-policing roles and administration.**

The safety of our residents and businesses is non-negotiable. We ask that you treat this issue with the urgency it deserves and work towards a sustainable and effective solution. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further at your earliest convenience.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. We look forward to your prompt response and action.

Yours sincerely,

Toni Forrester
CEO