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Minister looking at Fingal Garda District options – Kennedy

MINISTER FOR Justice Brian Lenihan has welcomed suggestions from Dublin North's Fianna Fail Deputy Michael Kennedy on the improvement of policing provision in the Dublin North area and revealed that he is actively considering the option of including the Dublin North area in his planned reshuffle of the Garda Divisional Boundaries.

Deputy Kennedy said: "I have been seeking this designation of Swords and Balbriggan Garda Stations as divisional stations for years now, as the advantages of having that status are innumerable. Not only would various divisional taskforces be based there, but there would be a substantial increase in the number of Garda based there too. As divisional stations, Swords and Balbriggan would also benefit from having a permanent residence of a Chief Superintendent, who would oversee the running of various local stations."

"At the moment, Swords and Malahide fall under the division of Coolock Garda Station, whilst Balbriggan, Skerries, Lusk and Rush fall under the jurisdiction of the Louth/Meath district. I believe that the population of the greater Fingal area merit elevation to the same status, keeping the running of all local investigations firmly in local hands. The designation of Swords and Balbriggan as divisional stations would also mean more effective work from the Joint Policing Committee which would no longer be crossing local authority districts."

"In discussions with the Minister for Justice, we addressed the issue of Garda numbers in North Dublin. I first suggested an overall increase in the level of Garda in Swords, which has experienced a population boom in recent years. The need for further resources is clear when we take into account the fact that Swords Station also has jurisdiction in other large areas, such as Donabate and Portrane.

"Balbriggan, who are already catering for its own huge population increase, also includes the growing areas of Skerries, Rush and Lusk and clearly needs extra Garda ."

"In addition to this, I made it clear to the Minister that additional Garda are required for the Malahide Station which also takes in the growing Drynam, Holywell, Kinsealy and Portmarnock areas."

"I also called for the introduction of a Garda cycle unit across the county, to better tackle perpetrators of antisocial behaviour which is a scourge on many communities. And I stressed the importance of introducing measures to make parents financially responsible for the vandalism of their children, and sought a plan from the Minister for tackling the proliferation of drug use by the middle classes."

“In addition I conveyed my concerns about the late-night opening of bars in some of the county’s larger towns, such as Swords and requested that the Minister introduce measures to stagger the closing times of late-night pubs. This will avoid the current situation which sees crowds spill out onto the streets at the same late time every night – all competing for taxis etc.”

“I have been assured by the Minister that he will consider carefully all of my suggestions and I am optimistic that some of these measures will be introduced as part of ongoing improvements of Garda services in Dublin North,” Deputy Kennedy concluded.