

Limerick crime could go out of control - AGSI

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The Limerick Branch of the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors has called for a dramatic increase in garda resources to help deal with the escalating crime problem in the city.

The call was made at the branch's annual general meeting at the weekend which heard several members complain about the severe stress involved in trying to maintain a police service with massively depleted numbers.

"Many members at the meeting complained that the crime scene in Limerick is now in danger of getting out of control – witness the mugging recently in broad daylight of Sabine Sheehan, a young lady who was attempting to portray a good image of the city," said the General Secretary of the AGSI, George Maybury. "It is clear that criminals in this city are aware of the garda staff shortages and are taking full advantage."

The meeting heard of the impossible task facing sergeants and inspectors in trying to find personnel to send to incidents. The meeting also heard that:

- 'Headline' offences – the totals of murder, manslaughter, sexual offences, robberies, burglaries and larcenies, went from 2,779 in the year 2000 to 3,564 in 2001, the latest full year for which statistics were available – an increase of 22%. Indications are that the figures for 2002 will be higher.
- Limerick had by far highest number of homicides of any division in 2001 – 18 as opposed to six each for DMR North Central and DMR North.
- Limerick has the second highest rate of murders in the country when expressed per 100,000 of population. In 2001 this was 5.42. DMR North Central topped the league at 7.93.
- In the 11 years from 1991 to 2002, Limerick was also third highest division in the country for murders/manslaughters with a total of 52 as against 59 for DMR West and 55 for DMR South.
- Community gardai are regularly diverted to escort work in Limerick which means that they cannot carry out their other valuable work in

the community, work which is specially important in the Limerick context, ” said Mr Maybury. “A cycle patrol was promised for last September, but this has not yet materialised in spite of the fact that personnel were interviewed.”