



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY

23/02/2017

**Policing Authority meeting in public with Garda Commissioner
Opening Statement by Chairperson Josephine Feehily**

(Check against delivery)

This meeting in public of the Policing Authority with the Garda Commissioner and her senior team takes place at a time of very considerable public controversy in relation to the Garda Síochána and the Garda Commissioner personally.

This meeting also takes place in the context of the establishment of a Tribunal of Inquiry under Mr. Justice Peter Charleton to investigate a range of matters, including allegations of wrongdoing contained in certain protected disclosures.

That being the case it is appropriate at the start of this meeting that I reflect on the remit of the Authority for the information of the public.

The Policing Authority, as part of a complex architecture of Garda oversight, has a quite specific and carefully delineated role given to it by the Oireachtas. Whatever about the role we **ought** to have, and indeed the Authority itself may have views on that question in due course, we have the role and remit given to us – no more and no less.

The overarching remit is to oversee the performance by the Garda Síochána of its policing functions, and a range of specific functions or tasks are given to us in that regard. This remit relates to the Garda Síochána **organisation** including its systems, processes, effectiveness, achievement of targets etc. If you like, it relates to the performance of the body corporate to use business language.

Individual accountability is a different matter in the statute. The personal accountability of Garda members is to their superiors, the Garda Commissioner or GSOC depending on the circumstances, and the Garda Commissioner's accountability is to the Minister and the Government for the performance of the Commissioner's functions and those of the Garda Síochána.

It is a clear statutory distinction of which the Authority has to be mindful, particularly in the current context where the Government has decided to set up a Tribunal of Inquiry to investigate certain matters, including allegations relating to both the current and former Garda Commissioners personally. We are mindful that there are a range of questions which the Authority would like to ask and no doubt questions which the public would like to see asked and would like answers to. However, as a matter of course, we are not in a position to discuss, in public, the specifics of any open investigation, whether a criminal investigation or an internal investigation. This is also the case

in relation to matters which are the subject of a Tribunal of Inquiry. Both Authority members and Garda representatives are aware that care needs to be taken in our questions and answers, and this includes not to comment on or criticise a person outside this meeting or encroach on the work of the Tribunal.

That being said, it is within our remit to discuss relevant process and system issues and to discuss how current matters are impacting on Garda performance and on public confidence in policing. We already commenced our discussion last week when the Authority had two additional meetings, including one with the Garda Commissioner at her request. We have arranged our agenda today with our remit in mind, beginning with public confidence and performance questions, and moving on to questions about the Garda Code of Ethics.

Commissioner, rather than making an opening statement, can I ask you how you will assure the Authority and by extension the community that Garda performance is not suffering because of the impacts of public controversy and of engaging and appearing before a Tribunal of Inquiry? Can you assure us about the targets in the Policing Plan and that the foot won't come off the accelerator so to speak on organisation change? Can I ask you to be as specific as possible please.