



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY

Minutes – Policing Strategy and Performance Committee Meeting

Date: 20 July 2023

Venue: 90 North King Street & Zoom

Authority: Deborah Donnelly (Chair), Moling Ryan, Paul Mageean, Gillian Imery

Secretary: Philip Cox

Executive: Helen Hall, Cormac Keating, Mark Nother, Judy Higgins

1. Closed session

Committee members did not exercise the standing option to conduct a closed session.

2. Committee Administration

The Committee Chair opened the meeting with an update that was provided following an advance meeting with the Deputy Commissioner, Policing and Security, regarding the agenda and recent Authority engagement. The agenda was agreed as set, and no conflicts of interest were declared. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved with minor adjustments made. The Committee was informed that its Terms of Reference were approved by the Authority at its June meeting. The Executive provided the Committee with an overview of any pertinent developments since the last meeting. It was agreed that items on the Committee's Log of Actions that were proposed to close will be closed.

3. Policing Performance

The Executive advised the Committee that an update in relation to the Garda Operating Model was received at short notice. A number of matters relating to the Q2 Policing Performance Report and wider organisational performance were identified for further engagement with the Garda Síochána Representatives in Part B of the meeting.

4. Community Safety

The Committee considered material provided by the Executive in relation to community safety and a number of areas were identified for discussion with the Garda Síochána Representatives in Part B of the meeting.

Part B – Meeting with Garda Síochána representatives

Authority: As previous.

Executive: As previous.

Garda Síochána: Deputy Commissioner Anne Marie McMahon (Policing and Security), Deputy Commissioner Shawna Coxon (Strategy, Governance & Performance), Assistant Commissioner Paula

Hilman (Roads Policing and Community Engagement), Assistant Commissioner Justin Kelly (Organised and Serious Crime), Superintendent David Butler (Policing Authority Liaison Office), Eimear Bourke (Strategic Transformation Office), Deirdre Morris (Strategic Transformation Office).

5. Closed Session

The standing option to conduct a closed session was not exercised. The Committee Chair noted the occasion of the first in-person meeting of the Committee since February 2020.

6. Policing Performance

The Committee expressed its appreciation to the Garda Representatives of the huge amount of work undertaken in providing the recent quarterly report on Policing Performance, as well as the work that it captures.

Policing Plan 2023

The Garda Representatives outlined that the structure of public-facing Divisional Policing Plans, which will soon be published on the Garda website, will follow the broad pillars of the Policing Plan 2023, and within the pillars, local concerns can be addressed, so that people now see themselves being reflected in the National Plans. It was provided that external constraints, including translation, have slowed down publication, and that progress against the Divisional Plans is regularly measured and assessed at Divisional Performance Assurance Framework (PAF) meetings.

Impacts on Policing Plan 2024 and Garda Síochána Strategy 2022-2024

The Committee queried the Garda Organisation's confidence that the strategic objectives, as set out in the Garda Síochána Strategy 2022-2024, will be achieved by the end of 2024. The Garda Representatives expressed confidence that movement continues in the right direction, but accepted that there are concerns about achieving the necessary pace of change with the current resourcing challenges. In that regard, it was provided that the planned recruitment of specialist resources in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) through the services of an external recruiter will take time, and an optimistic expectation would be the end of 2023 or Q1 2024.

Organisational Performance Assessment: Internal Assessment and Learning

The Committee heard that the process of overseeing effectiveness against the Policing Plan 2023 (the Plan) incorporates the use of reporting templates, which include space for progress and risks to be recorded, and are shared with action owners. The Garda Representatives set out that when it comes to quarterly reporting, reports from action owners of progress against the targets in the Plan are collated by the relevant Assistant Commissioner and are then provided to the Senior Leadership Team that reflects on the impact of, and learnings from, actions. It was agreed that further engagement will occur on the timing of the next quarterly report, which should also include impact analysis and examples of where impacts have been made. It was provided that the Strategic Transformation Office recently completed a mid-term review of the Garda Síochána Strategy 2022-2024, in which a number of complete projects, for example RDMS, were assessed, and those learnings have been incorporated in

reporting against the Plan. An organisational shift towards assessing how one project influences another was reported.

The Committee expressed appreciation of the inclusion of some assessment of the impact of actions and interventions in regular reporting against the Plan. The Garda Representatives asserted confidence in achieving the targets set out in the Plan. The Garda Representatives provided that recruitment and retention of staff remain difficult, that for this reason reallocation of tasks from Garda members to Garda staff has not progressed as hoped this year, and that weekly discussions on prioritisation of projects and targets take place.

The Garda Operating Model was discussed as a specific example of a challenging target and the Garda Representatives provided that if issues are addressed quickly it could still be achievable in the main, although accommodation issues in a number of divisions will push the rollout beyond the end of 2023; many of the challenges, including accommodation and recruitment, are beyond the control of the Garda Síochána. The example of economic crime was also discussed, and the Committee heard that, particularly in the DMR, a number of vacancies have arisen for a multitude of reasons, including but not exclusive to Civil Service Mobility. The Garda Representatives noted that GNECB staff are very attractive to industry.

The Garda Representatives described plans to alleviate recruitment capacity challenges by using a three-pronged approach: the Public Appointments Service (PAS), Garda Síochána competitions, using its recruitment license, and using an external recruitment agency. The Garda Representatives expressed awareness that ongoing Operating Model changes, the dispute around rosters, and, in particular, the lack of clarity on the terms and conditions of existing and future Garda staff on 1 January 2024 are impacting the attractiveness of the Garda Síochána as an employer. The Garda Representatives reported change fatigue as a factor, both in terms of providing momentum and in assessing what can currently be achieved with the challenges in play.

The Committee noted that the recent Quarterly Performance Assessment against the Plan indicates that reporting of sexual offences has recently dropped by 13%, and the Garda Representatives provided that no particular reason for that drop has been pinpointed, and it was affirmed that both resourcing in this area and publicity around sexual crime are the best they have ever been. The Garda Representatives reported that feedback from the non-governmental organisation (NGO) sector is positive in the main, that the relevant policies are in order, the domestic violence policy is ready for issue, and that the direction of travel is positive overall. The Garda Representatives reported that a detailed analysis of the reported sexual crime numbers has not been done by the Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau (GNDOCB).

The Committee also noted that the level of call-backs completed within 3 days of a reported incident, to victims of suspected domestic abuse, has dropped to around 70% from over 80% during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Garda Representatives set out that call-backs are made in all cases even where the 3 day target is exceeded. It was provided that Regional completion rates are discussed weekly by management and that the real situation is better than the call-backs statistic makes it look on the surface. The Committee was assured that domestic violence is at the forefront of the work in Divisions, that the intervention policy, bail and other issues are discussed regularly and that the appropriate awareness is present. The Garda Representatives provided that the understanding is that the call-back rate represents actual contacts, rather than attempted call-backs, but that the Chief Information Officer

(CIO) would have the appropriate detail. A case was referenced, in which the use of the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment Tool led to an intervention where otherwise a homicide may have occurred. It was also provided that the current strategic focus is on improving the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment Tool.

The Committee noted that including red RAG statuses in the reporting under ICT projects that might not happen would be an important signal both to organisational teams and to the Senior Leadership, and the Garda Representatives agreed to take that on board.

Economic Crime

The Committee asked about resourcing of the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) in line with the recommendations of the Hamilton Report, and appropriate prioritisation. The Garda Representatives described changes in personnel, provided that the GNECB now has its full complement of senior staff assigned, but noted that transferring members, who tend to come predominantly from the Dublin Metropolitan Region (DMR), to GNECB, must be done incrementally, in order not to deplete their previous units. Current staffing levels were provided by the Garda Representatives, and it was reported that future needs are being reassessed, as the previous needs assessment was deemed unrealistic. The Committee welcomed this re-prioritisation. The principle of sharing into Divisions, via the GNECB, of lessons learned, examples of success and expertise in operations to combat organised crime was discussed.

The challenges of addressing drugs-related intimidation (DRI) in organised crime were discussed, and the Committee heard that the Garda Síochána take every opportunity to pursue prosecutions against those engaged in this criminal behaviour, welcome and endeavour to use all related information they receive, not only to prosecute suspects for DRI, but also other offences.

7. Community Safety

The appointment of Divisional Inspectors with responsibility for Community Safety, in mapped areas within the Community Policing Framework, was queried by the Committee, and no resistance was reported by the Garda Representatives, who outlined that resourcing is an ongoing issue causing delays at the Garda National Community Engagement Bureau (GNCEB), and that community policing needs an agile and flexible structure. The Garda Representatives reported that in some areas the mapping exercise overcomplicated the framework – for example in Dublin North Inner City it was appropriate but it was not needed in Kerry – and that on a practical basis it is not helpful to be totally prescriptive about areas.

Engaging with and Protecting Young People

The Committee addressed the approach of Juvenile Liaison Officers (JLOs) to engagement with children and young people, including suspected offenders, and drew comparison with the general approach of the majority of Garda members with young people. The Garda Representatives accepted that there appears to be a variance of approach, and noted some factors identified by JLOs that positively impact the interactions between Garda members and children and young people - these include consistency, the ratio of Gardaí to population, specific training in dealing with younger people, including understanding adverse childhood experience, trauma-informed practice, and the use of restorative justice. The Garda Representatives provided that although not perfect, the approach of the JLOs is good

and they are valued members, and that because all Garda members interact with young people, the approach of the JLOs should be spread across the organisation. The GNCEB plan to make proposals on this to senior management. In addition, it was provided by the Garda Representatives that because JLOs also work closely with drugs units in a local context, as well as participating in Performance Assurance Framework (PAF) meetings and operational tasking, it has not yet been finalised where they will sit in the Divisional Operating Model.

The Committee mentioned its previous request to revisit the Garda decision not to develop a strategy or bespoke plan for children and young people, who represent a particularly vulnerable grouping in terms of their interactions with police. The Garda Representatives set out that such a move would lead to a perceived need for the elderly, Irish Travellers and other groups to have an analogous strategy, and that as a consequence intersectionality would be lost. The Committee heard, however, that a structured plan is in development, through which children and young people at high risk of offending are dealt with via the Youth Diversion System, those with safety and welfare concerns are channelled via Divisional Protective Services Units (DPSUs), and responsibility for youth engagement rests with all Garda members.

In relation to the role of JLOs and the Youth Diversion Monitoring Committee, the Garda Representatives stated that in their view the committee should not be within the sole remit of the Garda Síochána, because the Youth Diversion System is a Governmental strategy, related to the Children's Act, rather than Garda strategy.

The Garda Representatives outlined that the draft revised Terms of Reference for the National Diversity Forum (NDF) are with the Assistant Commissioner, that conversations around the terms continue, and that the principles relating to Local Diversity Fora are also wrapped up within that process.

In relation to a number of recent media reports relating to children in care, the Garda Representatives provided that Operation Cosnaím has been in place since 2020 in conjunction with Tusla, covering all types of care provision from foster homes to residential care. Work in this area was reported as difficult, as there is a reliance on people in contact with children and young people in care to notice indicators of sexual exploitation and report them to Tusla, which results in a report to the Garda National Protective Services Bureau (GNPSB), which leads to investigation by the Garda Síochána. The Committee heard that so far in 2023, 15 such referrals have been received and a number of investigations are ongoing.

Relatedly, the Garda Representatives reported that training of specialist interviewers is planned, with emerging legal issues under discussion between the Garda Legal Section, the Garda College and the DPSUs. It was reported that transcription of specialist interviews is time consuming, and an automation pilot for transcription is underway, in conjunction with Garda Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). The Garda Representatives provided that wait times for specialist interviews are currently 48 hours to initial interview, where an assessment is made, following which prioritisation is carried out. It was reported that prioritisation can be difficult as non-sexual crime cases are also involved; GSOC cases also rely on specialist Garda interviewers, and it is planned to issue internal guidelines to clarify some grey areas and increase consistency in specialist interviewing while awaiting a full review of the best practice guidelines in this area, which depends on a number of external partners and may take some time.

Internal Learning and Ensuring Consistency

The Committee asked how learning from local initiatives is gleaned and disseminated through the organisation, and what processes are in place to allow knowledge sharing. The Garda Representatives reported that in the first instance, learnings from local initiatives are shared up the line through the rank and line management structure, and secondly that lessons are brought to policy owners, who share their knowledge through policy and procedures. The Committee heard that sharing of learnings is exemplified both by the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment Tool, piloted in Dublin, and by the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) quarterly online seminars, through each of which best practice is shared. In addition, the Garda Representatives provided that the Community Toolkit section of the Garda Portal contains a good practice section, as well as details of national initiatives, for example 'Ask for Angela', and relevant contact numbers.

In terms of policing protests, the Garda Representatives were asked whether the current approach, focussed on the prevention of escalation, was still appropriate. The Garda Representatives outlined that the position has not changed since the Committee's last engagement on the topic. It was outlined that each situation is assessed individually, and that arrests may take place later, when a case has been built against a suspect. Where advance notice of a protest is provided, the Garda Síochána Representatives reported engaging with organisers in advance. The Garda Representatives also provided that in many cases the removal of one disruptive person to a station is not practical, but insisted that there is no tolerance of criminal behaviour. In terms of community engagement, it was reported that the Garda Síochána are listening to the concerns of the LGBTQ+ community nationally through the NDF, and it was also noted that there is an international element to some of these protests. The Garda Representatives reiterated that action occurs after the fact, as well as dealing with incidents in the moment.

The Committee signalled an intention to return to the theme of policing children and young people.

8. AOB

No other business was raised.