



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY

Minutes – Policing Strategy and Performance Committee Meeting

Date: 22 September 2023

Venue: Zoom

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

Secretary: Philip Cox

Executive: Aoife Clabby, Mark Nother, Michal Alfasi-Hanley, John McCole, Barry Smith

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 the minutes of the previous meeting. A few minor adjustments were suggested and agreed upon, and no Declaration of Interests and Matters Arising were made. An update was provided on developments from/since the last Authority meeting, with the key points of discussion including updates on Deputy Commissioner and Chief Corporate Officer competitions, the Authority's observer capacity on the Strategic Human Rights Advisory Committee, visit from the Scottish Policing Authority, visits of Bob Collins and Helen Hall to various Superintendents, engagement with Professor Niamh Brennan (Chairperson of Garda Audit and Risk Committee), and discussions around the implementation of the PSCS Bill.

An outline of a conversation between the Committee Chair and Deputy Commissioner Strategy, Governance & Performance was provided. The agenda was agreed as set, and no conflicts of interest were declared. It was agreed that items on the Committee's Log of Actions that were proposed to close will be closed.

3. Policing Plan 2024 – Final Year of Strategy 22-24

The highlights of the draft Policing Plan 2024 were outlined. A number of matters relating to the Policing Plan and wider organisational performance were identified for further engagement with the Garda Síochána Representatives in Part B of the meeting.

4. Policing Priorities Review

The Committee considered material provided by the Executive in relation to Policing Priorities Review, 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 Shawna Coxon (Strategy, Governance & Performance), Assistant Commissioner Paula Hilman (Roads Policing and Community Engagement), Eimear Bourke (Executive Director, Strategic Transformation Office), Niamh O’Hara (Assistant Principal Officer, PALO), Andrew O’Sullivan (for part of meeting), Irene Campbell (Office of DC Strategy).

5. Closed Session

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

6. Policing Plan 2024 – Final Year of Strategy and Priorities 22-24

Outcomes Project

The meeting commenced with the Chair addressing the recent GAR response received in relation to the Outcomes Project. Garda representatives stated that this was a matter for Deputy of Policing and Security, but a summary on its progression was given, and the obstacles faced were outlined. It was said that the project leads are currently not in a position to discuss the data, so if the information was given to the Policing Authority at this time and there were questions about it, the project leads would not be in a position to answer them. It was noted that the Policing Authority deals with sensitive information from the Garda on an ongoing basis, and there has never been an abuse of that. The Garda representative gave an assurance that the concerns of the committee on this matter would be addressed with the Deputy Commissioner Policing and Security so that the conversation around this subject can continue.

Policing Plan 2024

In terms of the Policing Plan 2024, it was noted by the Chair that the Policing Authority welcomes receiving a very fulsome draft of the plan at this time of the year, as it enhances the discussions that can be had at this time. The positive feedback on the Policing Plan draft was acknowledged with thanks by the Garda representatives. An outline of how the organisation have brought the draft plan to where it is now was given including the various meeting held with the SLT to discuss the projection of the plan in line with the Pillars and Enablers. The main area of focus was the concept of orientating towards outcomes.

Community

Under the Community Pillar, a further update was sought on children and young people. An outline was provided by the Garda representatives on plans to develop a strategy in this area. The details around how they are going to achieve all of the ambitions and objectives are still being worked through, so the plan is currently at first draft stage. Relevant sections have been sent to teams such as Protective Services and the Youth Diversion Bureau for them to populate their sections of the plan. It was noted that the engagement aspect of the plan sits with the National Community Engagement Bureau. The Garda representative indicated that areas of the plan on which work has commenced include the Stop and Search of young people. Work has also been ongoing between the Gardaí and the Department of

Justice to create a workshop with the three pilot Community Safety Partnerships in conjunction with the Drogheda Implementation Board, on the rollout of Support Hubs or Support Forums. It was noted that some sections involved in the development of this plan do overlap, such as Protective Services, Community Engagement, and Youth Diversion. The ownership of the Plan was queried by the Committee and it was explained that Assistant Commissioner - Roads Policing & Community Engagement had ownership of Youth Diversion and Community Engagement, and Assistant Commissioner - Organised and Serious Crime has ownership of Protective Services. The Garda representative indicated that ownership of the plan as a whole was as yet undecided, but it was noted that with the new Bill, there is a vulnerability stream and the Service Lead over vulnerability will be Assistant Commissioner Organised and Serious Crime. The age range of the plan was queried, and it was said to incorporate anyone under the age of 18 years old. The point was raised by the Committee that there are some other strategies in place that define the age range of 'younger persons' up to 24. The Garda representative stated they believed this would make resourcing extremely challenging due to the number of offenses that would be included. The Garda representative suggested they would be open to be keeping this under review.

Community Policing Framework

The committee queried as to why the Community Policing Framework was not mentioned in the plan. The Garda representatives outlined that talks are ongoing with the Community Policing areas and are being mapped out, so it was thought that rather than have the same information in the draft, it would be best to develop the next stage of it before including in the plan, but they provided an assurance that it will be implemented.

Drug Related Intimidation

The committee noted that there were three points in this area that are continuing on from what has come before, so an update on anything more specific was asked for. As the Assistant Commissioner - Organised and Serious Crime, who has responsibility in this area, was not present at the meeting, the Garda representatives stated that the feedback and queries of the Committee would be taken away and reflected on.

National Diversity Forum

The status of the National Diversity Forum was queried by the committee, and it was asked if this forum was paused while the Terms of Reference were being written. The Garda representatives said that the forum is not paused and there are conversation around this still ongoing, and a review of the terms of reference has been carried out. It was explained that when the forum was set up in 2018, the Terms of Reference were about monitoring implementation of the strategy, so the GS have been designing Terms of Reference that are more in line with an independent advisory group role. An engagement was held with an Independent Facilitator that was found to be useful, and it is hoped that this forum will be up and running during 2024.

Tackling Crime and Preventative Policing

It was observed by the committee that there is a greater focus being placed on outcomes within the plan and for an outcome to take place there has to be activities that have occurred, but there was no sense of the initiatives that have facilitated the outcomes. The Garda representatives stated they would

take these comments away and reflect on them in order to offer a more tangible sense of what steps were taken in order to achieve the outcome, but work on mapping this out is continuing. The Success Indicators were also mentioned in terms of what marks a success under the relevant headings, and it was thought by the committee that there should be further work done on this also in order to achieve a more tangible sense of how the success was achieved.

It was also noted by the committee that they believe the success indicators in the area of Enhancing our Capacity and Capability to Address Crime through Coordination, Collaboration and Information Led Approaches were lacking, and there is still some further work that can be carried out in this area. It was noted by the Garda representatives that within this area two people from the team have been lost within the past two months, so although the ambition is there to expand on the work that has already been done, the reduction in team numbers has meant the resources are being stretched significantly.

Victims and the Vulnerable/Roads Policing

It was noted that Victims and the Vulnerable is a key area that speaks to the whole of the Government, due to the extent of partnership that is required. A reduction in the number of fatal and serious collisions was stated as one of the key benefits, however it was said that the Gardaí alone are not responsible creating a reduction in the number of fatalities on the roads, but is the result of a lot of inter-agency work, so there was a caution to bare this in mind when attempting to measuring the success of Garda actions. A drop in the number of detections of Lifesaver offences was raised. The inter-agency work engaged in by the GS was also noted, and it was felt by the committee that the 'Achieved by' section of the plan is underselling this, so it was suggested further work may be needed to make the situation clearer.

A pilot that was rolled out in Longford was outlined by the GS representatives where a person caught speeding outside a school had the option of receiving penalty points or be put in front of a panel of children. The Garda representatives noted that the language used needs to be carefully considered, as although the Garda and the Policing Authority may understand what is meant when a term like 'lifesaver offences' is used, the public may not. It was also agreed by the Garda representatives that although the Gardaí play their part in enforcement, this alone will not significantly reduce death and serious injury on our roads, and there must be a collaborative approach of engineering, education and technology along with enforcement.

The lack of a Government Strategy on safety cameras was highlighted by the Garda representatives. They stated there has been a recent 'fact finding mission' to Scotland on this subject as Scotland is recognised as having a good model and also have a very clear Government programme of safety cameras. It was noted that as a country Scotland is quite comparable to Ireland. It was stated that the speed cameras that we do currently have are paid for by the TII, but there is a need for a whole of Government approach to this. It was said by the committee Chair that this issue has linkages across to topics such as Community Engagement, and it was wondered if there was an opportunity within the plan to reflect on this fact.

Vulnerability

The planning of work that is being undertaken by the Garda in conjunction with Barnahus was mentioned by the committee Chair, and it was thought that this work was being undersold within the Policing Plan and perhaps this could be re-visited.

Public Order

The committee Chair highlighted that there was no mention of Public Order Policing at all within the plan. It was noted that in previous meetings the Garda representatives stated that there was no plan to change the current approach to Public Order Policing and that it would remain intelligence led. It was noted by the Garda representatives that they recognise there is a gap in the plan in relation to this topic so they will take on the comments of the committee.

Sustainable Change and Innovation

The implementation of the upcoming Bill was discussed in terms of the administrative and organisation elements associated with it, and the potential for that impacting on Garda capacity to meet the various objectives within the plan. Garda representatives stated that it is being looked at organisationally and an 8 week assessment has previously been carried out in April or May, and the Bill Readiness Programme is currently stood up. Structures have been put in place, and there are dedicated resources and support in place to implement that.

There were two specific areas of the Bill that were noted by the Garda representative as needing to be mindful of were:

1. the issue of the retaining existing skilled resources. The letter that was sent out by the Minister in July was noted as being particularly helpful in terms of retaining skilled staff.
2. the acquisition and retention of talent, there is a need to establish the details around T&C's for new staff, as the current uncertainty around T&C's will impact the ability to recruit.

It was queried by the committee if there are particular initiatives being undertaken that have significant costs associated. The Garda representatives indicated that their budget is currently being assessed by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and spending is still being mapped out.

7. Policing Priorities Review

The committee asked the Garda representative to address three questions on the current Policing Priorities. Firstly, if there were any gaps in the Policing Priorities Review from the perspective of the Garda. The Garda representatives stated that they did not see any gaps in terms of the Policing Authority's observations, and they do not have concerns in that regard.

The second question was if there are any aspects of the priorities that they may find particularly difficult to achieve. Resourcing again was noted by the Gardaí as an ongoing obstacle in achieving some deliverables. The need to move resources into certain emerging crime areas such as cybercrime and economic crime, and the number of people that were required to be assigned to these areas was mentioned by the Garda Representatives, as well as not being able to recruit during the period of Covid restrictions. These challenges together have had a direct effect on frontline visibility across the country.

The third question was are there any additions that they determine are important to make. It was suggested by the Garda representatives that there is a need to look at the plan again in the context of employee experience. It was noted that Garda members are under pressure and are facing considerable challenges. Ways to improve how members and staff are feeling and how to make them feel more valued and appreciated for the hard work they provide are being examined. It was suggested that this is something that could be done by both the Garda Síochána and the Policing Authority together at public Authority meetings. It was acknowledged that priorities will not be achieved if there is not a workplace where employees feel good about coming to work and carrying out their duties.

In the area of economic crime the implementation of the Hamilton recommendations was discussed. It was highlighted by the committee that concerns have been raised in past meetings on the lack of progress on the implementation of the report and assurances had been given to the committee that the resourcing issues in this regard would be addressed. The committee asked what progress had been made on this. The Garda representatives stated that this would need to be taken away to be looked into, but they noted that there are currently more resources devoted to this area than ever been before and an update will be provided.

It was noted by the committee that the Garda Síochána have been very successful in increasing the public's awareness and sensitivity to the issue of Cybercrime and Romance Fraud.

The Rights Based and Ethical Service Delivery priority was mentioned by the Garda representatives along with the Code of Ethics. It was noted a small number of members still have not signed the code of ethics. It was suggested that in some cases a member will have a very specific reason for not signing, and it was proposed that these reasons could be communicated to the Policing Authority in future. A report on the Human Rights course and the 'Champions' who undertook it was discussed. It was determined that this has not yet been seen by the committee.

The committee discussed Public Order Policing and the different components of that such as the intelligence led element, the human rights assessment element, the operational decisions around deployment. It was agreed that a conversation will be had at the upcoming Authority meeting about the potential for including something around Public Order Policing in the priorities. Garda representatives stated that it is something they would like to take on as a bigger conversation in order to get the relevant information out to the public.

8. AOB

No other business was raised.