



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY

Minutes – Policing Strategy and Performance Committee Meeting

Date: 19 October 2023

Venue: 90 North King Street & Zoom

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

Secretary: Philip Cox

Executive: Mark Nother, Michal Hanley, Sophia Carey, Judy Higgins, 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 number of issues were identified for change and agreed upon. There were no declaration of interests or matters arising declared.

It was discussed that an opportunity had been given to the Garda Síochána to provide a presentation previously offered to the committee on the Outcomes Project, but the relevant team was unavailable for the date of this meeting. It was agreed that the offer should be extended for this presentation to be delivered on the date of the next committee meeting (subsequently agreed by the Garda Síochána). An update was provided on developments since the last Authority meeting.

The agenda was agreed as set, and no conflicts of interest were declared. It was noted that a number of items on the Committee's Log of Actions were open for a long time. Feedback was given and agreed upon.

3. Policing Performance Q3 Reporting and Policing Plan 2024

The highlights of the Policing Performance Q3 Report 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 of Victims and the Vulnerable

The Committee considered material provided by the Executive in relation to Victims and the Vulnerable, 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 & Security), Assistant Commissioner Paula Hilman (Roads Policing and Community Engagement), Chief Superintendent Colm Noonan (Garda National Protective Services Bureau - GNPSB), Eimear Bourke (Executive Director, Strategic Transformation Office), Niamh O'Hara (Assistant Principal Officer, PALO).

5. Closed Session

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

A number of issues with the minutes of the previous meeting were raised by the Garda Síochána representatives, and changes were agreed.

Acknowledgment was given to this being Deputy Commissioner Anne Marie McMahon's last PSP Committee meeting, and the committee expressed their thanks and gratitude for the input and engagement provided by Deputy Commissioner McMahon over the years.

6. Policing Performance Q3 Reporting and Policing Plan 2024

It was noted by the committee that the level of detail contained in the quarterly reporting has greatly improved. It was also stated by the committee that the Policing Plan for 2024 is in good shape, with some issues to be discussed.

The 2023 targets were discussed, it was noted that there are ten currently on target, ten at risk and three are currently reported as off target. The committee asked whether the Gardaí anticipate the status of their targets changing over the remaining months of the year. Garda representatives thought that it is unlikely that there will be drastic changes by the end of the year. The ICT related target was noted as being a challenge to achieve due to issues of resourcing, but is expected to be green at the end of the year. Recruitment of Garda staff has been noted as being exceptionally challenging, but a good response has been received from the recent Clerical Officer competition. The uncertainty on terms and conditions of Garda staff employment remains a challenge. The committee asked if resourcing issues have necessitated a change to where staff are allocated. The Garda representative stated that the pace at which certain areas are being staffed, in particular specialist areas, has slowed down. It was noted that there are 174 new sworn members from the last intake, so there is a steady increase. Garda representatives suggested that the recruitment of staff remains a focus, particularly for specialist positions, however the uncertainty in the terms and conditions for Garda staff remains an issue.

The committee asked what impact the experiences gained in 2023 will have on the setting of targets for 2024, and if there is a willingness to set challenging objectives given the backdrop the difficulties faced getting the necessary resources. Garda representatives stated the organisation would always seek to challenge itself, however there is a need to remain realistic.

The committee asked if the individual needs of specific areas are looked at when resourcing is being allocated, or if there is a strategic reflection on the priorities that are considered. Garda representatives suggested that priority is given to areas within the Policing Plan such as protective services and economic crime. It was noted that roads policing remains a priority area. Garda representatives stated

that the Garda staff numbers are a leading concern and this has a significant impact on operational policing.

The establishment of a diversion process for those aged 18-24 was discussed. It was clarified that this is not something that is planned at this time due to the resources that would be required. It has been considered if the Youth Offender Management could extend to age 21, but with the volume of offences involved it would not be feasible to roll out a Youth Diversion model to that age group. The framework being set for the 8 – 11 age group was queried by the committee. The Garda representative clarified that projects for this age group are not managed by the Garda Síochána.

The Quarter 3 report was discussed. The committee noted confidence in Gardaí had reduced in some areas. Garda representatives stated that the Public Attitudes Survey was positive in general, but a section that they were specifically aware of was the victim's piece and the feedback of victims. An outline was given of the work being done by internal working group, the National Protective Services Bureau and GSAS to improve the services to victims of crime. Committee members suggested that although there were a lot of positives in the survey there was also a reduction in the positivity reflected in some of the responses.

Resourcing of roads policing was discussed. Garda representatives agreed that it has been a bad year so far for roads deaths. They suggested a reduced number of staff, as well as the roster that the Roads Policing Unit operate have contributed to a reduction in detections of some traffic offences. The lack of safety cameras in Ireland was highlighted by the Garda representative. Comparisons were drawn between Ireland and Scotland. Scotland has 516 fixed safety cameras, while Ireland has 2. It was said that Scotland has a clear Government Safety Camera Policy that the police operate under, which the Garda do not have here in Ireland. It is thought that 99% of drivers in Ireland are now wearing seatbelts. However it was said that 1 in 5 people who die in road traffic collisions were not wearing a seatbelt, and are often a passenger in the car. Road deaths involving a single car collisions where the driver is not wearing a seatbelt were discussed. A Lifesaver Project that has been launched by the Gardaí was described. The project is aimed at people from 15 years and aims to educate young people on road safety.

Blackmail and extortion offenses were discussed. The statistic of 89% of victims being male was mentioned. The majority of these cases were said to involve the threat of intimate images being distributed. Drugs related intimidation was mentioned as another subset of blackmail and extortion. Garda representatives highlighted that there has been new legislation introduced as well as a media campaign to raise awareness, however it is still thought to be an under reported offence.

The joint report on custody in response to the recommendations of the Inspectorate was discussed, Committee members asked if this report has been considered by the Commissioner yet. Garda representatives stated they would check and respond to the committee.

Homicide figures were discussed and it was noted that over the past number of years there has been a reduction in homicides, which reflects the ending of feuds in Dublin. However the increase in the number of female victims was noted, and the causes of this were queried. Garda representatives stated that the majority of these cases occur in a domestic setting and are carried out by a person that is known to the victim; usually a current or former partner. Domestic violence reviews are carried out in such cases to see if there were indicators prior to the homicide. It was noted that in many of these cases

there were no previous interactions with the Garda, but some cases had engagement with mental health services and other supports. Coercive control was discussed, and it was noted by the Garda that many coercive control cases only come to light after a tragic event has unfolded. A presentation on coercive control by the GNPSB was offered for a later date.

Resourcing of the Human Rights Unit was discussed and the impact it has on the capacity and ability to deliver on objectives were mentioned. Difficulties in recruiting qualified staff for this role due to the competitive nature of the jobs market were outlined.

The committee enquired why the Community Policing Framework was not included in the Policing Plan. Work being carried out to provide the Community Policing team details on the Garda website was outlined. Garda representatives suggested that feedback on this from the committee is welcomed.

An update on the progress and development of the Offender Management Model was provided by the Garda representatives, the independent consultant is drafting a proposed national framework based on the inputs from An Garda Síochána and Probation Services at the workshops.

The National Diversity Forum discussed. Garda representatives informed the committee the Terms of Reference have undergone a redesign and are still in the process of being finalised.

The EDI strategy was also mentioned. Some of the work involved in developing these strategies is taking longer than was hoped, but conversations are still ongoing, and the unions and associations need to be consulted.

A brief update on changes to the Op Model was given by the Garda representatives.

7. Policing of Victims and the Vulnerable

The commitment that was included in the Policing Plan to review the National Protective Services Units was discussed. An update on the progress of reviews was requested by the committee. Garda representatives stated that the reviews were progressing well, and they are currently focussing on the capacity and capabilities of the DPSUs. A survey of all DPSU Detective Inspectors across the country has been completed. A number of NGO's have also been surveyed regarding their involvement with the DPSU's, in addition four Regional workshops were held nationwide in Q2 of 2023. The team working on this are from the National Bureau, in conjunction with the Strategic Transformation Office, the Garda Síochána Analysis Service and the Garda Research Unit. GSAS have carried out an analysis of the resources in the DPSU's and their workloads. A brief outline on this was provided.

The preparation of business cases to fill vacancies at various levels was discussed and the committee asked if there was any update on these competitions. The Garda representatives said that the last competition run for the National Unit was in 2020 for Detective Inspector, Detective Sergeant, and Detective Garda rank. Vacancies are currently being examined and a business case outlining the vacancies will be brought to the SLT. Garda staff vacancies are also being worked on.

Challenges faced in Inter-Agency working were discussed. A high number of vacancies in Tusla was noted, and the affect this has on work done in conjunction with the Garda Síochána was outlined. There

is a full time member of Tusla attached to the National Bureau who works side by side with Garda colleagues in the same office, and there is a close working relationship between the Garda Síochána and Tusla. It was noted that there is now electronic notification now between the two organisations, as well as a Garda/Tusla memorandum of understanding on data sharing. Other inter-agency teams include the Sex Offender Management team, which consists of two members of An Garda Síochána and a Tusla member were also mentioned. Due to the increased workload expected to arise from the Sex Offenders Amendment Act there is a request to increase external agency's allocation of staff to a full time basis, as opposed to the current 20-50% basis.

The HSE investigation into abuse in care homes was discussed in relation to the national independent review panel report. This recommended an MOU or protocol between the Garda and the HSE and to clarify roles and responsibilities. Garda representatives stated that talks on an MOU are still at an early stage. The Gardaí are currently working with the HSE to see if an MOU is necessary and how that will fit within the Bureau's model.

Abuse within Direct Provision Centres was briefly discussed, and it was said that the Garda National Diversity Unit proactively engage with Direct Provision Centres. Work carried out with minority groups such as the Muslim and Jewish communities was highlighted and identified as examples of points of contact which may facilitate the reporting of cases.

8. AOB

No other business was raised.