



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY

Minutes of Meeting of the Garda Organisation Development Committee

Date: 01 December 2023

Venue: Online

Part A – Committee Meeting

Attendance

Authority: Donal De Buitléir (Chair); Valerie Judge

Secretary: Michal Alfasi-Hanley

Executive: Helen Hall (CEO); Aoife Clabby; James Kiernan; Mark Nother; Philip Cox; Annie O'Malley

Apologies: Elaine Byrne

1. Closed Session

The standing option to conduct a closed session was not exercised.

2. Chairperson's Opening Remarks

- There were no declarations of interest from the Members in respect of any of the agenda items.
- It was agreed that Part B of the meeting with the Garda Representatives could take place on MS Teams hosted by the Garda Síochána rather than a Policing Authority Zoom account as requested by Garda representatives due to technical issues with Zoom.

3. Consent agenda items

- The minutes of the previous meeting (17 April 2023) were approved.

Part B – Meeting with Garda Síochána Representatives

Attendance

Authority: As per Part A above

Garda Síochána: Shawna Coxon, Deputy Commissioner Strategy, Governance and Performance; Jonathan Roberts, Assistant Commissioner, Governance and Accountability; Yvonne Cooke, Acting Executive Director HRPD; Kathryn Clifford, Executive Director, Finance and Services; Niamh O'Hara, Assistant Principal, PALO.

1. Closed session

The standing option to conduct a closed session was not exercised.

2. Conduct & Discipline

Boards of Inquiry and Appeal Boards

- The Committee questioned the GS reps on training for members of Boards of Inquiry and was informed that dedicated training for board members took place on Mid-November. Initial anecdotal feedback on this training has been positive. GS reps reported that it is hoped that further training for both Boards of Inquiry and Appeal Boards will be provided in the New Year.
- The matter of payment for presiding officers of boards was discussed, including issues around the current DPER circular which sets out that presiding officers are paid a certain sum for the 1st day, and then ½ of that sum for subsequent days, but receive no payment for preparatory work or post-inquiry work.

Communication

- The Committee discussed with GS representatives what communications measures – in the interest of public confidence - were being undertaken to counter misleading narratives in the public domain around GS dismissals. The Committee questioned whether there are risks around vetting or providing references for former GS members who left the organisation prior to dismissal procedures being initiated. GS reps advised that it is not possible to retain a person in order to formally dismiss them, but that a policy on References, both internal and external, provided through HRPD, is to be considered by the SLT before Christmas.
- The Committee was advised that increasingly there is a move away from the use of discipline for what are performance issues.

Disciplinary Regulations

- The GS reps noted that the current disciplinary system will remain in place until the new Discipline Regulations are agreed. GS reps were of the view that the organisation would need about a year to put in place measures to accommodate the new Regulations. They have also acknowledged the need for one system encompassing both sworn and unsworn staff rather than the current separate systems. Work is ongoing to align the two current systems.

Suspensions

- There have been fewer suspensions this year compared to recent years with 29 suspensions ending in 2023, of which most were historical.

3. Human Resources and Workforce Planning

HRIS

- The Committee heard that in the absence of HRIS, the RDMS is considered useful for Superintendents in ascertaining resource availability. A tender for HRIS will be published before the Christmas period.

23rd November events

- The Committee acknowledged the flexibility shown by Garda Members during the riots in Dublin on 23rd November when GS members were redeployed to the city from around the country.

Strategic Work Force Planning

- The Committee requested an update as to progress made in compiling a workforce planning strategy. GS reps reported that work is ongoing on this, including a horizon scan, planned joint work with organisations that have similar issues and partnerships with police services in other jurisdictions.

Annual Leave and Overtime

- The Committee commented on a discrepancy between the GS and other public sector areas with non-standard working times in terms of how annual leave is calculated. While other areas using longer shift patterns calculate annual leave based on 8-hour working days, it was noted the GS calculates annual leave based on 12 hour days. This is a long standing issue and inflates cost in addition to reducing availability of Garda members.
- GS reps expressed the view that the current GS roster is an issue and is thought to contribute significantly to GS overtime requirements. It was reported that work is ongoing to agree implementation of a new roster.

Recruitment

- The Committee asked about the timelines and constraints in filling the current 1,000 Garda vacancies.

The GS noted that attrition levels within the process itself are an issue and reported that there is ongoing work to consider new approaches to recruiting in the future.

The risks to resourcing arising from staff mobility were and the requirement to give 1 months' notice was noted.

- GS reps outlined some of the issues arising in exit interviews and undertook to share with the PA further information on these interviews in the New Year.

ACTION: The Garda Síochána to share with the Policing Authority further information on the exit interviews in the New Year.

- The Committee was told a recruitment campaign for Garda Reserves is expected to launch in Q1 2024 and that the GS is looking at ways to pay allowances to Garda Reserves.
- GS reps noted that the organisation remains within cost for overall staffing. GS HRPD aims to slightly over-staff where possible until there is more stability around the issue of mobility.

4. Finance

- The Chair questioned GS reps on the request for a supplementary budget, even though the house returns indicate the GS is under profile.

GS reps noted that a number of events were expected to significantly impact the budget to include the visit of the US President and a late request in relation to estate.

- The Committee requested that the GS produce a financial forecast quarterly.
- The Committee requested sight of the internal GS document that is about to go to the Joint Resource Working Group.

ACTION: The Garda Síochána to share with the Policing Authority the internal GS document that is about to go to the Joint Resource Working Group in relation to the financial forecast.

- GS reported an underspend on the capital budget this year, but plan to defer from 2023 to 2024 so that this funding will not be lost.

Part C – Private Meeting (Garda Síochána Representatives leave)

- The Committee agreed to delay planning for subsequent meetings until there is further clarity on the role of committees during the transition period to establish the PCSA.