



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY

Minutes of Meeting of the Policing Authority

Date: 27 February 2025

Venue: HIQA, North King Street

Part A – Authority Meeting

Attendance

Authority:	Elaine Byrne (Chairperson), Deborah Donnelly, Paul Mageean, Donal de Buitléir, Anthony Harbinson.
Secretary:	Aoife Clabby
Staff of the Authority:	Helen Hall (Chief Executive), Margaret Tumelty, Karen Shelly, Aisling O’ Connor
Garda Síochána Inspectorate	Mark Toland (Chief Inspector)

1. Meeting of Members in Private

The Authority exercised its option to have a meeting in private with the Chief Executive and Secretary in attendance.

2. Chairperson’s Opening Remarks

The meeting agenda was considered and approved, subject to the inclusion of an additional item on other policing performance matters.

Authority Member Paul Mageean advised that he had been awarded a contract by GSOC to provide consultancy in the area of human rights. The Authority was satisfied that the contract allocation did not constitute a conflict of interest but noted that the matter should be recorded, for good order.

Members noted a number of pieces of correspondence including:

- A letter to the Commissioner regarding the Garda Síochána Public Attitudes Survey and Authority proposals to include questions concerning the public’s experiences of “unacceptable behaviour” by Garda members. Members were advised that an additional follow-up meeting with the Commissioner and his senior colleagues would be sought to progress the matter.
- A letter to the Department of Justice outlining the Authority’s concerns regarding the Department’s proposed approach to dealing with the extension of the current Annual Policing Plan 2024 and Policing Priorities 2022-2024 into 2025, in the context of the

statutory provisions. The Chief Executive advised Members that both documents had since been consented and approved by the Minister and that a formal letting would issue from the Department of Justice at an early date.

- A number of pieces of legal correspondence, arising from a selection competition for a senior civilian staff position in the Garda Síochána. Members discussed a number of matters arising, in the context of its statutory role regarding senior civilian appointments and its wider oversight functions. It was agreed that further correspondence would issue, setting out the Authority's position on the matters discussed.
- A letter from the Commissioner briefing the Authority in relation to recent problems that occurred with the Static Speed Camera on the N17.
- A letter from the Commissioner regarding Garda member average earnings in 2024.

Members reflected on recent media coverage of IT procurement within the Arts Council. Members had regard to the significant levels of financial investment in information and technology in the Garda Síochána, and the extent of the organisation's reliance on consultancy and contract positions for project delivery. Members were reminded of the Garda Síochána's stated desire to decrease its reliance on consultancy positions and to build internal expertise through direct recruitment. Members also noted that there had been 45 instances of non-compliance with procurement by the Garda Síochána, as outlined in the most recent audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

Members were provided with an overview of matters discussed at a recent meeting with Commissioner and noted that many of the issues raised would be addressed in Part B of the meeting.

3. Consent Agenda Items

3.1 Minutes of Meeting and Matters Arising

Members agreed two minor amendments to the draft minutes of the meeting held on 30 January. The minutes of the meetings held on 30 January and 7 February were then approved and cleared for publication.

3.2 Policing Authority and Garda Síochána Actions Logs

The Log of Actions was noted and proposals to close specified actions were approved.

Members considered two outstanding actions related to approvals for senior roles at Principal Officer level in the Garda Síochána. It was agreed that as one of the roles was a vacancy backfill and was no longer required, this action could therefore be closed. Members were advised of the status of the second Principal Officer role and it was agreed that correspondence would issue to the Department of Justice on the matter, in the context of transition to the PCSA and the cessation of the Authority's function regarding appointments to senior positions in the Garda Síochána.

Members considered a proposal to close an action relating the Garda Síochána Audit Committee. Members discussed the Authority's statutory role in relation to the appointment of the Committee

in the context of ongoing uncertainty in respect of the commencement date for the PSCS Act. Members agreed that if the PSCS Act had not been commenced by the end of March, then the matter would again be tabled for Authority consideration at an early date.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Action point</i>	<i>By Date</i>	<i>By Whom</i>
A_148_01	Write to the Department of Justice in relation to the approval status of a Principal Officer role in the Garda Síochána.	ASAP	Chief Executive

4. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive's report was taken as read and further updates were provided to Members on several matters in the context of the report, including in relation to:

Meeting with the Director for Public Prosecutions (DPP): Members were provided with an overview of a meeting held with the DPP, noting that much of the discussion had centred on policing performance in the context of the Garda Síochána's prosecutions in a court of summary jurisdiction in the name of the DPP, under Section 8 of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, as amended. Members also noted that a meeting had taken place with colleagues in the Department of the Taoiseach in the context of work being undertaken through the Summary Prosecution Reform Steering Group, convened under the auspices of that Department. The Chief Executive advised that a further meeting with colleagues from the DPP was planned to provide any insights the Authority might have, in support of the Steering Group's work.

Meeting with the Director Designate of the new National Office of Community Safety: Members were advised that the Chairperson and Chief Executive had met with the Director designate of the new National Office of Community Safety and had received a comprehensive update on work to establish Community Safety Partnerships in each county.

Three-year statutory review of resources available to the Garda Síochána: The Chief Executive informed Members that the review for the period 2022-2024 had yet to be received from the Garda Síochána and that she had spoken with senior Garda colleagues on the matter. While noting the imminent commencement of the PSCS Act, Members also noted its statutory obligations under the existing legislation in relation to the report's provision to the Minister. Following discussion, it was agreed that correspondence would issue to the Department of Justice, outlining the Authority's engagement on the matter and the outstanding obligations on the Gardaí Síochána.

Oversight Delivery: Members were provided with an overview of the Executive's recent attendance at Performance and Assessment Framework meetings in a number of divisions. Members were provided with an overview of key themes arising. There was a wide-ranging discussion on the importance of the divisional performance assurance functional areas (PAFA) in enhancing systems and providing assurance regarding consistency of practice. Members discussed the potential risk that with constrained resources, the perceived importance of governance and assurance might be diminished. As a consequence, Superintendent resources might be diverted to other functional areas

such as crime or community and engagement, at the expense of performance assurance. It was agreed that the matters highlighted would be discussed with the Commissioner in part B of the meeting.

The Chief Executive advised that she had received contact from Judge Caroline Biggs, following the launch of a new juvenile protocol for dealing with murder and rape cases involving children. Members noted that this was with a view to discussing how the Authority's oversight of the Garda Síochána might contribute to the protocol's successful implementation. Members discussed the challenges of dealing with serious crimes, investigation, and prosecutions for children within one year, as provided for in the new protocol. Members considered ways in which the role of the Garda Síochána within this process might be overseen, in the context of future annual service plans or as part of policing priorities.

Members were informed that the planned meeting with the Garda Síochána's Executive Director, Legal and Compliance to discuss progression of the statutory Memorandum of Understanding between the PCSA and the Garda Síochána had been deferred.

Members considered the advice of legal counsel on the Authority quorum, having regard to the statutory provisions. Members were satisfied that the advice provided was clear and had no additional observations.

Members considered the draft Annual Report 2024 and made a small number of observations in relation to the draft content. Members approved a proposal to delegate to the Chairperson and Chief Executive its finalisation and submission to the Minister, in advance of the statutory deadline of 31 March or prior to the commencement of the PSCS Act, whichever is soonest.

It was further agreed that any additional observations on the draft Report could be provided to the Secretary by 13 March. In concluding the discussion, while noting the progression of various iterations of the Authority's annual reports, the capacity of future annual reports of the PCSA to be a more effective communications tool was highlighted.

No.	Action point	By Date	By Whom
A_148_02	Write to the Department of Justice in relation to the outstanding obligations on the Gardaí Síochána under section 23 of the Garda Síochána Act (2005)	ASAP	Chief Executive
A_148_03	Provide any additional observations on the draft Annual Report 2023 to Authority Secretary.	March 13	Members
A_148_04	Finalise the Policing Authority Annual Report 2024, in consultation with the Chairperson and submit to the Minister for Justice.	March 31	Chief Executive

5. Policing Priorities – approach to development

Members considered an overview of proposed approach to the development of the Policing Priorities 2026-2028. Members noted that the approach builds on what is currently outlined in the Business Plan 2025. Members also noted the intention to continue to align the Priorities with the Garda Síochána three-year strategy period and to include measures of success, consistent with international best practice.

Clarification was sought in relation to the extent of consultation and engagement with the public and it was noted that extensive, in-person consultation was envisaged in the later stages of the project, in addition to online engagement. Following discussion, Members were satisfied to approve the approach to the development of the Policing Priorities 2026-2028, as outlined.

6. Adequacy of Garda Síochána Resources - Letter to the Minister

Members considered and approved a proposal for the early provision of Ministerial advice on the adequacy of Garda Síochána resources, in recognition of the appointment of a new Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration, the imminent commencement of the PSCS Act and the stated ambitions of Government in respect of policing, as set out in the Programme for Government. Members considered and provided feedback in relation to draft advice to the Minister.

In considering draft advice, Members discussed the position in relation to the Garda Síochána's overtime budget and the extent to which it is over profile in the year to date. Members expressed concern in relation to the expectations being placed on the Garda Síochána to manage an unrealistic budget allocation, where overtime is necessarily relied upon to deliver a wide range of day to day policing services. Members also noted that while the Garda Síochána needs to exercise stringent controls on overtime spend, the budget allocation did not appear to take into account the cost implications of policing support for the upcoming EU presidency in 2026. Following discussion, it was agreed that the concerns raised would also be reflected in the final advice to be provided to the Minister.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Action point</i>	<i>By Date</i>	<i>By Whom</i>
A_148_05	Finalise and submit statutory advice to the Minister on the adequacy of Garda Síochána resources.	ASAP	Chief Executive

7. Risk Management

The Authority considered the monthly risk report, provided in accordance with its Risk Management Policy. The Chief Executive provided Members with an update on adjustments made to a number of risks.

Members discussed the ongoing risk of the sustainability of the operation of the current Authority, given the continuing uncertainty surrounding the establishment date for the PCSA and taking into

account the current number of five Members and associated quorum challenges. Following discussion, it was agreed that the matter would be revisited and re-engaged upon with the Department of Justice, as a matter of urgency, if the establishment of the PCSA is further delayed beyond the end of March.

8. PSCS Act implementation update

Members considered the update provided in relation to Department of Justice's plans to implement the PSCS Act, in addition to organisational readiness for the establishment of the Policing and Community Safety Authority (PCSA). Members considered the likely timelines for the PCSA's establishment and the implications for scheduled meetings of the Authority, in particular public meetings.

Members again discussed the impact of delays to commencement on the ability to run a selection competition to appoint a new Garda Commissioner, and selection competitions at the ranks of Superintendent and Assistant Commissioner, where vacancies currently exist. The Chief Executive advised that there have been requests made to the Minister for a meeting to discuss the serious implications of the delay on the Authority and the Garda Síochána, but that a response was still awaited.

Members were advised that the latest drafts of the regulations relating to Conduct, Performance and Standards of Professional Behaviour were still awaited from the Department of Justice. Members were advised that once received, they would be reviewed by the Executive and significant changes would be notified to Members, for the purposes of consultation.

9. Preparation for meeting with the Garda Commissioner

Members discussed the agenda for the meeting and agreed the matters to be discussed with the Commissioner and his team.

Documents for Noting by the Authority – February 2025

The following documents were noted by the Authority Members:

Document		Action Required
D_148_01	Doras - Access to Justice for International Protection Applicants in Ireland	For noting
D_148_02	Garda Síochána National Organisational Structure	For noting
D_148_03	Garda Síochána Inspectorate – Inspection and Non-Inspection Related 2025 Work Plan	For noting

Part B – Authority Meeting with the Garda Commissioner in private

Attendance

Authority and Executive: Elaine Byrne (Chairperson), Deborah Donnelly, Anthony Harbinson, Donal de Buitléir, Paul Mageean, Helen Hall (Chief Executive), Aoife Clabby (Secretary), Margaret Tumelty, Karen Shelly, Aisling O’ Connor

Garda Síochána: Drew Harris (Commissioner), Siobhan Toale (Chief Corporate Officer), Justin Kelly (Deputy Commissioner), Johnathan Roberts (Assistant Commissioner), Paula Hillman (Assistant Commissioner), Niamh O’Hara (Assistant Principal)

At the outset of the meeting, the Authority commended the Commissioner for the Garda Síochána’s swift response and actions in relation to recent, high profile knife incidences in Dublin city.

The Authority noted that the recruitment campaign for Garda trainees was concluding and commended the Commissioner and his colleagues on the extent, reach and innovative nature of the promotion campaign. Members were advised in excess of 6,000 applications were expected once the deadline for applications closes.

The Commissioner provided Members with an overview of the changes made to the vetting process for Garda trainees, including a phased, risk-based approach, aligned with the different stages of training and concomitant access to sensitive information, ensuring that all trainees are fully vetted prior to attestation. Members were assured of the rigour and enhanced nature of vetting for trainees by the Commissioner. Members were also advised that the fitness test had been reviewed and adjusted to further streamline the path to training commencement and that the process was now more aligned in terms of the needs of the role.

The Commissioner was reminded that any outstanding matters requiring Authority consideration and approval prior to commencement of the PSCS Act should be provided for consideration at an early date.

10. PSCS Act commencement delay: impacts on senior Garda member appointments and policing service provision

The Authority engaged with the Commissioner on the impact that the delay to commencement of the PSCS Act and the rolling deferral of that date by the Department of Justice is having on senior member appointments. The Commissioner expressed disappointment that the process to select a new Commissioner had not commenced. He noted that any opportunity for an orderly handover to a new Commissioner was now no longer possible. In addition, the Commissioner highlighted that, arising from the promotion of an Assistant Commissioner to Deputy Commissioner, one Assistant Commissioner was currently managing two full-time portfolios. The Commissioner highlighted further challenges arising from the current number of vacancies, including the significant period of transition ahead, associated with the new Act’s provisions, the scale of policing demand associated

with the upcoming EU presidency and the delivery of ongoing operational commitments. The Commissioner noted that when taken together, these factors made the situation in relation to vacancies at senior leadership level unsatisfactory. The Commissioner further noted that while the current situation may not create operational risks in the short term, it may pose reputational risks to the organisation. Notwithstanding the challenges discussed, the Commissioner emphasised the extent of experience of his senior colleagues and their capacity to lead the organisation through the upcoming period of change and demand.

Members discussed the impact of existing vacancies at the rank of Superintendent with the Commissioner and his senior colleagues. The Commissioner advised that a detailed review had been conducted of existing deployments with a view considering proposals for the backfilling of existing roles. While noting existing vacancies, the Commissioner also advised that there were a considerable number of Superintendents available, combined with the extensive investment the organisation had made in frontline supervision, up to and including the rank of Inspector.

Members then discussed the role of Superintendent within the Operating Model, in particular in heading up the Performance Assurance Functional Area (PAFA) in each division. Members were advised that a review of the PAFA function is currently underway, in light of the substantial changes to various conduct and performance standards regulations under the new Act. However, it was confirmed that the role of PAFA Superintendent was seen as important in having senior oversight of performance assurance and guiding and directing Inspectors in this regard. The opportunity to link performance assurance more strategically across divisions and with the Professional Standards unit at national level was discussed with the Commissioner and emphasised.

In concluding discussion on the agenda item, Members were advised that there has been extensive and continuous engagement with public jobs to ensure readiness for the immediate commencement of selection competitions at the senior ranks, once the PSCS Act is in place.

11. Public order- ongoing management

Members acknowledged receipt of the Events, Public Order and Public Safety (EPOPS) Planning and Command Structure policy and procedures documents. They engaged with the Commissioner and his senior colleagues on a variety of matters related to public order policing including training, recertification, reporting and co-ordination. Members asked the Commissioner for his assessment of what had changed since the introduction of the new policy and procedures.

The Commissioner and his senior colleagues provided the Authority with a detailed overview of the training ongoing, noting the fourth cycle of training for strategic commanders was underway and highlighted the increased availability of commanders across all regions. The Commissioner outlined the impact of the training, not alone in terms of the increased numbers, but in the use of a single language and shared understanding of public order policy and procedures. In addition, the Commissioner advised that two water canons had been procured and training is currently being sourced to bring them into operational use, if required.

Members asked the Commissioner whether there was greater clarity on the role of the Public Order Steering Group, vis á vis the role of Regional Assistant Commissioners in delivering the EPOPS policy. Members were advised that consistency in providing public order services and co-ordination is

improving. The importance of the Steering Group receiving data, to feed into the Strategic Threat Risk Assessment and to determine the numbers to be trained in public order was highlighted. In this regard, Members were advised that the Public Order Steering Group is now in receipt of a debrief of any public order event that happens in the country, which had not happened previously.

Members discussed the issue of timely recertification and retraining with the Commissioner and his senior colleagues. It was noted that matters in relation to training extraction had been examined and revised. Members were also advised that the new policy contains a stipulation that once trained, Garda members must have a minimum of two public order deployments per year, in recognition of the significant investment that training and equipment presents. The pivotal role of regional co-ordinators in monitoring deployments and training planning and extraction was highlighted.

Members discussed recent news reports relating to applications made for data from news outlets, through orders under section 63 of the Criminal Justice Act. The Commissioner advised that the coverage was distorted. He provided Members with an overview of the applications made, advising that they had been grounded appropriately, having regard to relevant human and constitutional rights. Members also discussed reports in the public domain about a shotgun that was in the possession of the Garda Síochána later coming into the possession of criminals, purportedly having gone missing from a container in Garda Headquarters. Members were again advised of inaccuracies in the reportage. The importance of clarifying such inaccuracies was discussed with the Commissioner. In circumstances where such reporting may be a potential to impact public confidence.

12. Juvenile Diversion Programme

In the context of discussions between the Authority and the Commissioner at the November 2024 and January 2025 meetings, Members had a detailed engagement with the Commissioner and his senior colleagues in relation to the Garda Síochána's role, along with other agencies, in the Youth Diversion Programmes, administered by the Department of Justice.

Members were provided with an update on a review into the operation of the Youth Diversion Programmes, involving all agencies that have a role in their delivery. Members were advised that, arising from this review, a governance risk had been identified relating to individuals for whom youth diversion had been recommended as an alternative to criminal proceedings. Specifically, there did not appear to be any mechanism in the wider system to monitor participation in the programme or refer non-participating individuals back to the courts. Members noted that the issues outlined have not been highlighted to the Authority in previous meetings and that the matters discussed would be returned to at a subsequent meeting of the Authority.

13. Conduct and Discipline

Members sought an update from the Commissioner in relation to the status of a report being compiled on the experiences of women in the Garda Síochána, following the Baroness Casey Review of behaviours and culture in the Metropolitan Police service and the report of the Commission on the Irish Defence Forces. The Commissioner advised that the report, which was being undertaken on

a two-phased basis, was nearing first phase completion, the outcomes of which would be shared with the Authority at an early date. Senior Garda colleagues advised that the second phase of the report had been substantially progressed.

Members were provided with an overview of the first phase of the examination of domestic, sexual, gender-based violence and coercive control related crimes involving members of the Garda Síochána. Members were informed that the first phase sought to establish if members who were the subject of domestic violence orders had reported them, in compliance with policies and procedures in place over a specific time period. Members were advised of the outcomes of this review and a number of issues identified including reporting and recording inconsistencies; inaccurate data recording; and shortcomings in investigations. Members were further advised of the immediate actions to address the findings, in addition to key recommendations arising from Phase one, which are already being actioned.

Members were informed that phase two of the review was focussed on the examination of relevant crime incident categories to see if they were dealt with appropriately, in accordance with the law and Garda policies and procedures. It was agreed that this report would be provided to the Authority upon completion.

Members then discussed with the Commissioner the measures being employed by the Garda Síochána to take sufficient care of personnel who come forward in terms of calling out inappropriate behaviour or making a complaint in relation to bullying or sexual harassment. Members asked about the extent to which those who came forward risked being ostracised by their colleagues during and post the conclusion of the process, irrespective of any outcome. The Commissioner and his senior colleagues emphasised the organisation's whole-hearted commitment to the investigation of allegations. The Authority was advised that there did not appear to be any evidence of members who make such complaints being disadvantaged in terms of their career progression. Members sought clarification in relation to how the organisation assured itself in this regard. Members also emphasised the importance of being aware of the possibility of such situations arising and the need to respond appropriately.

The Authority engaged with the Commissioner in relation to the provision, by serving Garda members, of character references or testimonials for serving or former Garda members convicted of serious offences. Members were advised that policy in this regard was being updated where permission must now be sought from the Garda Executive before providing any character reference. Members noted that this new policy was due to be signed off by the Executive at an early date.

Members also discussed with the Commissioner the apparent absence of any commentary from Garda representative associations in relation to significant convictions and reported egregious behaviours of serving Garda Members, cases of which have been in the media in recent years. The Authority shared the Commissioner's disappointment with the absence of commentary or condemnation of the behaviours. It was agreed that if commentary were to happen, it would bolster public confidence and the confidence of serving Garda members that its representative associations do not believe that these behaviours are acceptable in the Garda Síochána.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Action point</i>	<i>By Date</i>	<i>By Whom</i>
A_148_06	Garda Síochána to share its report examining domestic, sexual and gender-based and coercive control related crime involving Garda members, once finalised.	ASAP	The Garda Síochána

14. Other Policing Performance Matters

In concluding the meeting, members engaged with the Commissioner on a variety of other policing matters including:

- Knife crime:** Members asked the Commissioner and his senior colleagues if knife crime is increasing. The Commissioner and his senior colleagues advised that while knife seizures have remained static between 2023-2024, there has been a significant increase in the incidence of crimes committed using knives in the same period. A number of factors contributing to this increase were outlined. However, it was noted that further disaggregation of data was needed to understand any patterns or trends. It was agreed that this data would be shared with the Authority, once finalised.
- TUSLA data sharing agreement:** The Commissioner and his senior colleagues provided an update in relation to the current status of the data sharing agreement between the Garda Síochána and TUSLA. Members were advised that while the agreement had been signed between the two agencies in 2024, the protocols for data sharing were currently being finalised and should be ready in a matter of weeks. Members were apprised of practical arrangements in place for data sharing in the interim. The Commissioner acknowledged that that the process has taken time, but the protocol's implementation would be a welcome step forward for data sharing,
- Pursuit Policy:** Members sought clarification as to the current number of pursuit-trained drivers and what needs to be done to ensure Garda members are adequately trained. Members were advised that while the policy had been approved, work was now required to develop design and implement an associated training course, in conjunction with the Garda College. The Commissioner and his senior colleagues acknowledged that a gap currently exists in respect of numbers trained. Members were further advised that training had been delivered in the Regional Control Centres to support call dispatchers and supervisors in circumstances where a call involves the stopping of vehicles by Gardaí.
- Historical Cases:** Members sought clarification on recent assertions made at the Omagh bombing inquiry that the Garda Síochána had failed to share information. The Commissioner clarified that the Garda Síochána is awaiting an agreed Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Justice and its counterparts in Northern Ireland. Members noted that until the MoU is signed information cannot be shared. However, Members were assured that preparations are underway to have information available to share once the MoU is in place.

No.	Action point	By Date	By Whom
A_148_07	The Garda Síochána to share their data in relation to knife crime with Authority members once the figures had been finalised.	ASAP	The Garda Síochána

15. Any Other Business

The Authority recorded its sincere appreciation to Mr. Andrew O’Sullivan, Chief Information Officer, on his departure from the organisation and thanked Mr O’Sullivan for his engagement with the Authority and his contribution to the Garda Síochána’s Data and Technology vision.