



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY

Minutes – Policing Strategy and Performance Committee Meeting

Date: 20 June 2019

Venue: 90 North King Street, Dublin 7

Part A – Committee Meeting

Attendance

Authority: Judith Gillespie (Chair), Josephine Feehily

Secretary: Fiona Larthwell

Executive: Helen Hall, Margaret Tumelty, Mark Nother

Apologies: Moling Ryan, Vicky Conway, Ronan Nolan, Maureen Lynott (Part A only)

1. Closed session – Committee members

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

2. Minutes of previous meeting 11 April

Minutes from the previous meeting were approved, subject to minor amendments. There were no matters arising.

3. Executive Updates on Site Visits and Other Work

The Executive provided an update on recent engagements, including the Homicide Review Team meeting, a meeting on the Detections Improvement Plan, and a meeting with GSAS.

It was noted that some significant matters were being highlighted as part of the Homicide Review process, including concerns around duplicate PULSE identities and around missing persons. The Committee Chair proposed that further consideration would be given to these matters later in the year.

It was also noted that the meeting with GSAS indicated that ‘performance improvement plans’ for any Policing Plan numerical KPIs that were not on target are being produced. Authority staff will obtain and review a sample of these plans, and report back to the Committee.

4. Garda Síochána Performance Jan-May

Performance to date was discussed and the Committee Chair agreed that Part B of the meeting would address overarching concerns around performance, rather than specific initiatives, given that the 2019 Plan had only been in effect since the 1st of April.

5. Half-Year Policing Plan Performance Assessment

Feedback was provided on the draft report. Some suggestions for additions and amendments were made and the publication date was discussed. It was agreed that an updated draft would be provided at the July Committee meeting, for finalisation before the July Authority meeting.

6. Preparation for Garda Síochána updates

Homicide review: The fifth report from the Homicide Review Team was discussed. A concern was raised that the concluding remarks appeared to follow a template and did not reflect the content provided in the individual reviews. In particular, cases where investigative issues had been identified were summarised in a way that did not reflect those issues. It was agreed that this would be raised in Part B.

Organised Crime Groups Update: Potential questions to direct the update on Organised Crime Groups were discussed.

7. Update for Committee member

An additional Committee member joined the meeting and was updated on discussions in parts 1-6.

Part B – Meeting with Garda Síochána representatives

Attendance

Authority: As previous, Maureen Lynott

Executive: As previous, Karen Shelly

Garda Síochána: Joseph Nugent (Chief Administrative Officer), David Gilbride (Executive Director Strategy and Transformation), Laurence Scanlan (Head Garda Síochána Analysis Service), Assistant Commissioner Orla McPartlin (Community Engagement and Public Safety) Assistant Commissioner Michael Finn (South Eastern Region), Assistant Commissioner John O'Driscoll (Special Crime Operations), Lois West (Deputy Head Garda Síochána Analysis Service), Chief Superintendent Patrick Conlan (Dun Laoghaire Garda Station), Inspector Paul Franey (Strategic Transformation Office), Catherine Heffernan (Policing Authority Liaison Office)

8. Closed session

The standing option to conduct a closed session was not exercised. It was noted that the minutes of the previous meeting would be provided in due course, once minor amendments had been made.

9. Organised Crime Groups update

The Committee was advised that a report was being prepared for the Commissioner assessing the resource needs of all bureaux under Special Crime Operations. A number of external factors were outlined that place additional demand on Special Crime Operations, including EU compliance, interagency commitments, increases in financial and cybercrime, and the potential effects of Brexit.

It was noted that resources had previously been considered for each bureau in Special Crime Operations in isolation, resulting in a concentration on bureaux that required resources to address organised crime. While results were positive for those areas, it was stated that this had reduced the resources available to other areas of crime. Upcoming competitions are expected to address these deficiencies as well to address skill gaps through targeted recruitment for specific bureaux.

The Committee was informed that there is a heavy dependency on GSAS and the critical role of analysts in investigations was highlighted. The potential value of additional analysts was emphasised.

Garda Síochána representatives discussed the governance around vetting and clearance for all members in Special Crime Operations. The promotion of the Code of Ethics was also discussed. Garda Síochána representatives did not have Code of Ethics signing figures for available for Special Crime Operations, but agreed to provide them. It was noted that the signing of the Code of Ethics is being examined and that this matter is being followed up by the Garda Organisation Development Committee.

Emerging threats, hot spot analysis and methods for projecting crime were discussed. Garda Síochána representatives stressed the difficulties in making predictions about crime. The interaction between communities and the Garda Síochána and its impact on addressing organised crime, largely through Joint Policing Committees, was also discussed.

The Committee praised recent media efforts by the Garda Síochána in connecting low level drug use to the financing of organised crime and commented that this model might be used to make the connection for the public between the purchase of counterfeit goods and organised crime.

The Committee acknowledged the successes the Garda Síochána has had in tackling Organised Crime Groups and keeping people safe. Both Garda Members and Garda Staff were commended for their contributions in these areas.

National Drugs Strategy update

Progress against the National Drugs Strategy was discussed, including: a joint research project into drug intimidation conducted with the third sector; a dedicated Inspector in each division allocated to addressing drug intimidation; involvement in a cross-agency group considering alternatives to prosecution for minor possession; and, consultation in relation to safe injection centres. The Garda Síochána committed to providing the Committee with a copy of the research report, and its quarterly National Drugs Strategy Updates.

10. Garda Síochána Performance Jan-May

The Committee Chair advised Garda Síochána representatives that the initial draft of the half-year assessment on policing performance had been prepared and that the report was expected to be finalised by the end of July.

The process for assigning RAG (red/amber/green) status flags to initiatives in the monthly Policing Plan performance report was discussed. Garda Síochána representatives confirmed that there is increased focus on the Policing Plan this year, with every second meeting of the Senior Leadership Team dedicated to reviewing performance against the Plan. It was noted that there has been a change in how progress is being assessed. Garda Síochána representatives stated that changes have led to more accurate reporting and improved performance against initiatives.

The greater proportion of 'green' initiatives in 2019 versus 2018 was attributed to these changes, a change to a milestone focus, and the increased level of resources being deployed to achieve the Plan. However, it was also noted that it is still early in the lifespan of the Plan and a number of the resources currently allocated to the Plan are temporary, external staff brought on to deliver certain projects rather than long-term deployments. The wording of commitments in the Plan was discussed to ensure that there was a shared understanding of what will be delivered this year. It was agreed that Authority staff would follow up with Garda Síochána staff on this matter.

It was also noted that the high number of projects on target (green) were those that are not immediately dependent on enablers (staffing, ICT, training). Initiatives dependent on resources are experiencing similar issues to 2018, with the organisation struggling to meet demands for resources, particularly demands for Garda staff. These issues are expected to continue for the medium term.

The alignment of reporting with that being provided to the Policing Reform Implementation Group in the Department of the Taoiseach was discussed. Garda Síochána representatives stated that the reporting was identical and had been prepared by the various project owners across the organisation. It was noted that this reduced the opportunity for the Planning Unit to interrogate and clarify what was reported against the Policing Service for the Future initiatives, which is a step that would take place for initiatives developed within the organisation. It was also noted that the Policing Reform Implementation Group reserved the right to alter the RAG status of initiatives based on the reporting to it and its interactions with project owners. It was noted by all parties in the meeting that this might result in a degree of misalignment between the Policing Authority's assessment of performance and the Implementation Group's quarterly review.

Several specific initiatives were discussed, including:

- the Reserve Strategy, with a focus on the drop-out rate and the exit interview process
- the Community Policing framework, with a view to its presentation at the July Committee meeting
- the standards review of discipline, acknowledging the Authority's statutory role in this area.

It was noted that all those items were close to completion or sign off

The inclusion of the rate per 100,000 metrics (crime rates based on numbers per 100,000 of the population) in the Plan was discussed; the Committee expressed its disappointment that these

figures were not available from the start of the Plan. Garda Síochána representatives explained the technical issues that had prevented inclusion of the new metrics. It was stated that the new metrics would be available from July.

The recruitment of analysts was discussed and it was noted that there is a revised target for recruitment in 2019 that is significantly below the number originally approved and sanctioned by the Authority and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in 2017. The difficulties with recruiting analysts were discussed, as were the benefits of increasing the analytical capacity of the organisation. This was linked to the current recruitment cap of 500 new Garda Staff positions between 2016 and 2021. It was suggested that this cap may be too low, given the emerging needs of the organisation. The Committee agreed to refer this matter to the Garda Organisation Development Committee.

11. Detections Improvement Plan

The action points from the Detections Improvement Plan were discussed. The Committee raised concerns about the expectation that the new Investigation Management System (IMS) will address all of the issues addressed through the Detections Plan.

The applicability of the IMS to all crime types was discussed. The pilot raised the issue of a disproportionate administrative burden for more minor or simpler cases. Garda Síochána representatives stated that processes may be adapted following the pilot in Waterford. It was suggested that adopting different approaches for different crime types might make the system more user-friendly and efficient, and that this would be imperative in ensuring the credibility of IMS within the organisation. It was acknowledged that the IMS would only work effectively where the basics of investigations were done correctly and the data inputted was of a high quality. Effective supervision was identified as a key enabler to mitigate against the system being used incorrectly. Early feedback from the pilot has identified difficulties arising from the complexity of using the IMS (as currently configured) for high volume crime.

Garda Síochána representatives reported progress with other actions from the Detections Improvement Plan, and noted that the majority of short-term targets have been met; aide memoires completed, National Intelligence Model piloted and DPSUs established. It was noted that there is still progress to be made on the quality of crime data and the crime counting rules. The positive feedback from the Central Statistics Office on the improvements being made with data quality was highlighted. It was noted that the CSO's satisfaction with the data quality of detections will be a key performance indicator for the success of the plan.

Setting specific targets for levels of detections was discussed. Garda Síochána representatives stated that the internal goal is to return to 2015 levels and put in place revised crime counting rules before re-assessing target levels. Garda Síochána representatives explained some challenges faced in making comparisons with other jurisdictions. Improvements in sexual assault detections were discussed and the positive effect of the DPSUs was highlighted (increased reporting and a more efficient process in managing sexual assault cases). However, it was noted that there is analysis to be done to quantify the effect of DPSUs on detection rates. Garda Síochána representatives committed to providing more detailed information and analysis for the next meeting.

12. Homicide review

Garda Síochána representatives advised the fifth report covered the final nine cases, excluding one remaining case that is subject to an active investigation and so not included. It was noted that this report had led to a new recommendation from the review team concerning missing person's investigations. It was noted that owners had been assigned to each recommendation and it was stated that there is already work ongoing to address those, even though the sixth report has yet to issue. Ongoing work to reduce duplicate IDs on PULSE were also discussed, as were plans to introduce a peer review system.

The Committee's concerns that the conclusions for each case do not entirely capture the issues outlined in the main text of the review were discussed. Garda Síochána representatives acknowledged the concerns raised. The Committee stated that it would be important for the 6th report to be clearer in summarising the issues raised by the cases.

Garda Síochána representatives stated that there is a level of confidence that no similar issues are arising in 2019 due to the work of the review team in meeting investigating teams across the country. This has resulted in liaison between investigating team and the review teams to address any issues as they arise during the course of an investigation.

The approach to the initial classification of homicides by investigating officers was discussed, and no changes are proposed by the Garda Síochána. However, some consideration will be given to the simplification of PULSE entry, including review of the number of categories currently in use for homicides.

13. Any other business

It was noted that an item of other business had been identified in relation to the use of force, following on from a Parliamentary Question earlier in the month. However, this was deferred for consideration in the following meeting.

The need of GSAS for new analysts was reiterated by Garda Síochána representatives, with the view expressed by GSAS representatives that numbers are currently approximately a fifth of what they would ideally be in order for the service to be used most effectively throughout the organisation. The Committee noted its support for the recruitment of additional analysts to sanctioned levels. The ongoing recruitment campaign was discussed and it was noted that further utilisation of improved IT solutions might compensate for current shortages in staff.