



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA  
POLICING AUTHORITY

## Policing Authority publishes review of Public Order Policing

25 June 2019

The Policing Authority has today published a review of Public Order Policing in Ireland, which was carried out on its behalf by the Garda Inspectorate. The review will be presented by the Inspectorate at tomorrow's Authority meeting in public with the Garda Commissioner and will then be discussed by Authority members with him. The meeting will take place at 2.30pm on Wednesday 26 June at Collins Barracks, is open to the public and will be live-streamed [here](#).

The context for the review was the Authority's oversight and assessment of Garda performance at two public order incidents that occurred at An Cosán and North Frederick Street, in 2014 and 2018 respectively, as well as its assessment of the Garda Síochána's reports on these incidents.

The review finds a number of positive aspects of public order policing such as the level of capacity, the standardisation of training across divisions, examples of good practice and multi-agency cooperation. However, there has been limited progress in implementing the recommendations from the internal Garda reviews of the incidents at An Cosán and North Frederick Street. The Inspectorate has developed 19 recommendations based on its findings, which are directed towards addressing key issues it has identified in this critical area of policing.

Commenting on the publication of the report, Policing Authority Chair Josephine Feehily thanked the Garda Inspectorate for their work on the review, and said:

*“Effective public order policing which recognises the right to freedom of assembly and the right to public protest is essential in a healthy democracy and, in this context, every year, the Garda Síochána manages many large public gatherings effectively and without incident. The Garda Inspectorate has identified that the greatest risk with regard to public order does not arise from the potential for widespread public disorder, which in an Irish context would be considered relatively low. The risk arises from inconsistent governance and application of Garda policy in this area of policing. It is an internal risk rather than one posed by the environment.*

*This is a concise, focussed inspection report, the findings of which are consistent with other matters examined by the Policing Authority. I welcome the clarity with which the Garda Inspectorate grounded its assessment on human rights and on the Garda Code of Ethics. The Authority looks forward to discussing the recommendations with the Garda Commissioner when he has had an opportunity to consider them.”*

The findings of the report include that:

- The professional competence, knowledge and deep commitment to public order policing among the command ranks (chief superintendents and superintendents) who were engaged during the inspection, was impressive.
- The Garda Síochána does not have a Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment (STRA), which would examine organisational readiness, contingency planning and emerging protester tactics and



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would also provide an evidence base for developing the most appropriate operating model for public order policing. STRAs are commonplace in other jurisdictions, in public order and other areas of policing, and the absence of a STRA is identified by the Garda Inspectorate as a significant organisational risk that requires to be addressed urgently.

- A number of the recommendations relate to issues that are recurring themes across the Authority's oversight work, namely, diffused accountability; a lack of clarity and consistency in the application of policy; and a lack of a coordinated approach within the organisation.
- From an operational perspective, the Public Order Incident Command Model has been developed without a clear definition in supporting policy of what constitutes a public order incident and that the model is not consistently used from division to division. Human rights and ethics have not found expression in supporting policies, procedures and guidance. This has implications for the quality and consistency of this type of policing within the community. It creates a risk that a disproportionate policing response or inappropriate tactics may be employed and that in turn can impact public confidence in policing.
- The governance structure of public order policing within the Garda Síochána is confused, with responsibility and accountability dispersed across a wide group of senior individuals. The Inspectorate found limited strategic coordination, and that public order responsibilities overlapped across a number of assistant commissioners, chief superintendents and superintendents, which limits the organisation's ability to drive the strategic changes necessary in this area of policing. Organisational learning in the context of public order is described as ad hoc. This is of particular concern to the Authority in light of the extent of its engagement with the Garda Commissioner on this topic since July 2017.
- While enhancements are recommended, there are extensive welfare supports available to garda members and staff. The Garda Síochána also has a clear vision for the future development of welfare and employee services within the organisation.
- There is currently limited external accountability with regard to use of force by Garda members despite the impact that the use of any force can have within a community and its relationship with its policing service.

Registration for tomorrow's meeting in public between the Policing Authority and the Garda Commissioner, taking place at 2.30pm in Collins Barracks, remains open at [www.policingauthority.ie](http://www.policingauthority.ie). This meeting is open to the public and will be live-streamed [here](#).