

Minutes – Policing Strategy and Performance Committee Meeting

Date: 03 April 2020

Venue: Remote Video-Conference

Committee Meeting

Attendance

Authority: Judith Gillespie (Committee Chair), Moling Ryan, Vicky Conway, Deborah Donnelly, Ronan Nolan, Bob Collins (Chairperson) (item 1 only)

Secretary: Fiona Larthwell

Executive: Helen Hall (item 1 only), Margaret Tumelty, Cormac Keating, Aoife Clabby, David Pasley, Mark Nother

Apologies: N/A

1. Verbal update from the Chairperson and Chief Executive on any matters of relevance to the Committee agenda

The Committee Chair's opening remarks highlighted the increased relevance during the COVID-19 crisis of the Garda Síochána's strategic aim of 'Keeping People Safe', and of the Authority's focus on human rights.

The Chairperson provided a verbal update to members on developments that had occurred since the last Authority meeting in light of the Garda Síochána's response to COVID-19, including engagements between the Chairperson and the Garda Commissioner.

Discussion focussed on various interactions that had taken between the Garda Síochána, the Authority, the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission and the Irish Council for Civil Liberties concerning the proposed use of 'spit hoods' by the Garda Síochána during this crisis. The Committee discussed the need to ensure appropriate training and accountability mechanisms were in place before their deployment. Reference was made to a related incident and the Committee asked that the Chief Executive request a report from the Garda Síochána on this matter.

The Committee also discussed the potential for requiring the Garda Síochána to report on the use of the new powers to be conferred by the regulations. It was agreed that this, and the recording of the use of spit hoods, would be discussed with the Commissioner in the public meeting.

There was a brief discussion about interim plans for the Internal Audit function. The Committee noted the importance of Internal Audit and Professional Standards continuing to undertake their

statutory role as far practicable, acknowledging that, in light of the current crisis, some staff would be redirected to immediate critical priority areas including vetting.

It was noted that it was clear that the Authority could not continue with the existing Policing Plan as the basis for evaluation of the Garda Síochána. The Committee discussed recent relevant correspondence and engagement on this topic. It was agreed that the Executive and the STO would continue to engage on changes to the Plan, and that this would be included on the Agenda for the next meeting of the Committee on the 20th of April.

2. Committee approach

The Committee Chair emphasised the need for proportionate but continuing oversight of the Garda Síochána. The Committee considered the need for a revision of the Policing Priorities and decided that consideration would instead be given to incorporating the COVID-19 response within the existing Priorities. It was agreed that this would be discussed at the next Authority meeting.

It was agreed that the Policing Plan should be revised to address projects that would be continued, amended, added or paused. The Committee agreed that the Garda Síochána should present its proposals for the amendment of the Policing Plan, and that, if possible, this should be discussed in the next meeting in public of the Authority. The Committee stressed the importance of the evidence base for any decisions around amendments to the Policing Plan.

The potential impact of the crisis on the Garda Síochána's capacity to report to the Authority was discussed. It was agreed that a minimum standard for reporting would be agreed with the Garda Síochána. The Committee highlighted a number of operational areas to be kept under review, which would be included on the agenda for the April Committee meeting.

The Committee noted that the Joint Policing Committees are not meeting at this time and suggested that the Authority could urge Chief Superintendents to make contact with heads of JPCs, in order to keep communication channels open.

The Committee requested that the Executive maintain a focus on stakeholder engagement and requested that the Executive make contact with stakeholders in relation to domestic violence and child abuse in advance of the next Committee meeting.

3. Agenda for 20 April

The Committee discussed potential areas of engagement for the agenda of the next meeting, scheduled for 20 April. It was agreed that the number of Garda representatives requested would be kept to a minimum and discussions would be kept at a high level. A number of items for inclusion on the draft agenda were agreed.

Finally, the Committee returned to discussion of the use of spit hoods and its reporting. The importance of discussing this matter further with the Garda Síochána was re-emphasised.