

Minutes – Policing Strategy and Performance Committee Meeting

Date: 21 September 2020

Venue: Remote Video-Conference

Committee Meeting

Attendance

Authority: Judith Gillespie (Committee Chair), Bob Collins (Authority Chair) Vicky Conway, Deborah Donnelly, Moling Ryan (Part A only)

Secretary: Karen Shelly

Executive: Helen Hall, Margaret Tumelty, Aoife Clabby, Mark Nother, Gráinne Curtin (Part A only), David Pasley (Part A only).

Apologies: Ronan Nolan

1. Closed session – Committee members

Committee members did not exercise the standing option to conduct a closed session.

2. Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of the previous meetings were approved. There were no matters arising and no conflicts of interest identified.

The CEO gave a verbal update on recent engagements and correspondence with the Garda Síochána regarding the frequency of reporting against the policing response to COVID-19. The Committee agreed that due to the ongoing operating environment and oversight requirements, they would request fortnightly updates on policing of COVID-19 generally and as-they-happen updates on use of anti-spit hoods by members, in Part B of the meeting.

3. Policing Performance Assessment

An overview of Executive fieldwork activity since the July meeting was provided by the Executive, including remote interactions with the Garda Síochána and with external stakeholders.

Following a discussion on performance against the Policing Plan and COVID-19 policing the Committee identified a number of key areas for discussion with the Garda Síochána in Part B of the meeting.

4. Policing Plan and Priorities

The Committee discussed the approach to both the Policing Priorities 2021 and the Policing Plan 2021.

On the Policing Priorities it was agreed that the Committee would recommend to the Authority that the Priorities for 2021 would remain consistent with those put in place for 2020. The Executive was requested to proceed on this basis with the addition of explanatory, contextual information to aid the understanding of the public and stakeholders of the priority areas, and to consider the inclusion of measures, outcomes or an articulation of what successful implementation would look like.

This was decided upon on the basis that the Strategy Statement 2019-2021 is based on these priorities and also that they offer sufficient scope for the Garda Síochána to incorporate the necessary response to COVID-19.

On the Policing Plan consideration was given to what would need to be included in the Policing Plan 2021, including it being used to take stock against the Strategy Statement realisation to date, and provide a roadmap for achieving outstanding aspects.

It was also agreed that engagement on the Policing Priorities 2022 would begin early in 2021 to allow sufficient time to consider the need for any adaptations to the approach in conjunction with the Garda Síochána.

On the Policing Plan 2022 it was agreed that earlier engagement would coincide with the discussions on the Strategy and that consideration was needed on how to evolve the measures used currently in the Plan to assess Garda performance. The Executive was tasked with undertaking research into the approach in other jurisdictions, including the identification, where possible, of peer-reviewed methods of successful policing performance measurement.

5. Preparation for the Garda Síochána updates

The Committee discussed materials received and issues pertaining to the agenda items of the Homicide Review and DNA. As at the July meeting concerns were raised as to the absence of sufficient detail in the reporting on the former, and the intention to only provide a verbal update for the latter.

Areas for engagement with the Garda Síochána Representatives were agreed on these items and the quarterly standing item of Organised Crime.

Part B – Meeting with Garda Síochána representatives

Attendance

Authority: As previous

Executive: As previous

Garda Síochána: Assistant Commissioner John O’Driscoll (Organised and Serious Crime), David Gilbride (Executive Director Strategy and Transformation), Andrew O’Sullivan (Executive Director ICT and Data), Lois West (Deputy Head of the Garda Síochána Analysis Service), Gráinne Shortall (Policing Authority Liaison Office), Audrey Guilmartin (Policing Authority Liaison Office).

Apologies: Deputy Commissioner John Twomey (Policing and Security)

6. Closed session

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

The Committee Chair enquired as to the late apologies of Deputy Commissioner Policing and Security, noting the short notice and lack of detail provided to the Committee. It was requested that the Garda Síochána representatives communicate the Committee’s concerns as to the manner in which this occurred, given the Deputy Commissioners responsibility for the items on the meeting agenda.

7. Policing Performance

COVID-19 Policing

The Committee Chair requested that the Garda Síochána, in light of the extraordinary powers and circumstances in which they are currently operating, resume fortnightly reporting on the policing of COVID-19 with as-it-happens reporting against the use of anti-spit hoods by members. The Committee expressed their acknowledgement of the operational and analysis demands on the organisation and the issues surrounding analysis capacity, but outlined the necessity of the timely reporting so as the Authority can fulfil its statutory oversight responsibilities, and those additionally requested by the Minister in light of COVID-19.

The Garda Síochána representatives outlined the internal capacity issues that increased frequency reporting brought, and the current demand placed on the Garda Síochána by an increased volume of Parliamentary Questions tabled by Members of the Oireachtas. It was agreed that the Committee’s request would be brought to the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner Policing and Strategy for approval.

Policing Performance

The Garda Síochána representatives outlined to the Committee the severe resource challenges being faced by the organisation including: the capacity within the Garda Síochána Analysis Service; the

overall allocation and number of Garda Staff; delays in recruitment; and severe budgetary issues in light of the current, ongoing economic uncertainty. The Authority Chair and the CEO, in reference to the Authority's function of advising the Minister on the adequacy of Garda resources, reiterated the need for the Garda Síochána to provide the necessary and adequate information to the Authority to allow them, if appropriate, to advocate on the Garda Síochána's behalf. The Committee also noted a seeming lack of strategic direction in HR and IT planning that was exacerbating the issues experienced by the Garda Síochána.

On performance against the Plan – and in particular in relation to the functions under the National Protective Services Bureau – it was noted by the Committee that the feedback from stakeholders, and available statistics, spoke to a significant level of performance on domestic abuse and related homicides. The Committee raised concerns however about the rates of detections for sexual crime, the resourcing of Divisional Protective Services Units and a lack of prosecutions on human trafficking. The Garda Síochána representatives outlined that the nature of sexual crimes results in investigations being quite lengthy and complex resulting in a low detection figure over a 12-month period, but that this figures rose subsequently. As such the figures were described as somewhat misleading, but it was noted that improvements could still be made and were being actioned through the introduction and rollout of the Investigation Management System and other initiatives, including the dedicated DPSUs.

On these units it was outlined to the Committee that 19 had been established to-date and that further units were planned by year end as were additional resources for a number of existing units. It was also reported that they are currently operating on a revised scope from that initially planned and leading investigations on the areas of sexual crime (including legacy cases), and crimes involving children.

The Committee heard that human trafficking was still being investigated and managed at Divisional level by local detective units as opposed to the DPSUs as previously planned. On the detection and subsequent prosecution of this crime type the Garda Síochána representatives outlined that many of these investigations involve cooperation and joint operations with other jurisdictions and as such may result in the prosecution of individuals in countries other than Ireland.

Reporting

The Committee again raised concerns with the Garda Síochána representatives regarding the organisations reporting against policing performance. In particular it was noted that an absence of detail, inconsistencies in reporting, and the underreporting of risks and issues that act as barriers to performance in some areas result in a narrative that undersells areas of good practice and frustrates the ability of the Authority to fully assess performance.

The Garda Síochána representatives outlined that following the July meeting and discussions on a potential change in approach to the Pan in 2021 that research was being undertaken to identify and learn from best practice in other jurisdictions. In particular consideration was being given to: the metrics for measuring performance; moving to a more concise, high level plan; ways to refresh the

centrality of the Plan to the organisation and its members; and increased connectivity between the national and sub-national Plans.

The Committee requested that the following factors be considered in the redrafting: the collective, iterative process, involving the Authority, in place for the formation of the Plan; ensuring a connection between the reporting on the Plan and other reporting; and, including explicit connections between the Plan as a vehicle to deliver in the final year of the Strategy Statement 2019-2021.

8. Homicide Review

The Committee Chair outlined that the Committee felt the lack of detail in the report provided made an assessment of progress impractical. The Garda Síochána Representatives provided a verbal update in response to the Committee queries on implementation, in particular relating to the actions marked as complete, and agreed to provide a more comprehensive reporting going forward.

The Committee Chair informed the Garda Síochána representatives that it was not possible at present for the Committee or the Authority to agree to the closing of the matter at the September meeting of the Authority as planned; pending further, comprehensive, written reporting.

9. DNA

The Committee received a verbal update on the progress concerning work relating to DNA samples. The Committee sought assurances as to the ongoing liaison with stakeholders including: the DNA Database Committee chaired by Ms Justice Murphy; Forensic Science Ireland; and the Data Commissioner.

The Committee Chair outlined to the Garda Síochána representatives that this was an agenda item for the September Authority meeting and that a written update was needed and expected in advance of the meeting.

10. Organised Crime

The Assistant Commissioner Organised and Serious Crime provided a verbal update to the Committee on resourcing and operations in respect of: drug and drug related crime; economic crime; cybercrime; and the Garda Síochána's response to organised crime gangs.

11. AOB

The Committee Chair reiterated the request that the written updates on the Homicide Review and DNA be received by the Authority in time to be read and digested before the full Authority meeting.
