



## **Minutes – Policing Strategy and Performance Committee Meeting**

**Date: 07 December 2020**

**Venue: Remote Video-Conference**

### **Committee Meeting**

#### **Attendance**

**Authority:** Judith Gillespie (Committee Chair), Vicky Conway, Deborah Donnelly, Moling Ryan, Ronan Nolan

**Secretary:** Karen Shelly

**Executive:** Helen Hall, Margaret Tumelty, Cormac Keating, Sophia Carey, Michal Hanley, Mark Nother

#### **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. An update on such, provided by the Garda Síochána, was outlined by the Executive and it was agreed that it would be discussed with the Garda Síochána representatives in Part B of the meeting. There were no matters arising and no conflicts of interest identified.

The Committee Chair relayed her thanks to the Committee members and the Executive staff on the occasion of her final meeting, and gave particular thanks to Vicky Conway whose term with the Committee was also ending.

#### **3. Policing Performance Assessment**

An overview of Executive fieldwork activity since the October meeting was provided by the Executive, including remote interactions with the Garda Síochána and with external stakeholders. The CEO also provided an update to the Committee on issues pertaining to a report in the media concerning emergency call responses by the Garda Síochána.

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 a number of themes and issues to be reflected in the Policing Authority Assessment of Policing Performance 2020, ahead of provision of a draft of such to the Authority in the January meeting.

The latest draft iteration of the Policing Plan 2021 as provided by the Garda Síochána was considered by the Committee, who agreed a number of areas to follow-up on for comment and clarification in Part B of the meeting.

#### **5. Preparation for the Garda Síochána updates**

The Committee discussed materials provided and issues pertaining to the agenda items of sexual offences and Brexit preparedness. The Committee members agreed a number of key areas on which to base their engagement in Part B of the meeting.

#### **6. Committee Actions**

The Committee considered a list of ongoing actions arising from meetings in 2019 and 2020, along with Executive updates against such and proposals for future progression of same. It was agreed that any further feedback could be communicated to the Committee Secretary in writing.

## Part B – Meeting with Garda Síochána representatives

### Attendance

**Authority:** As previous

**Executive:** As previous

**Garda Síochána:** Deputy Commissioner John Twomey (Policing and Security), Acting Deputy Commissioner Anne Marie McMahon (Governance and Strategy), Assistant Commissioner John O’Driscoll (Organised and Serious Crime), David Gilbride (Executive Director Strategy and Transformation), Andrew O’Sullivan (Chief Information Officer), Chief Superintendent Declan Daly (Garda National Protective Services Bureau), Gráinne Shortall (Policing Authority Liaison Office).

### 7. Closed session

The standing option to conduct a closed session was not exercised. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved with the agreement to follow-up on the area of victim statements – subject of a clarification in the draft October minutes – under the sexual offences agenda item.

### 8. Policing Performance

A verbal update was provided to the Committee by the Garda Síochána representatives pertaining to an identified potential issue in the emergency call responses by the Garda Síochána. It was outlined that a review is underway and that the Authority would be kept abreast of developments including an update at the December Authority meeting.

The Committee Chair invited the Garda Síochána representatives to provide an assessment of the year in the context of the upcoming Policing Authority Assessment of Policing Performance 2020, including achievements and challenges faced. It was outlined by the Garda Síochána representatives that in a highly unusual year for the organisation there was a clear positive in the agility and responsiveness shown by the organisation and its members in answering the internal and external demands placed by COVID-19. In particular it was noted that there was a sense of achievement in: the upscaling of community policing, including the rapid deployment of extra community policing vehicles; the increased provision of IT capability to allow remote working and increased mobility for front-line members; the rollout and success of Operation Faoiseamh and the wider support given to vulnerable and elderly people in particular; and the continued success enjoyed in responding to organised crime gangs and the disruption of their activities. It was noted that this occurred in a difficult operational context, albeit one featuring reduced crime, and that there had been a knock on effect to certain targets in the Policing Plan. The Garda Síochána representatives also spoke to the need to maintain the improvements in the aforementioned areas of success with particular reference to Operation Faoiseamh, the increased service, positive relationships and joint working experienced in the area of community policing, and in the area of crime prevention as certain crime types return to pre-COVID-19 levels.

## 9. Policing Plan 2021

The Committee Chair noted the energy and vigour that was evident in efforts to design a new Policing Plan that responded to the previously discussed change in style and approach. The positive engagement to date with the Authority and the movement in the right direction were also acknowledged.

In response to queries from the Committee the Garda Síochána representatives outlined that:

- the Commissioner was involved from the first draft through the providing of the broad framework for the Plan and continued to be engaged and supportive of the process to deliver a condensed Plan;
- the ongoing process would deliver an increased policing focus leading to a more evident centrality of the Plan within the organisation centred on the Strategy Statement and its central tenant of keeping people safe;
- success would be measured and based on:
  - data including, but not limited to, the Public Attitude Survey and work is ongoing to identify other sources of data that can be used as performance measures
  - meeting the milestones as dictated by the existing plans and strategies that are to be included in the Plan;
- it will be aligned with both the Strategy Statement and the Policing Priorities – an update on which would be provided to the Authority in advance of the December meeting;
- a member-led innovation project that tied into and increased the relevance of Plan was being considered, in tandem with planning for an increased focus on internal communications on the Plan; and
- the above will ultimately lead to the production of a Policing Plan that is referenced and relied upon by, and directs the performance of, the members and staff of the organisation.

The Committee sought assurances that an increased policing focus and reduction of organisational development targets present in the plan would not lead to a decrease of importance in the organisation of developing and providing capacity through the key enablers of HR, IT, finance, etc. In response it was outlined that these issues were central to other plans and strategies and as such were being reported through other avenues that were either available to the Authority or would be made so through the sharing of progress reports. The removal of such was not seen within the organisation, it was stated, as a reduction of importance but rather an acknowledgement that the current Plan was dominated by these ongoing, large projects. In response the Committee reiterated these needed to be kept in focus even if not in the Plan as they had been major barriers to performance in previous years and at present.

In order for the Authority to approve it, the Committee spoke to the need to see a Plan that communicated a clear vision to stakeholders, was measurable, contained a clear articulation of what change was planned to be achieved, and able to be effectively reported against. It was agreed that communication and engagement on the development of the plan would continue.

The Committee also sought an understanding of the governance structures and performance appraisal mechanisms within the Garda Síochána on areas that were not in the Plan and outlined the importance of ensuring these were not only present but robust and comprehensive.

## **10. Sexual Offences**

The Garda Síochána representatives, in response to questions from the Committee, outlined some of the investigative issues that arose in relation to sexual offences specifically. It was provided that, on average, these investigations took longer than many other crime types as there was less likely to be witnesses and or other similar, corroborating evidence, thus requiring lengthier investigations to gather evidence and placing an increased importance and centrality of forensic and/or medical evidence, where it was available, and that there are timeframes attached to these processes. It was also outlined that these investigations can feature a high attrition rate on the part of the victim. In addition there are longer timeframes in relation to legacy and inter-jurisdictional cases that can be prevalent. It was outlined that a review is to take place into these and other issues in order to gain a better understanding of them and to provide, where possible, recommendations for improvements. The Committee was informed improvements to investigations such as shorter durations and improved case files – as per feedback from the DPP – were a feature of the recent rollout of DPSUs to all Garda Divisions. These units were credited by the Garda Síochána representatives as increasing the consistency of service provided to victims.

On victim statements the Garda Síochána – in an update on the discussion in the October meeting – outlined that these are required to be provided in writing as part of the evidence book but that this transcription process can be undertaken using IT software rather than requiring a member to take it in writing. However, it was reported as still being a highly manual process at present due to the need to procure the necessary technology for interview suites and to train members in the use of same. The Committee heard that this process is expected to take 2/3 years.

On the subject of data it was provided to the Committee that the Garda Síochána is moving towards an outcomes based method of reporting in this crime area, to provide an increased understanding through the reporting of the factors and where applicable, barriers to detection. A review of rape cases over a 3 year period is intended to be undertaken with this approach. It was outlined that as per the above investigative factors regarding timeframe sexual offences take up to 3 years to settle in terms of detection rate (final investigation/court outcomes as per the crime counting rules) and that the true detection rate is thought to be approximately 20%.

## **11. Brexit Preparedness**

The Committee sought a greater understanding of how the Garda Síochána was prepared for an upcoming deal or no-deal Brexit, particularly in terms of data-sharing, joint investigations and other inter-jurisdictional liaison activities. The Garda Síochána provided an overview of agreements and preparations in place. In addition the Committee heard about inter-agency work on the issue relating to bodies such as Interpol and Revenue, as well as the PSNI and other UK police services. The Committee was assured that the Garda Síochána, despite the unknowns present, were adequately prepared for any eventuality.

## **12. AOB**

The Committee Chair relayed the Authority's best wishes for a speedy recovery to the members injured on duty over the previous week, and thanked the Garda Síochána representatives for their engagement during her tenure, with particular reference to the retiring Deputy Commissioner. The Deputy Commissioner in turn relayed his best wishes to the two departing members and acknowledged the joint working of the Authority, including through the Committee, and the Garda Síochána since 2016 that had led to an improved organisation and a better policing service for the people of Ireland.

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