



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY

Minutes of Meeting of the Garda Organisation Development Committee

Date: 21 February 2022

Venue: Online Meeting

Part A – Committee Meeting

Attendance

Authority: Paul Mageean (Chair), Valerie Judge, Elaine Byrne, Dónal de Buitléir, Melanie Pine (external Committee member)

Secretary: Michal Alfasi-Hanley

Executive: Helen Hall (CEO), Cormac Keating, Margaret Tumelty, Sharon O'Brien, Karen Shelly, Mark Nother, Alexandre Eisenbarth, Aoife Clabby

1. Closed session – Authority Members only

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

2. Chair's Opening Remarks

- There were no declarations of interest from the members in respect of any of the agenda items.
- The agenda items calendar for the year was discussed. Some subjects will be on the agendas of both the PSP and the ODC meetings (i.e. Public Order) but will be discussed from different perspectives.
- The CEO gave an update from the last Authority meeting including on the topic of Public Order.
- The Chairperson discussed the need to get the GS budget estimates for the Authority meeting on resources in May, in order to send the resource letter to the Minister.
- Melanie Pine informed that her membership of the Committee will end in June.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

3.1 The minutes of the previous meeting (14 December) were approved in principle. Some minor typos will be fixed and the final approval will be done by email.

3.2 Members discussed ongoing GAR requests.

- The Committee welcomed the information received with the GAR request related to “Responding to Hate-Crime and Non Hate-Crime” and especially the flow charts in the procedures.

While the Committee agreed to close the request, it was decided that further discussion was needed with the GS about the implementation and would need to be on the agenda in a future meeting maybe in the context of Diversity.

Action:

Close GAR request 566

Add an agenda item on a future ODC meeting to discuss the implementation.

- The Committee noted the receipt of an update on the “informal chat with the local Superintendent in the recruiting process”.

The Committee discussed the material and agreed that it should be queried at the start of the meeting with the GS representatives.

Questions were raised regarding the process, how the GS prevent bias and discrimination and when this process was judged as appropriate, therefore further information will be required.

Action:

To request further information within GAR 725, in particular, how does the GS decide when it is appropriate to apply this procedure.

- The material received within the GAR request on “Training report” was discussed. Since the material received was sufficient, it was agreed to close this GAR request. It was agreed to discuss at part B of the meeting the need for a more strategic view, the future of training post-COVID, the future of Garda College, hybrid and blended learning, the probationer and leadership trainings.

Action:

Close GAR request 732

- The Committee noted the material received in the GAR request regarding the “ePMDS pilot”.
- It was agreed the GAR request could be closed.

Action:

Close GAR 727

- The response from the GS regarding “Response from the GS regarding OD_38_06 (Inclusion of acceptable and non-acceptable behaviours in ethics training based on examples of real cases)” was noted by the Committee and was found to be very comprehensive.
- The response from the GS regarding OD_38_04 to confirm reasons for not signing the Code of Ethics was discussed. No specific reason or concerns were highlighted and the Committee agreed to move away from the issue.
- The GS response to the Authority’s request to attend the Code of Ethics training was discussed.

Action:

Since the reasons provided for not enabling this were related to Covid restrictions, it was agreed that the Executive will re-submit the request to attend, given that Covid restrictions had been lifted.

- The GS letter to PAC was discussed.
The Committee raised concerns about the amount of money spent outside of the formal Procurement process. It was mentioned that this could be an area under the remit of the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General.
It was agreed that the relevant GAR request can be closed.

Action:

Close GAR request 749

- Relevant press and Newsbeat articles were noted.

4. Executive update on oversight activity

4.1 Culture - update on the progress of the 2nd Cultural Audit:

- The Executive gave a verbal update on both documents.

4.2 Quarterly update on Discipline:

- The Committee discussed the quarterly update provided by the GS.
- Concerns were raised regarding delays, the length of some suspensions and the length of the court processes.
- The Committee asked if the Anti-Corruption Unit was now operating at full strength. The Executive will ask the GS to provide the numbers for next meeting.

Action:

The Executive will obtain the numbers regarding staffing of the ACUs for next meeting. This item will be discussed later this year either at a Committee or an Authority meeting.

4.3 Summary of attendance at three technical briefings at Garda HQ:

- The Executive gave an update on staff attendance at three technical briefings at Garda HQ.
- The Committee was told that it was unclear which initiatives were happening soon and which ones were still aspirational.
- The Executive informed the Committee that these briefings were heavily focused on asking for resources.
- The Committee raised concerns about the lack of recruitment for three Executive Officers approved two years ago; the lack of ability from the GS to frame the resource asks in the context of the impact on policing and concrete examples of impacts on the public; the issues of staffing in GISC and GSAS; and the report from the Hamilton review not been received.

Action:

The issues raised by the Committee to be revisited in a future meeting.

4.4 Attendance in Policing-related webinars:

- The Executive gave an update on a webinar which discussed the issues of Diversity, hate-crime and racism.
- This will be further discussed at the April ODC meeting.

5. Information & Technology

- Briefing papers on the latest update on Information and Technology were discussed.

- The Committee agreed that more reflection on the paper was needed in preparation for the Authority meeting.
- Concerns were raised in relation to the impact of the relocation of the data centres and the de-prioritisation of the electronic notification system between the GS and Tusla.

6. Garda Training

- A briefing paper from the Executive was discussed.
- A verbal update was provided by the Executive, regarding informal interviews held with tutor Garda members on their experiences of tutoring probationers who were placed in stations very early in their training due to Covid and the closure of the Garda College.
- It was agreed that several topics will be discussed at part B of the meeting, such as the role of the Garda College, its role as a Professional regulator and how to ensure it is fit for purpose; training post-COVID; leadership training and culture change; the risks with the new approach on probationers training, including consistency, ensuring basic knowledge before being assigned to stations and the communication and feedback mechanisms with the Garda College.
- Concerns were raised regarding training delays, prioritisation, and the fact that training seems to be led by supply instead of demand.

7. 'Rise Up' Protest – Dublin Metropolitan Region (Grafton St. Protest) – GS report on lessons learned.

- A briefing paper from the Executive was discussed regarding this topic and especially in the areas of Human Rights, Workforce Planning and Training elements.

8. GS reflection on performance over the period 2019-2021 in respect of the strategy pillars 4-6:

- A briefing paper from the Executive was discussed.

AOB: The backfilling for Maternity leave was discussed. The Executive informed the Committee that a GAR request was sent but no reply was received yet.

Part B – Meeting with Garda Síochána Representatives

Attendance

Authority: As per Part A above

Garda Síochána: Joseph Nugent, Chief Administrative Officer; Kate Mulkerrins, Executive Director Legal; Anthony O’Donnell, Chief Superintendent, Garda, National Public Order Unit; Deirdre Morris, Principal Officer, Strategic Transformation Office; Aidan Minnock, Superintendent, Foundation Training, Garda College; Gráinne Shortall, Assistant Principal, Policing Authority Liaison Office.

Apologies: Chief Superintendent Pat Murray.

9. Closed session

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

- In the context of GAR request 725 – ‘Informal Chats’ with the local superintendents during the recruitment process, the Committee enquired about the reason why it was not part of the formal process and why these chats were happening; how did the GS ensure that there were no biases or discrimination; and voiced concerns about the potential delays they were causing in the recruitment process.

The GS representatives told the Committee that it was part of the vetting and clearance process and that it was an opportunity for the applicant to clarify areas of concerns that may arise during the process.

It was noted that these chats are happening as an exception when needed and are not standard. The chat will occur only in circumstances where there are discrepancies between what the candidate disclosed during the recruitment process and what came back from the vetting process.

Following the informal chats, a report is sent to the CAO and the Garda Commissioner.

The Committee agreed that the response to the GAR request needed to be reworded for clarification and to include further information, such as who else is present during those chats and the exact criteria for the chats to take place.

Action:

Request additional information within GAR 725 (As per section 3.2 in part A above)

- In terms of maternity leaves backfilling, the GS representatives noted the GS is working on it and an update will be sent to the Committee.

10. Garda training

- Superintendent Minnock provided a presentation with an overview of training, to include the structure of the Garda College and a breakdown of the number of training initiatives (such as crime, specialist and operational skills, leadership, management and professional development).
- Members were told that the approach of blended learning for the foundation training (3 weeks online, 1 week in the college, 7 weeks in stations, 16 weeks in college) has led to efficiency both in delivering and the budgetary implications.
- A training approach document for 2022 is being developed and it includes a training needs analysis conducted in Q3 2021.
- The training records process is still manual but the college is working on a central electronic system.
- When asked how does the degree in applied policing tie-in with the foundation training programme, it was explained that it includes three parts, with the BA being captured in the first phase:
 1. Academic (BA)
 2. Operational knowledge
 3. Behaviour.

These three parts are used for the recommendation to appoint a probationer as a Garda member.

- The Committee asked about the 'accelerated' cohorts, i.e. those who were sent early to stations when the college closed and mentioned the feedback the Executive received from garda tutors regarding the low levels of knowledge obtained by those probationers.

Sup. Minnock confirmed this feedback is aligned with information he received from various focus groups he held.

It was further noted that those probationers were returned to the college as soon as training was resumed.

In addition, it was noted that a revised tutor guards programme is being developed, to include the feedback received from the focus groups.

- When asked whether the 'accelerated' probationers are still on probation even though they were placed in stations, it was explained that their probation period has been extended until they complete their BA.
- The Committee enquired whether the Garda College sees itself as a professional regulator. The GS representative answered that the professional regulator is the University of Limerick
- The Committee asked about the training needs analysis and how prioritisation is made afterwards. It was explained that decisions are made by the Executive, with recommendations provided usually by policy owners (and only occasionally by the College).
- The Committee asked about the online training and was told that Garda members can access courses on their laptops. With respect to having time and space to do so, the Committee was told it is managed locally.
- The Committee asked when the Authority will be provided with the new training strategy. The GS representative informed the Committee that the draft is currently with the Executive.
- The Committee asked about spending on training and how the GS compares to other police services. The GS representatives mentioned that this is discussed in the report of the Expert Review Group, which will be provided to the Authority when signed-off.
- The Committee asked whether barristers still provide training on cross examinations in the Garda College. It was explained that this stopped due to Covid, but will be re-examined now.

The Committee recommended the GS to consider engaging with Kings Inns / trainee barristers for the provision of professional services to trainee Gardaí on court procedure / cross examination to enhance their skills in these areas. The Committee also recommended the GS to consider the provision of an honorarium to make participation by trainee barristers more feasible.

- The Committee asked how cultural aspects are included in the foundation training. It was explained that culture aspects are imbedded through every piece of learning and every module.

Action:

The GS to provide the Authority with the report of the ERG, once signed-off.

- The Committee asked how the evaluation of training is done and was told it is based on feedback from Chief Superintendents, Superintendents, Sergeants and Investigators, as well as court outcomes.

11. GS reflection on performance over the period 2019-2021 in respect of the strategy pillars 4-6

- The GS representative informed the Committee that in terms of leadership, they recognise there is still a lack in supervision roles, such as Sergeants, and further investment in that area needs to be done.
- The civilianisation initiative has stalled due to COVID. There is still a lot of work to be done, including in the legal area. The GS expects more output in 2022.
- The GS representatives reflected on structural changes that happened within this period and noted they didn't progress as much as they would have liked due to the COVID restrictions. However, the Operating Model is bringing consistency and standardisation as seen with the rollout of the Business areas. This has also improved Governance with a top-down approach. The RACI, a first for the organisation, have clarified the role and responsibilities across the organisation. While there is also a bottom-up process taking place in the form of workshops, the GS noted it could be better and there is some understanding deficit which was compounded with the restrictions and the industrial actions. Finance and ICT are still areas where a lot of work needs to be done.
- In terms of Human Rights, The GS representatives said there is now a very good understanding of the subject across the organisation.
There is a strong effort to leverage lessons learned from civil suits.

12. 'Rise Up' Protest – Dublin Metropolitan Region (Grafton St. protest)

- The Committee questioned Garda representatives on the mechanism for asking for resources and help. The GS said that the amalgamation of districts into new divisions forces them to reconsider their resources. The Public Order policy is being revised and there are new rules on training.
- The Committee enquired how involved the Human Rights unit was in the planning of Public Order events. The GS representatives informed the Committee that the current policy allows for Human Rights advisors to be consulted in the planning of events. These advisors are also available outside of Dublin and this is facilitated by the possibility to do online meetings. Human Rights are embedded in the policies so it is forced into the assessments. However, the GS representatives noted that this issue merits a separate additional meeting.

Action:

To include Human Rights on the agenda of a future meeting of the ODC

- The Committee questioned about the assessments and the proportionate response to events. The GS confirmed it was using a gradual response and the ASU (armed units) where only deployed after a proper threat assessment.
- The Committee asked about gender balance in the STOC. The GS answered and mentioned that a conscious effort has been made to expand and to encourage equality in gender and diversity. The fitness test can be a barrier but because of the nature of the role, it cannot be adjusted. Members have been canvassed for views regarding the test and these will be considered.