



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA  
POLICING AUTHORITY

## Minutes – Policing Strategy and Performance Committee Meeting

**Date:** 18 January 2022

**Venue:** Remote Video-Conference

### Committee Meeting

#### Attendance

**Authority:** Deborah Donnelly (Committee Chair), Moling Ryan, Shalom Binchy, Stephen Martin, Ronan Nolan (external member)

**Apologies:** N/A

**Secretary:** Mark Nother

**Executive:** Margaret Tumelty, Aoife Clabby, Cormac Keating, Karen Shelly, Sophia Carey, Philip Cox, Judy Higgins

#### 1. Closed session – Committee members

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

#### 2. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the previous meetings were approved. No conflicts of interest were declared.

The Executive provided an overview of any pertinent developments since the last meeting of the Committee.

Members of the Executive and Committee members discussed their views of committee effectiveness in 2021. Matters considered included the terms of reference of the Committee, quality and quantity of briefing papers, and coordination between committees.

#### 3. Policing Performance Assessment

An overview of performance against the Policing Plan in November and December 2021 was provided by the Executive, and themes emerging were discussed. A number of issues were identified for follow-up with the Garda Síochána under various agenda items in Part B of the meeting.

The Chairperson provided members with a summary of proposals from the Strategic Transformation Office (STO) to adjust the timing and format of Garda reporting on Policing Plan 2022. It was agreed that the Committee, on the basis of Authority approval, would consider a draft version of proposed quarterly reporting against the Plan at its February meeting. It was also agreed that a deviation from the normal monthly reporting, to allow to facilitation of the preparation of the draft by the Garda Síochána, would be recommended to the Authority at the January meeting.

Committee members suggested a number of themes to be addressed in the Authority's Assessment of Policing Performance 2019-2021.

#### **4. Detections**

The Committee considered materials provided by the Executive concerning detections. A number of themes were identified for discussion with the Garda Síochána representatives in part B of the meeting.

#### **5. Organised and Serious Crime**

The Committee prepared for a verbal update from the Garda Síochána representatives on Organised and Serious Crime and considered materials provided by the Executive. A number of themes were identified for discussion with the Garda Síochána representatives in part B of the meeting.

#### **6. Roads Policing**

A number of themes were identified for discussion with the Garda Síochána representatives in part B of the meeting.

## **Part B – Meeting with Garda Síochána representatives**

### **Attendance**

**Authority:** As previous

**Executive:** As previous, Michal Alfasi-Hanley.

**Garda Síochána:** Deputy Commissioner Anne Marie McMahon (Policing and Security), Deputy Commissioner Shawna Coxon (Strategy, Governance and Performance), Assistant Commissioner John O’Driscoll (Organised and Serious Crime), Assistant Commissioner Paula Hilman (Roads Policing & Community Engagement), Andrew O’Sullivan (Chief Information Officer), Deirdre Morris (Strategic Transformation Office), Gráinne Shortall (Policing Authority Liaison Office), Anne-Marie Flynn (Policing Authority Liaison Office).

### **7. Closed session**

The standing option to conduct a closed session was not exercised. There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting, which were approved subject to minor edits.

### **8. Policing Performance Assessment**

The Garda Síochána representatives described the challenge to workforce resilience posed by the recent wave of COVID-19, reducing availability to 77% at times in some divisions, and which has led to a temporary pause in training within the organisation. In response it was outlined that antigen tests were made available to all personnel, and voluntary antigen testing for COVID-19 at home, before attending the workplace for each shift, was being encouraged to reduce transmission.

The Committee heard that increased aviation vetting, in line with EU requirements, successfully began on 04 January 2022, with a requirement to re-vet aviation personnel every 36 months, and every 12 months for those whose positions require enhanced vetting. It was provided that such activity represented a sizeable increase in vetting demand on the Garda Síochána, that approval for 29 additional members and staff were allocated to meet same, and that appeals of the vetting results are to be processed through the Department of Justice.

Returning to matters concerning resourcing issues in the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB) and rising reporting of economic crime, the Committee heard that additional resources are to be considered in respect of demand and priority internally by the resourcing group, chaired by the Commissioner and attended by the both Deputy Commissioners, and that a competition is expected to come to the workforce planning group in early 2022. The Garda Síochána representatives added that increasing resources in the GNECB will involve fractional redeployments, competitions and staggered appointments, but is ongoing, and set out a timescale for beginning appointments at Garda and Sergeant levels at the end of Q1 or beginning of Q2 2022. The Committee reiterated its request to be furnished with a resourcing plan for GNECB as per the recommendations of the Hamilton Review.

The Committee received an update on the rollout of the Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment Tool, including matters pertaining to timelines, risk and risk mitigation. The Garda Síochána representatives outlined that the phased rollout was complete in the North-Western Region, ongoing in the Southern Region, with extension to the Eastern Region in the preparatory stages. In terms of harm to victims, the Garda Síochána representatives assured the Committee that a focus remains on domestic abuse and that victims are being served through callbacks, activities under Operation Faoiseamh, underpinned and assured via Performance and Accountability Framework (PAF) structures.

The Committee queried the data sharing arrangements between the Garda Síochána and Tusla with regard to child sexual abuse information, and how governance and accountability around the new interim referrals system will operate. The Garda Síochána representatives described a good working relationship with Tusla, with Tusla agents working with Divisional Protective Services Units (DPSUs), for example, and assured the Committee that the DPSUs will ensure good governance of the system, and a meeting with Tusla in this regard is planned in February. A plan for the eventual IT solution has been presented to both Tusla and the HSE and this solution contains significant governance and oversight mechanisms, but will take time to implement.

On the subject of diversity and inclusion, the Committee asked to what extent the Garda Síochána can assure itself that the organisation is receiving feedback and input from a holistic range of representatives, groups and communities, and their plans for the future in this regard. The Garda Síochána representatives outlined that the external Diversity and Inclusion Strategy is being finalised, and that the National Diversity Forum is used as a platform for voices from the nine groups defined under discrimination legislation, who are appointed to the forum. It was acknowledged that there is scope to review attendance there to ensure representation, including of young people in the 18-26 age group, especially young Black men. It is intended to roll out the diversity forum model locally to all Divisions, but there is an awareness that it must remain agile and adapt to the needs of the people in each area rather than replicate exactly the national model. The Committee heard that information from the diversity forum filters down on a low-level case-by-case basis via GISC call handlers and through training of Garda Diversity Officers (GDOs). It was outlined that there is an awareness of communities with a concentration of people with protected characteristics in a variety of locations, but that the locations of GDOs are mapped out against the Operating Model areas, aligned to the community policing teams, and in fact the majority of GDOs are working within community teams.

The Committee requested an update on the Public Attitudes Survey (PAS), which is relied upon for measurement of many policing outcomes but has been unavailable since the start of the pandemic in Q2 2020. The Garda Síochána representatives outlined that the 2020 PAS was conducted online for the first time and that while publication of the results has been delayed it is expected that they will be published in Q1 2022. The Committee were informed that while this iteration is nationally representative, it will be skewed towards younger cohorts, with more urban, young and victims of crime participating online than in previous surveys; thus impacting its comparability with previous and future iterations. By contrast, the Committee heard, the 2021 PAS was carried out face-to-face and will be comparable to previous years. It is expected to be released at end of Q2 or beginning of Q3 and will include divisional breakdown of results for the first time.

The Committee, in the context of the reporting by the Garda Síochána on the end of year position against the Policing Plan 2021, acknowledged number of successes in respect of policing performance,

particularly the ongoing focus on domestic abuse and the service provided to victims throughout the strategy period 2019-2021, whilst acknowledging the ongoing issues pertaining to the key enablers.

There was a discussion about the proposed changes to the format and frequency of future, regular Garda Síochána reporting on policing performance to the Authority, as presented by the Garda Síochána representatives. The Committee provided a number of comments as feedback and indicated its intention to recommend, in principle, to the Authority facilitating the proposed changes. It was agreed that a draft for discussion would be provided to the Committee in advance of the meeting in February. Subject to this process it was outlined by the Garda Síochána representatives that the new reporting process may be in a position to commence in full against Q1 performance in early Q2.

## **9. Detections**

The Committee sought an update on the Central Statistics Office's ongoing status of 'published under reservation' for crime and detections data, and the Garda Síochána representatives clarified that it is the position of the CSO and not the Garda Síochána to publish statistics under reservation, but that the Garda Síochána works with the guidelines provided by the CSO – who, it was acknowledged have recognised improvements to the data processes and quality assurance in recent years.

It was further explained that the process of quality assurance of data is metric-driven and in order to move away from the under reservation status, over 95% of PULSE entries must be created and/or reviewed by the Garda Information Services Centre (GISC) for a sustained period. The Garda Síochána representatives outlined that they had been at almost 80%, but that due to resource constraints in GISC they are currently reviewing only 70-75% of entries. The Committee heard that retention of GISC personnel requires renewed focus, as many experienced staff were redeployed to front office roles last year, and that developing the skills of a new GISC staff member takes approximately 18 months. The Garda Síochána representatives emphasised the importance of data quality but reiterated that resource constraints and IT spending are obstacles to improving results. The Committee requested to be kept informed on this situation.

The Committee asked whether the Garda Síochána were satisfied with the current rates of detection of crime – as provided for in the CSO release of November 2021 – and if there are any obstacles that can be identified that cause delays in bringing cases to detected status. The Garda Síochána representatives responded that they want all detection rates to be higher, and that looking at the detection rate after 12 months is not representative, particularly in complex investigations, where a three-year detection rate is more informative. The Garda Síochána representatives emphasised that the length of time taken shows an organisational effort to clear cases that have been active for more than 3-6 months. The Committee heard that at regional and divisional level, and within specialist units, learnings are incorporated into investigational processes, for example across DPSUs, and it was accepted that on rare occasions the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) has noted delays in the processing of electronic devices when it had an impact on a case.

The Committee was told that the PAF process allows stations with high detection rates to share their learning, and an example was given of two divisions within one region where rates were improved through the focus of the Assistant Commissioner on the PAF. The Garda Síochána representatives offered to share more detailed MTA data (and figures recalculated after the passage of 3 years) and how that is used to improve detection rates, and presented examples of some data analysis on recorded

crime detection rates being done by GSAS. In the case of sexual assault, in particular, the Committee heard that looking at the detection rate over a longer period is more informative, and the detection rate after 2-3 years in DMR is steadily improving. It was outlined that GSAS use a quadrant view of detection rates vs incident rates to analyse MTA data, both nationally and regionally, and offered to share this with the Authority.

On the ongoing projects to capture victim:offender relationships, and capture outcomes, the Garda Síochána representatives informed the Committee that a PULSE fix is ready to be implemented when the system allows, possible at the end of January. It will be available to all on the system, however a pilot project to record outcomes will take place only in Galway Division, where a technical briefing is scheduled in late January, to assess what insights can be gleaned from the additional information, particularly in cases of domestic abuse with regard to familial relationships.

In response to a query on the existence and implementation of a detection improvement plan, the Garda Síochána representatives assured the Committee that divisional plans are in place, with strands addressing each crime type and another strand on incidents and occurrences.

## **10. Organised and Serious Crime**

The Committee acknowledged the significant successes in seizures of cash and drugs in recent months, but pointed out that, according to the review of the National Drug Strategy published at the end of October, it does not translate into a reduction of drug use or a reduced impact on communities affected by drug use. The Garda Síochána representatives maintained that the organisational view is that drug and drug related crime, while a major challenge nationally, remains an area of high performance and priority to ensure that an appropriate response is provided.

The Committee noted that the targets relating to drug trafficking and dealing have moved from the crime area to the community pillar in 2022, and asked if that would influence the tone or practice of policing of drugs issues. The Garda Síochána representatives described the impact of Operation Tara, which has ring-fenced Divisional Drugs Unit capability in every division in the country, brought engagement back to communities and linking that community work with enforcement against national and international dealers. The Garda Síochána representatives stressed the need for more emphasis on Drug-Related Intimidation (DRI), which devastates families and communities, and is becoming increasingly problematic. This is currently addressed through the multi-agency DRIVE project, but work in this area has been severely impacted by COVID-19.

In relation to the community focus on drugs, the Committee noted positive sentiment expressed for the members and efforts of the Garda Síochána in a report on the wider Tallaght area, but that it seemed that other partners may not be as active. The Garda Síochána representatives discussed how historical deprivation and unemployment bring drug problems into an area, but that they already work closely with Revenue and Local Authorities, and that new legislation proposed in this area will put that interagency work on a legislative footing, which will require resources to actualise. The Garda Síochána representatives outlined their priorities in the area of organised crime and drugs enforcement for 2022.

The Committee Chair noted the provision of an update on the implementation of recommendations arising from the Homicide Review and it was agreed that the Committee will return to it at a subsequent meeting.

## 11. Roads Policing

In response to a query about resourcing and the adequacy of HR systems in place, the Garda Síochána representatives described the huge demand for recruitment competitions across all areas, for which there is limited capacity, including internal competitions, which have been delayed by external factors and external competitions, run by the Public Appointments Service. The Committee heard that the approvals process for appointments is not very agile, and is under consideration in conjunction with stakeholders. It was stated that the new Acting Executive Director of HR has been appointed, which should lead to improvements overall.

The Committee asked for an update on actions taken to reduce the number of Chief's Permissions in use and the plan for driver training. The Garda Síochána representatives outlined a reduction of 690 in the number of Chief's Permissions to drive, from 1141 in October 2021 to 451 in January 2022, following basic driver (CBD1) training, which had to be suspended due to COVID restrictions but will recommence when possible. The Committee heard that in ten divisions there are currently no members driving on Chief's Permission. A new Driver Training and Pursuit Policy is being developed, and a prioritisation board is in place to allocate training based on operational need and risk.

The Garda Síochána representatives clarified that there are two cohorts driving on Chief's Permission: those who have never received CBD1 training; and those who have been trained to CBD1 level, but are driving a vehicle for which they are not trained (e.g. a van). It is intended that advanced driver (CBD2) training will be rolled out when CBD1 training is complete to reduce the number of Chief's Permissions to zero. The Garda Síochána representative also pointed out that regular Garda members on 24/7 shift now need focus and pursuit training, and a link in with CAD, and this will be the next priority in 2022.

The Committee commended the reduction in road deaths in 2021 to their lowest level since records began. The Garda Síochána representatives described Operation Teorainn, launched in Q4 of 2021 to address an increasing trend in road deaths, through enforcement against poor driving behaviours. The Operation involved the National Roads Policing Coordination Group, who meet with the Road Safety Authority (RSA) each month and the operational plans are developed on a quarterly basis in response to current and seasonal trends (for example, in 2020 passengers were a larger proportion of fatalities, in 2021 it was male drivers and motorcyclists).

In response to a query about roadside drug testing, the Garda Síochána representative described two campaigns that found that over two thirds of drug driving arrests involve cannabis and almost a half involve cocaine. The use of mobile devices has been found to be more advantageous than having them in stations. The Committee asked the GS to inform them of where the Dräger devices are being used, on a geographic basis.

On the subject of the new Roads Strategy, developed by the RSA in conjunction with the Garda Síochána, the Garda Síochána representatives elaborated on the three enabling programme boards, in the areas of funding, data and reporting. The Committee was informed there are ongoing discussions in relation to resourcing the Garda Síochána's obligations to the data programme board.

## **12. AOB**

The Committee signalled an intention to return to the issue of gender-based violence at Committee and Authority level, including the role of the Garda Síochána in combatting gender-based violence and ensuring women are safe and feel safe, both at home and in public.