



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY

Minutes – Policing Strategy and Performance Committee Meeting

Date: 18 May 2022

Venue: Remote Video-Conference

Committee Meeting

Attendance

Authority: Deborah Donnelly (Committee Chair), Moling Ryan, Shalom Binchy

Apologies: Ronan Nolan (external member)

Secretary: Mark Nother

Executive: Helen Hall, Margaret Tumelty, Cormac Keating, Michal Alfasi-Hanley, Gráinne Curtin, Judy Higgins (Part A only), Samuel Lernihan (Item 5 only), Linda Yeates

1. Closed session – Committee members

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

2. Committee Chair's Opening Remarks

An update was provided by the Committee Chair following a discussion on the agenda with the Deputy Commissioner Policing and Security; including the agreement that the standing agenda sub-item Policing of COVID-19 could be retired hence forth owing to the reduction in required dedicated policing response and the cessation of the extraordinary powers conferred on the Garda Síochána. The Committee heard that instead matters relevant to COVID-19, if they should arise, would be dealt with under regular oversight

3. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the previous meeting were considered in the context of a proposed clarification from the Garda Síochána. It was agreed to discuss same with the Garda Síochána representatives in Part B of the meeting.

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

No conflicts of interest were declared.

4. Policing Performance Assessment

An update was provided by the Executive on progress on the *Assessment of Policing Performance 2019-2021* that had been published that morning. The Committee considered materials pertaining to Garda Síochána performance in quarter one 2022 and a number of items for attention were outlined for follow-up with the Garda Síochána representatives in Part B of the meeting.

5. Policing in Rural Areas

The Committee discussed the matters pertaining to policing in rural areas. A number of areas were discussed and identified for discussion with the Garda Síochána in Part B.

6. GAR requests and Administration

An update was provided on the status of the three requests for information from the Garda Síochána arising from previous meetings.

Part B – Meeting with Garda Síochána representatives

Attendance

Authority: As previous, and Bob Collins (Authority Chairperson)

Executive: As previous.

Garda Síochána: Assistant Commissioner John O’Driscoll (Organised and Serious Crime), Assistant Commissioner Paula Hilman (Roads Policing & Community Engagement), Deirdre Morris (Strategic Transformation Office), Gráinne Shortall (Policing Authority Liaison Office)

7. Closed session

The standing option to conduct a closed session was not exercised. The Committee sought additional detail on a proposed clarification to the minutes of the previous meeting and it was agreed to update the minutes accordingly

8. Policing Performance Assessment

A discussion took place on the updated style and format of the regular reporting to the Authority on performance against the Policing Plan. The Garda Síochána provided an overview of progress to-date and of further planned development of the reporting, a process that was previously agreed would be iterative and refined to ensure it met the needs of both the Authority and of the Garda Síochána Senior Leadership Team. The Committee welcomed the report format which was described as a positive change, with particular reference to its development towards an increasingly outcome based reporting. Feedback was provided in respect of a desire for a greater articulation of the risks and challenges faced by the organisation and the additional, minor drafting and layout matters. The Committee sought clarity on the extent to which the report is used internally within the Garda Síochána as a management tool. In response, the Garda Síochána representatives outlined the ongoing process to further refine and embed the reporting as a management tool through direct engagement with business owners and project teams, with the additional aim of improving the outcome focus of included material.

In respect of performance matters and in response to queries raised, the Committee heard:

- The Garda Síochána had received funding through the Government innovation fund for a pilot for virtual ID parades and that additional information on such could be provided to the Authority;
- Resources, in the context of the enabling functions, continue to be a challenge and were featuring as a risk across a wide array of targets within the Plan;
- Account fraud has increased in excess of 500%, with the nature and types of crime within the category changing and becoming more sophisticated. The Garda Síochána acknowledged there are challenges in respect of available, skilled resources, the allocation of these resources and the need to continually adapt to these and similar emerging types of crime. It was outlined that progress in addressing these challenges remains difficult.

- The Learning and Development Strategy remains under consideration by the Garda Executive and is awaiting further input from the Expert Review Group. In its absence training is being progressed in respect of priority courses.
- Queries raised in respect of Major Emergency Management, specifically in relation to CBRN capacity, were discussed insofar as possible and a number of outstanding queries were noted for further engagement with the relevant persons within the Garda Síochána.

Roads policing was highlighted as a concern from an operational perspective with deaths on the road currently up compared to the previous year and certain contributory factors now subject to particular focus: 28% of the deaths were a result of no seatbelt being worn, 80% of deaths are male, and all deaths in the first 3 months of the year were male. A pilot for reducing speed has started on the M7 using cameras to check average speed over distance.

With the return to normal road usage, reduced checkpoints following the cessation of COVID-19 related measures, and reported resourcing challenges it was acknowledged that there are fewer intercepts taking place, which has potential to stymie response to the above detrimental impacts on road safety. The Committee heard that a holistic approach needs to be taken on road safety and not an isolated approach to achieve each goal, nor can there be a singular focus on policing given the contributory factors from wider societal trends and norms. From a monitoring and governance standpoint, the Garda Síochána representatives outlined that each division has a Superintendent that acts as the focal point for the strategic and operational alignment between the national and local levels.

9. Policing in Rural Communities

Under the above, challenges and trends relating to rural roads were discussed, and the operations that occur in response. The Garda Síochána representatives updated the Committee on the relevant current road safety campaign and the remaining planned campaigns for 2022.

The Committee heard broadly the challenges, from a Garda Síochána perspective that face the organisation and the communities it serves, including in rural areas, in respect of Drug Related Intimidation (DRI). It was outlined that while most prominently present and growing in urban areas. DRI is also present in rural communities in line with the wider societal prevalence of other drug and drug related crime. The Garda Síochána representatives outlined that a dedicated operation, Operation Fogra, is currently ongoing in the DMR North Division to respond to drug related intimidation as part of the wider, national approach to drug and drug related crime, Operation Tara. In addition to recent success in relation to offenders, it was outlined that Fogra is producing data that may have wider applicability, including in rural areas. In terms of local services following the cessation of the operations of the National Family Support Network the Committee was informed that the establishment of the DRIVE project has been slow, although Garda representatives have been selected and recruitment of necessary staff by partners was commenced in Q2.

It was outlined that the extent of drug use and societal acceptance in all communities presented significant challenges, in particular the prevalence of drug use through social, sporting and cultural channels and activities. It was noted by the Garda Síochána representatives that policing/criminal justice responses undertaken by the Garda Síochána will not alone be able to solve the problems endured by communities in relation to drug and drug related crime, but that the ongoing disruption of criminal

networks engaged in these crimes and associated policing activity allows the space for other, multi-agency responses to address wider societal and health-based challenges.

The Garda Síochána representatives reported on Operation Tara from a governance perspective, the manner of the allocation of resources, the oversight role of Operation Tara and the extent of the success of the operation. The Committee heard that increases since the launch of Operation Tara meant that 329 members were assigned currently to divisional drug units across the country, although this was acknowledged by the Committee as being an increase it was noted that it still fell below the target articulated at the time of the operation's launch. In terms of determination of demand and the appropriate allocation of resources across divisions, the approach was described as similar to the Divisional Protective Services Units whereby a minimum strength is understood and then added to based on the data available, with additional support for investigations or operations applied divisionally, regionally or nationally as appropriate. It was highlighted that resources in units are not permanent and set at national level but rather that resources can be drawn from and moved as needed with divisional officers making the decisions. The Committee heard that at a high level, Operation Tara has to-date made a significant impact on how drug and drug related crime is tackled in each division, with detections increasing and considerable, ongoing successes being made in disrupting the drug supply.

More broadly in terms of policing in rural communities, the wide-ranging role of the members attached to Community Policing was discussed with clarifications sought and received as to the role, how selection is undertaken and the manner in which the organisation can seek to ensure consistency of services and protecting community relationships. The Committee heard that the Garda Síochána are currently working on a Rural Safety Action Plan as requested by Government as part of the wider rural policy landscape, and that the plan will be launched in late Q3 2022. It was outlined that community engagement in rural communities continues to be strong and that there is good use throughout the organisation of a variety of supports such as text alert, local media, etc. but that distinct challenges remain in respect of the expectations and practicalities of the use of CCTV schemes in rural communities. The Committee heard that the Community Policing Framework rollout would continue to increase the capacity and capability of the organisation to meet community needs. Outreach and engagement, tailored to each Division and communities within is being a central tenet to the Framework.

In respect of civil law matters, such those pertaining to family, inheritance, property, etc. – which can have particular applicability to rural communities – the Committee raised concerns based on stakeholder outreach on capacity of members to have ready access to the knowledge and expertise required to deal with such non-criminal issues. In particular the ability to identify and apply these wider matters in the context of potential domestic abuse situations. The Garda Síochána representatives acknowledged the demand in rural communities in relation to issues of land and inheritance and recognised the challenges; firearms and the associated licensing was cited as another issue mainly relating to rural areas, and it was provided that the processes and procedures on such are subject to ongoing consideration. The training available to members, as well as access to relevant information and supports, and the formats for delivering training and education on civil law matters was outlined to the Committee.

In response to queries the Committee heard that there is a review of Community Policing during COVID-19 ongoing and that an update on the status of same would be provided in due course.

10. AOB

It was agreed that Policing Covid-19 will be retired from the agenda given the change in operating environment and reduction of COVID-19 specific demand on the Garda Síochána following the end of relevant public health restrictions and legislation.

The Committee acknowledged the upcoming retirement of Assistant Commissioner John O' Driscoll, citing recent notable successes achieved within his portfolio and thanked him for his engagement with the Committee over its lifetime.