



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY

Minutes – Policing Strategy and Performance Committee Meeting

Date: 19 July 2022

Venue: Remote Video-Conference

Attendance

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

Apologies: N/A

Secretary: Mark Nother

Executive: Helen Hall, Margaret Tumelty, Michal Alfasi-Hanley, Sophia Carey (item 6), 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 Strategy, Governance and Performance, including matters pertaining to: the timeliness of the quarterly report; Garda staff mobility and attrition; crime prevention; the use and internal sharing of community-based intelligence; and, drug and drug related crime issues affecting communities.

3. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the previous meetings were approved and the Executive provided the Committee an overview of any pertinent developments since the last meeting.

No conflicts of interest were declared.

4. Policing Performance Assessment

A number of matters relating to policing performance were identified for further engagement with the Garda Síochána representatives in Part B of the meeting.

5. Drug and Drug Related Policing – Effectiveness for the community

The Committee discussed the matters pertaining to drug and drug related policing and the outcomes for communities. A number of areas were discussed and identified for discussion with the Garda Síochána representatives in Part B of the meeting.

6. Policing and Young People

The Committee discussed a number of matters relating to the policing of young people and wider interactions between the Garda Síochána and young people, including the strategic importance of such engagement and experiences of young people as reported to the Authority through stakeholder

engagement, and a number of matters were identified for further discussion with the Garda Síochána representatives in part B of the meeting.

7. GAR requests and Administration

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

Part B – Meeting with Garda Síochána representatives

Attendance

Authority: As previous.

Executive: As previous.

Garda Síochána: Deputy Commissioner Shawna Coxon (Strategy, Governance and Performance), Assistant Commissioner Paula Hilman (Roads Policing and Community Engagement), Assistant Commissioner Justin Kelly (Organised and Serious Crime), Detective Chief Superintendent Seamus Boland (Garda National Drugs and Organised Crime Bureau), Assistant Commissioner Michael Finn (Southern Region), Andrew O’Sullivan (Chief Information Officer), Chief Superintendent Colette Quinn (Garda Youth Diversion Bureau), Deirdre Morris (Strategic Transformation Office), Gráinne Shortall (Policing Authority Liaison Office)

8. Closed session

The standing option to conduct a closed session was not exercised. The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted, unchanged.

9. Policing Performance Assessment

There was an in-depth discussion on the timelines for the provision of regular performance reporting to the Authority, with the Committee reiterating the necessary and agreed timelines to allow for the reporting to be considered in full prior to engagement with the Garda Síochána. The Garda Síochána representatives acknowledged the recent issues with timeliness of delivery and attributed them to key issues with capacity due to staff turnover. It was outlined that while every effort will be made they cannot guarantee that the Q3 reporting will not be delayed. Accordingly, the Garda Síochána representatives proposed that there be a change in the dates of reporting periods by a month to allow greater time to prepare reporting. The Committee declined the proposal due to concerns about the information being out of date by the time engagement would take place and requested that the reporting maintain the previously agreed arrangement as set out when the reported moved from monthly to quarterly at the beginning of 2022.

The Committee recognised the significant improvement to the reporting in 2022 but reiterated that delays in receiving the report have an impact on the business of the Committee and the preparations for meetings and that receiving elements of the report out of sync would not be the best way to proceed. It was requested that the Q3 reporting be provided in keeping with agreed timelines.

Relatedly, the Committee enquired as to the impact on the Garda Síochána Senior Leadership Team (SLT) if the reporting was not received in a timely manner. The Committee reiterated that it was a central tenet to the reporting that it would be used not just by the Policing Authority but also be designed in a manner that allowed it to be of value to the SLT and, as such, there are ongoing concerns held by the Committee as to the impact delays in reporting could have. These concerns arise from the central importance of the high-level strategic view provided through the report, in the context of the scale and complexity of strategic developments and projects currently being undertaken by the Garda Síochána. Ultimately, the Committee explained, this gives rise to concerns on whether the reporting

holds the position it should and on potential shortcomings in the strategic view available to management on an ongoing basis.

In response the Garda Síochána representatives clarified that the reporting that advises the SLT on an ongoing basis is primarily operational reporting that is better placed to provide live, frequent updates on organisational performance – in line with the frequency of reporting required by the SLT. By contrast, the quarterly performance reporting engaged upon with, and provided for, the Policing Authority similarly provides the SLT and wider, sub-national Garda management with a higher-level strategic view of progress. Accordingly, it supplements the ongoing, more frequent operational reports and, while noting the Committee's concerns and sharing the understanding of the challenges delays in reporting can have, delays in receipt are not believed, in the view of the Garda Síochána representatives, to have a significant adverse impact in the ongoing management of the organisation. It was outlined that the Committee would monitor the situation and revert to this issue at future meetings as the iterative development of reporting continues.

The Committee expressed concern that the publication of the Public Attitudes Survey (PAS) results for 2020 was delayed given the position of the survey as one of the primary ways to engage and receive feedback from the public on the work of the Garda Síochána. The Garda Síochána representatives informed the committee that the analysis of the 2020 online survey – completed in place of the PAS which was disrupted due to COVID-19 – is complete and due to be published in July/August. The Committee also heard that the data from the 2021 iteration of the PAS is complete and should be published by the end of Q3. It was provided that the results of the survey are discussed in great detail at SLT meetings to review aspects of the data as it is made available and where appropriate further research or operational responses are proposed. In terms of early, high-level findings, the Committee heard that, in keeping with previous results of the PAS, the survey found that there are high levels of public trust and satisfaction in the Garda Síochána. However, the experience of victims of crime has been highlighted as an area of concern as a sizeable proportion of victims are not satisfied with the service they received, including for example, the information they receive after reporting a crime. The Garda Síochána representatives proposed to engage with the Policing Authority on the results of the survey prior to publication with the understanding that the figures are preliminary and further work needs to be done. A question was raised by the Committee about the aim to sample 1000 young people in the survey and it was confirmed by the Garda Síochána representatives that this did not happen in 2021 but discussions are ongoing with the current provider on such for the 2022 and future iterations.

There was a discussion on the current status of the Policing Plan targets at the half year point and the increase in at-risk targets since end Q1. The Committee noted that the reporting suggested there were significant concerns with the capacity to meet targets by year end, as envisaged. The Garda Síochána representatives reported that there would be an internal mid-year review undertaken to assess whether they will be able to deliver on the target as originally planned or if realignment of targets or milestones was required. In terms of wider reporting and development of outcome based reporting the Committee heard that progress was being made on the understanding throughout the organisation of the ongoing move to more comprehensive outcome based reporting with a growing understanding of the importance of recording outcomes not just outputs. It was outlined that a key message on the change is that the 'so what' is important and can be powerful in terms of setting performance targets and better understanding the impact of policing services delivered to communities. While it was outlined that the understanding of 'so what' varies throughout the organisation, coaching in this area is

underway and there is a sense at management level that reporting is improving. This improvement was also acknowledged by the Committee.

A number of other matters were flagged by the Committee for either written follow-up by the Garda Síochána or for discussion at a later meeting.

10. Drug and Drug Related Policing – Effectiveness for the community

The Committee recognised the recent successes of the Garda Síochána in responding to organised crime gangs and those engaged in drug and drug related crime. It was reiterated that the discussion on the meeting agenda was to further engage on the community impact of such success and other policing and community outreach activity being undertaken by the Garda Síochána. In this vein the Committee asked for a clarification of the roles of the community policing units and the Divisional Drugs Units in the response to local level drug and drug related crime activity. It was reported that the community policing units role is multi-faceted broadly, as well as when it specifically comes to drug and drug related crime. The role of the community policing units in such activity is to engage with the community from a public safety and intelligence perspective and also to respond, as necessary to the selling of drugs, drug related intimidation, and associated criminality – including the support of local operations to respond to and disrupt drug and drug related crime. The Committee heard that the connection between community policing units and Divisional Drugs Units is invaluable at local level and they must work in tandem as community policing units are a primary source of interaction for the Garda Síochána with communities and that as such they are vital to ensuring effective identification and response to local issues.

It was reported that there are 320 members attached to Divisional Drug Units and 1600 members assigned to various levels of community policing duties. In this context the Committee sought clarity regarding strategic and operational accountability, i.e. with both community policing units and drug units both working to tackle the problem, who is accountable to the Commissioner. It was noted that both Assistant Commissioner Roads Policing and Community Engagement and Assistant Commissioner Organised and Serious Crime would jointly be held accountable to the Commissioner on responding to local drug and drug related crime. Accordingly, both Assistant Commissioners work closely and engage regularly on associated matters.

The Garda Síochána outlined the operational response to drug related intimidation, including an overview of the success to-date of Operation Fógra in the DMR North Division and of the dedicated Inspectors in each division assigned responsibility for responding to drug-related intimidation. The impact that such crime has on individuals and communities was discussed, as well as the need for inter-agency supports for them. The Garda Síochána provided an update on the establishment of the multi-agency DRIVE (Drug-related Intimidation & Violence Engagement) Project which was expected to shortly commence operations across the country. It was outlined that DRIVE would allow for an enhanced response to drug-related intimidation as well as a resource for victims seeking information and/or advice but who were fearful of engaging with the Garda Síochána – a hallmark of drug-related intimidation.

The Committee also heard that Operation Tara continued and was consistently providing operational success as well as refocusing the organisation on drug and drug related crime, but it was acknowledged that it is difficult area to measure success at community level given the prevalence and acceptability of drug use in modern Irish society. The need for a wider multi-agency, all of society approach to tackling

drug and drug related crime – in line with the health-led approach of the National Drug Strategy – was reiterated and the current challenges faced in ensuring such a response.

11. Policing and Young People

The Committee asked if there is an overarching vision and strategy for policing and young people. It was provided that at present there are a number of organisational strategies and policies focusing on the needs and requirements of various vulnerable groups, including the cross-governmental, Department of Justice led Youth Justice Strategy. This strategy was described as a good document as a starting point for the whole organisation to understand the wider strategic direction being taken in relation to young people but that there is a body of work required – as related to the below conversation on structures and governance – to embed the approach and ensure good, consistent service at the levels required. This, the Committee heard, will require cross-organisational approaches to implement, as well as the coordination with external partners.

The Garda Síochána representatives further explained that while there is no internal dedicated strategy for children and young people at present there may be a need for such, but also that there may be a more pressing need for an office or bureau with specific responsibility for the engagement of the Garda Síochána with all young people at a strategic level that guides and ensures consistency of approach. This, it was suggested, would replace the current structure whereby youth offending has a dedicated function, but the responsibility for other engagement with children and young people – including as offenders or victims of crime – is diffuse across functional areas. It was outlined that such a need was borne of the fact that regardless of whether young people come in contact with the criminal justice system, or the Garda Síochána specifically, as offenders/suspects, victims of crime, witnesses, or as members of the community it is vital that their intrinsic vulnerability – by virtue of their age and position in society – is recognised and receives the necessary response. Such a shift in approach, the Committee heard, would require a dedicated organisation-wide strategy being put in place and a commitment to substantial, dedicated resourcing or it would not achieve impact. It was recognised that this is not an approach currently being undertaken or planned for, and that any change in approach such as this would require careful consideration due to the need to ensure that all vulnerable groups receive appropriate service and that it may be more appropriate to assign overall responsibility for all vulnerable groups to a function – such as the diversity and inclusion function – rather than a dedicated office/strategy for each societal group.

The Committee heard that currently there is a Child Protection Officer in the organisation in line with the Children First Act but they are not part of the Garda Youth Diversion Bureau – which is under the umbrella of Roads Policing and Community Engagement. This bureau has responsibility for a number of functions including the implementation of Garda actions under the Youth Justice Strategy 2021 – 2027, youth diversion – including the ongoing implementation of recommendations arising from the review of youth diversion –, and the Garda schools programme. It was outlined that engagement with the schools programme is strong and is very important in order to foster strong relationships between the organisation and young people. The Committee heard that the Garda Síochána are the only organisation that are there to deal with young people ‘after hours’ and that in this aspect there is a crucial need for the building of good relationships and the upskilling of Garda members to ensure that services are fit for purpose, however similar to drug and drug related policing there is a need for enhanced inter-agency response, in particular outside of core hours.

On the requirement for, and impacts of, youth diversion on young people to ensure that where possible young people receive an approach that sees traditional criminal justice intervention as a last resort, the Committee heard that the main strands of the programme are: addressing the criminal behaviour; crime prevention (through youth justice projects); and supervision (based on the welfare need of the child). It was outlined that there is a critical importance to address the welfare needs of the child at the heart of each situation to stop the behaviour at an early stage and ensure appropriate supports are in place where necessary. In this vein the Committee heard that there are three type of categories that the young people are put into when they engage in criminal behaviour:

- age and stage behaviour, where it tends to be a once-off occurrence that is grown out of and the child is unlikely to engage in such again as a child or adult;
- community/family vested in crime, where behaviour is encouraged, learned or otherwise a product of the environment the child is in; and,
- young people in care.

It was reported that currently in Ireland there are approximately 400,000 12-18 year olds, the majority of whom will not find themselves in one of the above categories but that if they do the need to ensure the right intervention occurs is critical and that it is informed and aligned by an understanding of young people and youth behaviours. The Committee heard that to ensure effective intervention in these cases the way the Garda Síochána interacts with young people is critically important and it is foundational that the whole organisation have training on how to deal with young people in a positive, proactive and professional way. This will allow for it to occur that young people can build a relationship with the Garda Síochána and they see them as safe people to go to.

The Committee raised a number of issues relating to the reported experience of young people in engagement with the Garda Síochána, including poor relationships between the organisation and young people from diverse and minority backgrounds, including socio-economic and ethnic groups. It was recognised that there are also reports of strong relationships and pockets of good practice, in particular for those in community policing and juvenile liaison officer roles but that there are critical problems in the wider perception on the organisation and its members. The Garda Síochána representatives noted the issues raised and outlined that there are areas within the Garda Síochána that are known to have good relationships with young people and that this level and type of service needs to happen from the top down and across the entire organisation – that a harm reduction approach is needed. The Committee provided its view that there is a need for trauma informed training for all members that would be in contact with young people if the improvements outlined were to be achieved. On being asked if there was any mechanism in the Garda Síochána to listen young people and their concerns, the Garda Síochána representatives outlined that formal engagement occurs at an individual level through the youth diversion process and that certain other engagement with representative groups may occur at national and sub-national level.

The Committee heard that as part of the youth justice strategy there is ongoing consideration on the development of policies for the 18-24 year old age cohort given evidence from developmental and behavioural science research that suggests the inclusion of this cohort into the umbrella of ‘young people’.

12. AOB

No additional matters were raised.