



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA  
POLICING AUTHORITY

## Minutes – Policing Strategy and Performance Committee Meeting

**Date:** 18 October 2022

**Venue:** Remote Video-Conference

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

**Secretary:** Mark Nother

**Executive:** Helen Hall, Margaret Tumelty, Linda Yeates, Barry Smith, Judy Higgins (Part A only)

### 1. Closed session – Committee members

Committee members did not exercise the standing option to conduct a closed session. The agenda was agreed as set, and no conflicts of interest were declared.

### 2. Committee Chair's Opening Remarks

An update was provided to Members by the Committee Chair following advance engagement with the Deputy Commissioner Policing and Security on the meeting agenda.

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

The minutes of the previous two meetings were approved by the Committee.

The Chief Executive provided a verbal update on key business matters and/or developments since the September Authority meeting, including engagement with the Garda Síochána on matters of policing performance and an upcoming follow-up engagement with community groups and Gardaí in Cork City a year on from the Authority's public conversation on community safety in the area.

### 4. Policing Performance Assessment

An update was provided by the Executive on matters pertaining to policing performance since the last meeting of the Committee. Following consideration of this and the reporting received from the Garda Síochána in the same period, a number of matters were agreed for engagement with the Garda Síochána in Part B of the meeting.

### 5. Policing Plan 2023

The Committee discussed the draft Policing Plan 2023 and a number of matters were agreed for engagement with the Garda Síochána in Part B of the meeting.

### 6. Garda Reserve

The Committee discussed updates provided in respect of the Garda Reserve Strategy 2021-2025 and its implementation, a number of matters were agreed for engagement with the Garda Síochána in Part B of the meeting.

### 7. GAR requests and Administration

An update was provided in respect of prior requests for information from the Garda Síochána.

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

**Authority:** As previous.

**Executive:** As previous.

**Garda Síochána:** Deputy Commissioner Anne Marie McMahon (Policing and Security), Assistant Commissioner Paula Hilman (Roads Policing and Community Engagement), Assistant Commissioner Paul Cleary (Organised and Serious Crime), Andrew O’Sullivan (Chief Information Officer), 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. There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

### **9. Policing Performance Assessment**

The Garda Síochána representatives updated the Committee on a number of matters pertaining to Policing Performance in the period since the previous meeting. The Committee noted the significant improvement in the reported status of progress against the targets in the Policing Plan. The Garda Síochána Representatives outlined that the latest reporting, including the achievement of progress, took into account not only the progress made within the quarter but also a full review of the Plan undertaken in August/September which included in-depth engagement with the relevant business owners across the targets within the Plan. This allowed an in-depth assessment and, what is believed to be, an increased level of accuracy in the as-is reporting as well as the projected outcome at year end.

The Garda Síochána representatives provided the Committee with further detail on progress across a number of operational areas including:

- an overview of recent operational successes in the area of Organised and Serious Crime in conjunction with national and international partners;
- the organisational response to cyber crime, including the impact of the recently established cyber crime hubs and increases in the resourcing of the Garda National Cyber Crime Bureau (GNCCB). The Committee heard that the Garda Síochána is targeting a reduction in the backlog of electronic devices to be examined by GNCCB to under 400 devices by the end of the year;
- the long-term impacts and success that has been achieved in respect of burglary under Operation Thor and the plans for the winter phase of the operation in 2022; and
- the ongoing Operation Citizen, which is focussed on public safety and responding to crime and anti-social behaviour in Dublin City Centre.

The Garda Síochána representatives also reported that the results of the Public Attitudes Survey 2021 were expected imminently and would be published. The Committee questioned the Garda Síochána representatives on what the benefits of the PAS are to management and how the information is utilised to guide strategic and operational decision making, including in respect of the attitudes and responses of victims. The Garda Síochána representatives spoke about the PAS being just one tool used by the Garda Síochána in this respect to guide policy decisions. They explained that the while the Public

Attitudes survey references whether respondents have been a victim of crime at a high level, it is not intended to be a replacement for a national in-depth study of victimisation rates for official statistics purposes – although there is a potential benefit to such a study being undertaken. It was explained that such a large scale statistical survey would need to be Justice sector wide and coordinated at a national statistics level and, as such, it would be advisable that the Garda Síochána would contribute to, rather than lead on, the design of such a survey.

## **10. Policing Plan 2023**

The Garda Síochána representatives updated the Committee on the progress of the report since the last engagement. The Committee acknowledged that the Policing Plan 2023 was still a work in progress but welcomed the progress to date in the draft provided, including the reduction in targets to allow for a great clarity and focus of priorities for the organisation. However, the Committee raised concerns that there was a lack of specificity in terms of the Plan overall and specifically in respect of a number of targets in the draft; the Garda Síochána representatives acknowledged that many targets were being left somewhat high-level for flexibility and to allow the target to be applicable at sub-national level.

It was relayed to the Garda Síochána representatives that the Committee would expect to see the inclusion of key projects included in the next iteration, such as: the implementation of third party recommendations (including recommendations concerned with key areas such as child sexual abuse, custody, youth diversion, etc.); CAD/999; and consideration given to other matters including public order and modern slavery. The Committee was informed that a separate milestones document to accompany the Plan was being developed and that this may offer the necessary specificity to respond to some of the matters raised. It was agreed that this would be circulated with the next iteration of the Plan, due to be provided in time for engagement at the upcoming Authority meeting.

## **11. Garda Reserve**

The Garda Síochána representatives gave a short presentation on the current status of the Garda Reserves as a cohort of the workforce and an update on the implementation of the Garda Reserve Strategy. The Garda Síochána representatives acknowledged that there had been delays in respect of a number of the timelines across strands of the Strategy but highlighted the progress made in the approval by the Garda Executive of a new Garda Reserve Policy and procedures document and in the updating of training, undertaking recruitment and engagement with Reserve members. In respect of the latter, the Committee heard that there was an operational review undertaken which identified 200 Reserve Gardaí who had not worked in over 2 years. The Garda Síochána representatives provided that the organisation reached out to these members and as a result 86 returned to duty and 111 resigned. The Committee heard that at its peak there were approximately 1,164 Reserve Gardaí but that currently it is reported that there are 399 active Reserve Gardaí. It was outlined that there will be an exit review completed to better understand the reasons for which Garda Reserve members have resigned and that there is also work ongoing to make sure that there is sufficient interaction with serving Garda Reserve members and that they are being fully utilised as an organisational resource.

The Committee heard that outstanding supporting regulations, as being updated by the Department of Justice, present a barrier to progress in respect of recruitment, training and duties. It is understood that the necessary updates to statutory instruments are not expected to occur in the immediate future.

In respect of governance, the Garda Síochána representatives outlined the role of the Garda Reserve Oversight Committee that is co-chaired by the Assistant Commissioner, Roads Policing and Community Engagement (AC RPCE) and the Executive Director, Human Resources and People Development (ED HRPD). It was also outlined that corporate ownership of the Garda Reserves will transfer from AC RPCE to ED HRPD on the basis that the Strategy currently is weighted toward actions under the corporate responsibility of this role. The Committee expressed their significant concern at this transfer of responsibility given the key operational role that the Reserve should hold, in line with the Strategy. The Committee stated their belief that if the Reserve function is to be fully and meaningfully utilised and increasingly central to the organisation it must remain and be part of the operational command environment. The Committee noted it is crucial to embed the Reserve with not only the strategies, policies and procedures but in a meaningful sense in day-to-day operational activity and culturally within the organisation. The Garda Síochána Representatives explained that the role of the Assistant Commissioner, Roads Policing and Community Engagement, as envisaged by the organisation in this context, is one of strategic policy development, implementation, and oversight and that the work to embed the Reserve, as expressed by the Committee, will in effect be the responsibility of Divisional Officers and their teams under such oversight.

The Committee felt that this did not sufficiently address the concerns held and also reiterated the wider, long-standing concerns held by the Authority as to the slow and insufficient progress made in recent years in the embedding and utilisation of the Reserve. The Committee raised again the understanding that these views were shared by Garda Reserve members based on engagement with them over the lifetime of the Authority and expressed the view that current progress did not augur well for the prospect of significant and necessary progress in the short-term. The Garda Síochána representatives noted the Committee's views and outlined that they believe there has been a renewed focus on the Reserve and that organisation has made progress but acknowledge there is still work to be done.

## **12. AOB**

The Committee paid tribute to the work of the Garda Síochána in their response to the Creeslough tragedy.