



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY

Minutes – Policing Strategy and Performance Committee Meeting

Date: 27 April 2023

Venue: Zoom

Authority: Deborah Donnelly (Committee Chair), Moling Ryan, Shalom Binchy, Paul Mageean, Gillian Imery

Secretary: Mark Nother

Executive: Helen Hall, Margaret Tumelty, Cormac Keating, Philip Cox, Judy Higgins, Barry Smith.

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

On the occasion of his first meeting the Committee Chair welcomed the appointment of Authority member Paul Mageean to the Committee.

3. Committee Administration

The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting without change, noting the observations provided by the Garda Síochána.

The success of the recent Authority meeting in Dublin's North East Inner City was acknowledged, with particular reference to the extensive engagement with community stakeholders and the value of engaging with the Commissioner in the heart of the community. It was noted that this approach was planned to continue in three further Divisions in 2023 and engagement on key themes emerging, such as the experiences of communities and the experiences of young people with policing would continue to be followed up on at Committee level as necessary.

The dates for the remaining 2023 meetings were agreed upon.

Members were provided with the results of the Committee Self-Assessment, undertaken in line with the Authority's obligations under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. The results of the assessments were noted as being in line with previous years.

Some minor amendments were considered in respect of the Committee Terms of Reference and it was agreed these would be proposed for consideration at the Authority's May meeting.

The Committee Log of Actions was considered and a number of items approved for closure.

Philip Cox was welcomed as the incoming Secretary to the Committee, commencing from the next meeting, taking over from Mark Nother.

4. Policing Performance – Including Q1 Reporting

The Garda Síochána's National Performance Report against the Policing Plan for Q1 2023 was considered and a number of matters were identified for further engagement with the Garda Síochána Representatives in Part B of the meeting.

5. Organised and Serious Crime

Matters pertaining to organised and serious crime were discussed by the Committee and a number of areas were identified for further engagement with the Garda Síochána Representatives in Part B of the meeting.

Part B – Meeting with Garda Síochána representatives

Authority: As previous.

Executive: As previous.

Garda Síochána: Assistant Commissioner Paula Hillman (Roads Policing and Community Engagement), Assistant Commissioner Justin Kelly (Organised and Serious Crime), Eimear Bourke (Executive Director, Strategy and Transformation), Yvonne Cooke (A/Executive Director Human Resources and People Development), Sara Parsons (Principal Officer, Garda Síochána Analysis Service), Chief Superintendent Pdraig Jones (National Community Engagement Bureau), Chief Superintendent Dorothy Humphries (Garda National Roads Policing Bureau), Niamh O’Hara (Assistant Principal PALO).

6. Closed Session

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

7. Policing Performance

The Committee acknowledged and welcomed the further development of the format and outcome-focussed nature of the quarterly report, noting in particular the centrality of considerations of the Garda Executive’s requirements in developing the latest iteration. Regarding the timing of the report, the Garda Síochána Representatives noted the impact of operational matters in April on the timing of the report but articulated reasonable confidence that the timelines could be brought in closer alignment with the previously agreed deadlines. It was agreed there would be ongoing engagement with the Executive on this matter.

It was agreed by both the Committee and the Garda Síochána Representatives that a realignment of targets, as occurred in 2022, would not be necessary or appropriate in respect of the 2023 Plan.

Regarding community policing it was outlined by the Garda Síochána Representatives that resourcing challenges continue to impact the rollout of the Community Policing Framework. A concern was raised by the Committee about the lack of impact at grass-roots level of the Framework. It was noted by the Garda Síochána Representatives that the rollout is continuing and that this should provide tangible impacts in the short/medium-term. It was also provided that a review of the rollout to-date is under way to ascertain what has worked well and where there are challenges and to ensure that the community Gardaí are aligned to where they are needed. Simultaneously, the organisation is continuing with the development of the necessary supporting infrastructure which will support and have benefits for the Framework, i.e. training, the mobility device apps, and the wider rollout of the Operating Model.

The Committee heard that there is ongoing work to record an ‘establishment figure’ for all divisions for community policing and that this will determine resource need and also provide a metric that will help plan for resources going forward and hopefully address the issues of backfills and potential shortfalls of staffing.

There was a robust exchange on the matter of the treatment of members of the community, including young people. Significant concern was raised by the Committee on the experiences reported to the Authority by community stakeholders in relation to people being over-, or inappropriately-, policed by

members of the Garda Síochána, including the use of abusive language, profiling, and inappropriate uses of force, including towards young people. This relates in particular to interactions initiated by members of the regular or specialist units. By contrast, it was noted that such experiences in the main were reported as a notable divergence from the largely positive approach taken by members assigned to Community Policing or Juvenile Liaison Officer roles. The Committee outlined its concern that community policing values and ethos is seen within the organisation as a softer role of policing that lacks a necessary centrality in other areas of policing, and therefore results in an inconsistent approach to policing within certain communities or in respect of groups within society.

In response the Garda Síochána Representatives outlined that every member should have a community focus and should perform their duties with a Community Policing ethos and in a manner consistent with the Code of Ethics. It was stressed that the majority of members are showing up to work every day, keeping the country safe and protected, and doing what they are supposed to do, but unfortunately there are some exceptions to the rule and these individual cases need to be reported so that they can be investigated and dealt with accordingly. In this vein, it was queried if the reported behaviours outlined by the Committee were happening in certain areas or if there were efforts made to report these instances of alleged misbehaviour. The Committee heard that in many areas of policing, and in particular drugs policing, those engaged with do not want to be policed and so it is inevitable that interactions are going to be confrontational and feature significant tension. In such cases, it was maintained, there were bound to be complaints and dissatisfaction by people who are policed as suspects or perpetrators of crime.

The Committee provided its view that this is not a case of responding to individual cases of misbehaviour but rather an organisational need to address what appear to be cultural and systemic issues within certain parts of the organisation. It was offered that the Executive could meet with the relevant Assistant Commissioners and/or others to provide more detail on the thematic feedback but that the Authority would not be in a position to provide further detail on the individual engagements it had undertaken.

The rise of incidents of domestic violence was engaged upon and the Committee heard there is an increased confidence and willingness to come forward with reports, leading to an increase in recorded incidents. The Garda Síochána Representatives noted that while there is a focus on encouraging people to report cases of domestic violence, in tandem there are efforts being made to engage with partner organisations in preventative actions. This includes increased public awareness campaigns, the reporting of successful convictions, and engagement with young people through schools and other avenues.

A request from the LGBTQ+ community was outlined that resulted in the issuance of operational guidance for divisions when policing complaints of sexual activity in public. The Committee received assurances that such guidelines are subject to input from human rights and legal sections in order to prevent any inadvertent targeting of any particular groups.

An increase in offences such as speeding, drink/drug driving, non-wearing of a seatbelt, and mobile device use were noted by the Garda Síochána Representatives as the main drivers for the recent increase in road deaths. In respect of the latter, it was provided that there are growing trends of drivers being engaged with devices in a broader manner than just use of a mobile phone to take calls, and that engagement with justice sector partners is ongoing to consider the feasibility of the introduction of an

offence of distracted driving. It was noted that the operational delivery of roads policing sits with Divisional Officers through their Regional Assistant Commissioners. It was outlined that a monthly tasking and coordinating meeting is held with the Roads Policing Bureau and a Chief Superintendent from each of the four Regions. An analytical product is given which shows where the detections are happening and where the high risk areas are in their Regions, which allows for localised planning and response to trends.

The Committee raised a concern regarding reports to the Authority of difficulties in obtaining a medical professional to administer a blood test on a suspected drink/drug driver and the potential impacts on being able to successfully charge such individuals. It was noted by the Garda Síochána Representatives that contact had been made through the Roads Policing Bureau with the four regional Assistant Commissioners regarding this issue, who had confirmed that this is not a significant issue at this time.

The governance challenges around the rollout of the new drug testing devices were spoken about. It was noted that positive tests are being recorded, however all tests being administered are not recorded due to potential human rights issues around recording personal information as a result of a negative test.

Regarding uninsured drivers, the Committee heard that the launch of the Irish Motor Insurance Database (IMID) will allow Garda members to see in real time if a car is insured and should allow for a more effective response to those driving uninsured.

8. Organised Crime

The Committee enquired as to the status of the outstanding resourcing plan for the Garda National Economic Crime Bureau (GNECB), as required under the Hamilton Report implementation plan. It was provided that at present competitions are focussed on backfilling vacant positions and that any increase to GNECB resources had not yet been agreed – with consideration of the prioritisation of resourcing being undertaken in line with the wider strategic workforce planning underway in the organisation – nor would any increase be likely to occur prior to 2024.

In relation to cyber crime it was outlined that there continues to be notable progress made in processing the caseload of the Garda National Cyber Crime Bureau (GNCCB). It was noted by the Garda Síochána Representatives that there has been multi-million euro investment put into cyber-crime and that the results were now evident. The further increase in resources, through the recruitment of civilian analysts is currently progressing. However, the Committee heard that recruitment and retention challenges remain due to the demand from private sector firms for skilled cyber security staff and the pay and conditions they can offer. Similarly storage continues to present a challenge to the Bureau and its satellite hubs as caseload grows and devices become more advanced.

Recent success achieved in conjunction with European partners in responding to human trafficking offences were acknowledged. The Committee were provided with a brief overview of the Garda work in this area, including increased engagement with Divisions and the national and international multi-agency nature of the response.

9. AOB

No other business was raised.