

Policing Authority meeting in public 30 June 2016

Opening statement by Garda Commissioner Nóirín O'Sullivan

Chairperson, Members of the Authority,

At this meeting, you've indicated you want to deal with performance management and supervision arising from the examination of a particular Garda District from 2007 to 2008 by the O'Higgins Commission.

The O'Higgins Report highlighted that the failures in that Garda District were at a human level and caused by poor individual performance and, in many instances, by poor supervision.

Under our Modernisation and Renewal Programme, published earlier this month, a number of measures have been introduced to strengthen supervision and accountability of all Garda members.

And by the way, I do want to register how good it was to have the Chairperson of the Authority present at the publication of the programme to underline the importance of setting out to professionalise, modernise and renew An Garda Síochána.

I thank the members of the Authority for their input into the development of the Programme and as outlined at previous meetings welcome the opportunity to present in detail to the Authority progress against the initiatives which will combined reform An Garda Síochána.

All of the initiatives in the Modernisation and Renewal Programme are focused on delivering real and effective change over the next five years. It will ensure the consistency and standardisation of service delivery. In the process, it will set out to prevent the kind of lapses the O'Higgins report identified.

Example: Probationer Gardaí. Our new training regime sees attested Probationer Gardaí assigned to a training station where they're accompanied by a fully trained tutor Garda and where there's a supervising Sergeant. During 34 weeks, the performance of the Probationer Gardaí is regularly monitored to assess if they can progress to the stage of being autonomous within standard policing supervision.

Our Performance Accountability Framework (PAF) processes and procedures are being revised in light of the O'Higgins Report and other Reports. They'll set out guidelines to be applied at District, Divisional and Regional level to formalise accountability at all sections within An Garda Síochána in relation to incident management, crime classification, and resource tasking and daily unit briefings. These guidelines will ensure consistency of practice across the organisation.

PAF meetings also provide opportunities for managers and their people to raise issues and make suggestions on how to achieve key objectives and targets.

I know some of the Authority Members recently sat in on a regional PAF meeting and are going to attend others. I look forward to your feedback on PAF meetings to see if we can improve them further.

We've also introduced improved processes for the management and oversight of incidents on PULSE. This gives supervisors full visibility on how individual incidents are being managed.

We've also recently revised our Development Programme for newly promoted Sergeants. The Development Programme helps develop the skills and abilities for Sergeants to manage and lead teams effectively. They are required to take personal responsibility for supporting each member of their team in the investigation of crime and the provision of a high quality service to the public, particularly victims of crime.

A programme of mentoring and coaching has also started at all levels so our members can learn from the experiences of others within the organisation on how to fulfil their duties to a high standard.

Under our Modernisation and Renewal Programme, we're strengthening our governance structures to provide increased transparency and accountability, and better identify and manage risks.

Finally, and importantly, supervision requires an appropriate amount of managers at all ranks and grades. Otherwise, supervisors, particularly at local level, become over-burdened, which creates risks.

Like all public sector bodies over the last number of years An Garda Síochána has seen a significant reduction at supervisory level. For example, the ranks order establishes posts for 240 Inspectors, but currently have only 195.

We are in the process of rebuilding this supervisory level – both officers and civilian managers, and there have been promotions or will be promotions shortly at all ranks and grades.

However, in order to ensure the necessary level of leadership, governance and management of the organisation in an increasingly complex operating environment it is clear that more needs to be done in this area.

Managing the day job and implementing the biggest reform programme in the 94 year history of An Garda Síochána requires a cohesive and adequately resourced management structure.

Chair, as you aware, earlier this week I wrote to the Secretary General of the Department of Justice to request the immediate appointment by Government of the remaining two Assistant Commissioners, 18 Chief Superintendents, and 26 Superintendents selected from recent competitions. These are critical vacancies to ensure the appropriate leadership capacity of the organisation and ensure the robust governance, management and accountability structures needed to address issues raised by the O'Higgins Report and other reports.

I have highlighted on several occasions to the Policing Authority during this year the profound risks to the continued effective delivery of policing and security services from the current leadership gaps in the organisation.

In this regard, I welcome the Chair's confirmation at our last public meeting that the Authority agreed that the promotions at Assistant Commissioner, Chief Superintendent and

Superintendent ranks were a critical necessity for An Garda Síochána that needed to be made as quickly as possible.

I would ask for the Policing Authority's continued support in ensuring there is ongoing adequate resourcing at the supervisory management and leadership level so we can provide the best possible service to the public.

Thank you Chairperson and I would like to take this opportunity to once again thank the members of the Policing Authority for their support for the Modernisation and Renewal Programme and the improvements it will bring to the delivery of policing services in this State.