

Policing Authority meeting in public 25 April 2016

Opening Statement by Garda Commissioner Nóirín O'Sullivan

Chairperson, members of the Policing Authority, Ladies and Gentlemen.

This is an important meeting.

In and of itself, it's important.

As a landmark in the history of An Garda Síochána, it's hugely significant.

A professional policing service with robust governance practices and structures is pivotal to our democracy.

An Garda Síochána is unique amongst policing services as a unitary body responsible for the security of the state and the provision of policing services.

Two very different functions.

Two functions united by an underpinning philosophy: the protection of the individual and the safety of communities.

We pride ourselves in being of the community and working for the community so the safety of the community is central to everything we do.

As is trust.

Trust is crucial.

And the fantastic thing about it is that it's a two-way process. Every time a member of An Garda Síochána proves to a member of the community that they can trust them, they learn to trust the whole service: they trust An Garda Síochána.

District and Divisional Officers work with Joint Policing Committees and local Policing Fora where they're held accountable for the policing of their communities. Trust is developed and nurtured at all levels in the organisation.

From the beginning of my term as Commissioner, I have forged a new direction when it comes to our critical friends: individuals and organisations that take a view on *how* we do *what* we do. We have

listened to the findings of the reports, tribunals, commissions and coverage over the past ten years. We have acted on the 784 recommendations from the 41 reports and we have framed these into our modernisation and renewal programme.

The members of the Policing Authority will have seen, from the outset, that this is not where we're at. Not now. We are committed to openness, transparency and accountability. To listening. To learning. Because it's all about trust, and that's how trust is built.

We're already getting there. Current research of Trust in An Garda Síochána has been consistently high over the last four quarters. It indicates a positive trend with 85% of the public expressing their trust in An Garda Síochána and its performance. We cannot do our job without the support of the community.

That's a figure to build on. And it's not easy to build on it. Crime and criminality continue to evolve and present different challenges to us. We have to move quickly and flexibly to cope with it. We've made major changes this year alone in response to organised crime, and we are constantly developing strategies to address other emerging crime challenges.

The Policing Authority is separate and independent from An Garda Síochána, but the two organisations are driven by parallel objectives, by a shared sense of purpose: to make sure An Garda Síochána becomes a beacon of policing that can be measured against any police service in the world. We look forward to working with the Authority in the identification of their priorities.

If you look at any of the news websites on any weekend, the one thing you can be sure of is that An Garda Síochána will figure, whether we're seeking information about an incident, dealing with a traffic tragedy, or warning people about a particular threat in a particular area.

But we mustn't miss the more positive aspects of our work. We're part of the community, and when I talk about our function in keeping the community safe, sometimes that happens as part of a celebration.

The St Patrick's Day celebrations and more significantly the 1916 Easter Rising Commemorations were hugely successful and passed off without incident. The central ethos for these policing operations was 'community safety' and the women and men of An Garda Síochána who policed these events showed fantastic understated professionalism.

I look forward with my team to answering the questions posed here today and I believe we have a shared objective of promoting trust and confidence in the provision of policing services. I welcome the insight and perspective of the Authority members into policing and our activity over the past few months.