



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY

Minutes – Policing Strategy and Performance Committee Meeting

Date: 19 October 2020

Venue: Remote Video-Conference

Committee Meeting

Attendance

Authority: Judith Gillespie (Committee Chair), Vicky Conway, Deborah Donnelly, Moling Ryan, Ronan Nolan

Secretary: Karen Shelly

Executive: Helen Hall, Margaret Tumelty, Sophia Carey, Mark Nother, Michal Hanley, Alex Eisenbarth

1. Closed session – Committee members

Committee members did not exercise the standing option to conduct a closed session.

2. Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of the previous meetings were approved. There were no matters arising and no conflicts of interest identified.

The Committee Chair and members of the Executive provided an update on Authority activity since the previous meeting including: the annual meeting of Joint Policing Committee (JPC) Chairpersons and Chief Executives of the Local Authorities; consultation with JPC members on policing priorities; the publication of the 8th report to the Minister on policing during COVID-19; and engagements with the Garda Síochána on ongoing issues relating to DNA samples and the detection rate of sexual offences.

The Committee Chair also relayed to the Committee members that her period of office as a member of the Authority and of the Committee would end on 31 December 2020, as would that of Vicky Conway.

3. Policing Performance Assessment

An overview of Executive fieldwork activity since the September meeting was provided by the Executive, including remote interactions with the Garda Síochána and with external stakeholders.

Following a discussion on performance against the Policing Plan and COVID-19 policing the Committee identified a number of key areas for discussion with the Garda Síochána in Part B of the meeting.

4. Policing Plan and Priorities

The Committee discussed a proposed approach to both the Policing Plan 2021 as provided by the Garda Síochána and agreed a number of areas to follow-up on for comment and clarification. It was agreed that the Committee would as a foundation seek a clear understanding of the prioritisation process that would be undertaken to develop the Plan, clarity as to the evidence base on which the Plan was built, and to ensure that the Authority interaction with such would be driven by the Policing Priorities – which should be clearly actioned in any final Plan. It was acknowledged that the drafting of a Plan is an iterative process and that engagement would continue at Executive, Committee and Authority levels.

5. Preparation for the Garda Síochána updates

The Committee discussed materials received and issues pertaining to the agenda items of the Roads Policing. The late provision of certain materials and resulting lack of time to fully consider them was noted and agreed to be raised with the Garda Síochána Representatives. The Committee members agreed a number of key areas on which to base their engagement in Part B of the meeting.

A number of issues for discussion in regard to the rollout of Divisional Protective Services Units (DPSUs) were agreed.

6. Looking Forward to 2021

The Committee agreed to schedule an additional meeting in November dedicated to planning for the next calendar year.

Part B – Meeting with Garda Síochána representatives

Attendance

Authority: As previous

Executive: As previous

Garda Síochána: Deputy Commissioner John Twomey (Policing and Security), Assistant Commissioner John O’Driscoll (Organised and Serious Crime), Assistant Commissioner Paula Hilman (Roads Policing and Community Engagement) David Gilbride (Executive Director Strategic Transformation Office), Lois West (Deputy Head of the Garda Síochána Analysis Service), Gráinne Shortall (Assistant Principal Policing Authority Liaison Office), Emer Doyle (Principal Officer Strategic Transformation Office).

7. Closed session

The standing option to conduct a closed session was not exercised and the minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

8. Roads Policing

The Committee noted that a number of papers had been received late and as such would be further considered before engagement on them would take place.

Assistant Commissioner Roads Policing and Community Engagement provided a verbal update to the Committee on performance in the area of Roads Policing. It was outlined that there had been an increase in road deaths year-to-date compared to the previous year – but decreases in both minor and serious injuries – and that action was being taken under the Roads Policing Plan and in conjunction with the Road Safety Authority to target increases in lifesaver offence detections and engage with the public. The Committee also heard that 41 additional drug testing devices had been made available to Roads Policing Units increasing the ability to identify those driving under the influence of drugs. A rise of 112% in such detections was reported. This targeting was outlined as being in tandem with the usual focus on detecting drink driving offences – which will be the subject of the annual Christmas awareness campaign.

On the implementation of the recommendations of the Crowe Horwath report the Garda Síochána representatives gave assurances to the Committee on the governance procedure in place to satisfy senior management that recommendations had been fully implemented effectively, including individual reviews per recommendation at Assistant Commissioner level and subsequent written reporting on same to the Deputy Commissioner Policing and Security. It was reported that all recommendations were now proceeding in line with the projected timelines and that of the 34 recommendations: 18 are closed, 9 finalised awaiting review and 7 are ongoing – 2 of which are reliant on partner agencies. It was noted that efforts were being made at governmental level to re-

establish the Criminal Justice working group. The Committee was informed further updates would be made available ahead of the December meeting.

The Committee enquired as to the use of Chiefs Authorisations being utilised to account for shortages in appropriately trained drivers across the organisation. The Committee raised concerns as to the use of such in relation to duties outside of community policing – previously reported as the sole eligible duty for such – and queried the eligibility criteria and governance arrangements in place. In response the Garda Síochána representatives outlined that such arrangements, although at the discretion of Chief Superintendents, were subject to monthly review by the Roads Policing and Community Engagement Bureau. The Committee sought an understanding of the use of such arrangements for the transport of prisoners and heard that this was only used by Chief Superintendents on very rare occasions where there was an urgent need. The continued wider than previously applied scope was outlined as being necessitated by the continued training impediments and staff attrition issues presented by COVID-19. A commensurate training plan was noted by the Garda Síochána representatives as being in place and ready to commence once restrictions allowed.

9. Policing Performance

The Committee Chair noted the strong performance reported against the Policing Plan as of the end of Q3. This was acknowledged by the Garda Síochána representatives who outlined that internally it was accepted that good progress had been made and that there was a confidence of continued delivery against the Plan for year end. However, the changing operating environment – particularly in relation to training, engagement with stakeholders, and the multi-faceted rollout of larger IT systems – was noted as a potential barrier to achievement of some initiatives in the Plan. The above notwithstanding it was stated that there shouldn't be significant shifts in the overall status of projects by the end of the year.

In response to queries from the Committee on the slow pace of moving to facilitating e-learning the Garda Síochána representatives outlined that the process was complicated by trying to capture the content of courses that are interactive classroom based rather than lecture style while retaining the quality of training. Also it was noted that the shift to such represented a cultural change that would take time to embed, and necessitate engagement with the representatives associations. The Committee heard that the migration of content online continues and that to this end staff had been retained in Templemore.

In the area of diversity the Committee was informed that internally the Garda Síochána was working with the Public Appointment Service to progress diversity in recruitment but that in line with the public service data collection ethnicity data was subject to self-declaration. Externally work was reported as ongoing as to the collection of ethnicity data for those engaged with through the provision of policing services, with engagement taking place from a legal, data-protection, and other jurisdictions' approaches perspectives.

Similarly in response to the Committee's request the Garda Síochána representatives agreed to review the Public Attitude Survey methodology to provide clarity on the ability of same to capture

the experiences/responses of minority groups, in particular the traveller community. The Committee acknowledged the range of progress represented in the most recent PAS results.

Following up on the issues of analysis capacity the Committee heard that a resourcing plan had been agreed by Garda management in May and an internal review meeting was to take place imminently to identify blockers to the delivery of the plan. In response to the Committee's concerns over the potential degradation of data quality, the knock-on effects of such on delivering evidence-based policing, and the seeming lack of recent progress the Garda Síochána representatives provided assurances as to the internal management focus on the issues and the recognised importance of the current vacancies.

Following a brief engagement in relation to the detection rate of sexual offences it was agreed that a dedicated agenda item would be included in December's committee meeting.

The Committee also heard that a review was due shortly on the use of anti-spit hoods.

Policing of COVID-19

In relation to capturing lessons learned from the response to-date to COVID-19 the Garda Síochána outlined that this was an ongoing process but to date they had considered public feedback, undertook a review of their communications with the public, sought internal feedback, reviewed HR practices and polices put in place and were engaged with the PSNI in a joint review to share lessons learned. It was outlined that external stakeholders were not yet being engaged as a matter of course but that this would occur in time.

10. Policing Plan 2021

The Garda Síochána representatives informed the Committee that the Policing Priorities as communicated by the Authority would be agreed to.

The Committee Chair outlined that the Committee felt the proposed approach to the Plan for 2021 was positive and represented a fresh approach.

The Garda Síochána Representatives provided a verbal update on ongoing internal discussions and intended principles and direction including the unanimous support of senior management for the new approach, including increased prioritisation.

It was agreed that engagement would continue and a draft would be provided for the Authority meeting in late October.

11. Divisional Protective Services Units

The Committee sought a greater understanding of how the Garda Síochána measured performance and effectiveness of the DPSUs. It was outlined that the call-back rate to victims was one such measure – it was outlined this had doubled in the previous year – and that victim feedback was also used. The improvements across both of these aspects was attributed to realisation of the DPSUs as

dedicated, specially trained units that afforded members the space and resources to effectively operated in line with the envisaged scope. It was noted that establishing the correct level of resourcing was a work in progress but that each Division now had an operational DPSU. Training was also outlined as an area impacted by COVID-19 related delays. The Committee also heard that a HQ Directive had been issued concerning the welfare of members attached to these units – as well as those also dealing with cases of a sensitive nature – and that the Garda Síochána had been nominated for a Civil Service Excellence Award for Operation Faoiseamh.

The Committee also sought clarity on the recording of interviews, which the Garda Síochána advised, are required by legislation to be written rather than electronically captured. However, the electronic recording of statements is utilised where possible and appropriate in order to assist with court proceedings, including but not limited to, the lessening of requirements on victims.

12. AOB

The Garda Síochána Representatives informed the Committee that the Health and Wellbeing Strategy had been signed off by the CMO and that an implementation plan was being developed.

Judith Gillespie

Committee Chair, Policing Strategy and Performance Committee

DATE