

To Whom It May Concern:

Firstly, a brief background, my name is [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]. I am making this submission in my personal capacity and hasten to add the ideas presented have not been researched but are more of a “brainstorm” on my morning off before the children come home from school. The future of policing in Ireland is important for me as a police professional, a citizen who will grow old and a father of children who will find their way in the world, hopefully supported when needed, with a police service of integrity.

It is beyond this submission to submit a comprehensive review of the terms of reference of the Commission, but the following matters are suggested for your consideration.

Ethos / Core Values / Culture: There is much research as to the concept of police culture or multiples thereof, however the core value of integrity should be encouraged. Hard work, sense of duty, diligence and commitment all abound within An Garda Siochana.

A code of ethics has recently been adopted by the organisation and I would suggest that the disciplinary regulations be reframed as a Code of Conduct reflective of the code of ethics in a practical way.

Role of Policing: Policing can be viewed as the State response to deviant behaviour and therefore manifests in a variety of ways including Data Protection Commissioner, Environmental Health Inspectors and Revenue Officials. However the policing we are concerned with here involves the State police service in regard to matters defined as criminal and to which the State reserves the right of the legitimate use of force and intelligence gathering.

Justice is central to the motivation and practice of policing. A clear understanding of the role of policing within the Irish Criminal Justice system needs to be articulated with reference to the statutory functions as set out in section 7 Garda Siochana Act, 2005 or any future amendments.

At the core should be a recognition of the dignity of any person so that all actions taken are proportional, necessary and within the law. This is clearly evident and should be borne in mind when conducting the key function of policing communities. These principles also equally apply to the vindication of the rights of police staff themselves as well as the “silent majority”.

There is much research around problem oriented policing, intelligence led policing, zero tolerance and community focussed policing. The key here I believe is evaluation; police may be performing duty with integrity and commitment, however an evaluation feedback system must be considered to ensure the duty performed is meeting the needs expressed.

Specialisation and innovation of function can be effective in service delivery whereby a police response unit may conduct initial police functions with follow up provided by a range of specialist services including cyber crime, fraud, victim support, major investigation teams, public

protection and domestic violence. The clear transfer of functional responsibility for any investigation would have to be clearly set out and understood by all.

Intelligence is central to policing and the enveloping of State security within the policing function is a matter for consideration. Nevertheless the police intelligence capability could be improved with regional supervisory and support structures to current local intelligence officers as well as further focus on the “actioning” of intelligence with adequate resources provided.

Communities: Communities are varied and with an indigenous ageing population coupled with net migration, the diversity and demands of communities are changing.

The communities of the future Ireland will be more compact urban developments and the policing model must account and plan for this. The report of E. Morgenroth (2018) Prospects for Irish Regions & Counties – Scenarios & Implications (ESRI Research Series No. 70) offers a guide to the National Development Plan for Ireland 2040. It notes population and economic growth both in Dublin and counter-pole second tier cities of Cork, Limerick, Galway and Waterford. It suggests a city focused pattern of development coupled with a regeneration of rural Ireland. The considerations of similar research should be borne in mind in planning for the policing of communities on a long term strategy with appropriate diversity training provided to Gardai and policing partnerships maintained with town planners and local authorities.

Communities are also online, an environment where people may virtually interact, discuss, conduct commerce and share with little restriction. If this behaviour was conducted openly, would the State and the police consider it appropriate to intervene in some matters? The online community must not be ignored and policing resources should be deployed to both interact with this community and conduct the policing function as appropriate.

Governance, Oversight & Accountability: It is important that every person is held to account for their roles and responsibilities. The mechanisms for this should be simple, clear and transparent to all. Great wrongs can be conducted by the great role of the police in society and ever mindful of this the oversight should be strong, supervisory and supportive where appropriate. A multitude of bodies, elected or otherwise, may serve particular functions but similarly distract and reduce in many ways. The system will never be completely correct and rogue employees or practices may occur, however in as well as it could and should be, governance, oversight and accountability will be available and applicable to all.

With this in mind, the office of the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission should be resourced to conduct all enquiries from within. Whilst there is always a reliance on the police for preservation of scenes or technical expertise for example, it is to my mind difficult for a practising Superintendent to conduct an internal enquiry with a member at one point of the day and then later in the day seek to motivate the member as part of a policing team. These roles need to be separated for clear boundaries for all concerned.

Data protection is significant to policing which obviously must ensure all data held is accurate and in accordance with current DP guidelines. A data audit should be conducted to identify what is currently held and thereafter the data protection guidelines applied.

Leadership Structure: The following three suggestions are made

1. **Abolition of District Structure** – Garda Districts should be abolished and boundaries brought into line with local electoral boundaries. The new structure will simply act as patrol and service sectors only. Similarly Divisions should reflect the local county council structure. This would ensure a pooling of public service strategies with other agencies and an accountability mechanism to democratic policing.

The abolition of the District structure would free middle management to focus on functional roles within the Policing Plan.

1. **Creation of Rank of Chief Inspector** – Sergeants and Inspectors should firstly be involved in the supervision and support of their staff with an eye ever turned to integrity and innovation in the face of changing needs.

The role of Chief Inspector can form an administrative bridge to the Superintendent rank, addressing local policing concerns and queries within the local area whilst the Superintendents can focus on specific service delivery portfolios throughout the Division e.g. crime prevention / crime investigation / victim support / community policing / road safety / intelligence / public protection / cyber crime / human rights / risk management / major event planning / public order / policing partnerships and prosecutions.

The role would further provide for career progression and enhance the differential between an Inspector and Superintendent which currently may seem an unattractive proposition to some.

1. **Regional & Local Structures** – As in many fields, Dublin is dominant and the creation of a small number of second tier commands may be appropriate and in line with the Regional, Spatial and Economic Strategy of the Government. The regional headquarters should similarly accommodate second tier forensic and technical capacity.

Further regional specialist units, such as cyber crime, should be established to provide for a local capacity and career progression for members not stationed within the Dublin hinterland.

At a Divisional level, the number of stations maintained open on a 24 hour basis should be reduced to free personnel for policing. Similarly current stations should be maintained throughout the country to provide a foothold in communities as “police surgeries” and further stations developed in new towns or extended urban developments. Opening hours should model local public service centres so as to accommodate late opening to facilitate the public.

The practice of maintaining a large number of functions in the Divisional headquarters should be reconsidered with use of available property in smaller stations or external buildings provided for specialist units with appropriate supervision, support and security.

Recruitment, Training & CPD: Recruitment should be accelerated to negate the effects of the previous moratorium on recruitment. Training and Professional Development should be

prioritised with at least 3-5 days per annum provided for ongoing training to capture recent legislation, policy and practice as well as the basics of ethical policing. Supplementary courses in specialist areas should be encouraged and members seeking to progress should similarly be facilitated. Adult learning styles vary and the recruitment or input of learning professionals should be sought in this regard. Self defence, fitness, first aid, occupational health, communication skills and conflict management are also suggested as topics for inclusion. These matters may extend beyond the terms of reference into industrial relations however are submitted here for your review.

An increasing number of Civilian Staff should be recruited at all levels and to more roles currently associated with Garda only. These might include technical expertise in Electronic Media Examination / Forensics / Human Resource Management / Administration & CallTaker & Dispatch to name a few.

An education program to explain the roles of various civilian posts to members of An Garda Síochána may be of benefit in this regard.

The organisation is large and personnel possess different skills and personalities. A skills audit should regularly be conducted and the use of the new PALF system extended to identify roles more appropriate to the employee. Whilst the current contract causes little concern of staff retention for management, wouldn't it be great if senior members, indeed all, found themselves in fulfilling roles matching and challenging their skills and encouraging others. Increasing civilianisation in number and role may even attract the return of retired members.

Digital Innovation: Any innovation that decreases the administrative processing time and increases availability for police function should be welcomed, whether the innovation be a hand held information device to a regional teleconference. The use of technologies as aids to communication, crime prevention, crime detection and road traffic safety is important and should be wholeheartedly embraced with investment to satisfy mobility, security and data protection concerns.

Conclusion.

Policing can be conducted well and assisted by innovation whether that be digital, structural, training or oversight. The goal should be to fulfil our statutory functions within a human rights structure for all and avoid the temptation of bureaucracy. Strong supervision and support are essential. Whilst there may be a variety of motivations, very few join a police organisation without wishing to assist in the police function in a fair and fulfilling way.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to wish you all, commission members and staff, well in this particular endeavour and those more to come. It cannot be an easy task but it is an important one that you address and to which those who hold the purse strings should be attentive.

Your time taken in considering this submission is gratefully appreciated.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

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