



AGSI

Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors
Cumann Sairsinti agus Cigiri de'n Gharda Síochána

**Submission to the Public Accounts Committee of Daíl Éireann
considering the payment of Allowances in the Public Sector –
specifically to An Garda Síochána in this instance.**

Date: Thursday, 1st November 2012

Attending AGSI Representatives: Mr John Redmond, General Secretary
and Mr William Gleeson, President

Observers: Ms Antoinette Cunningham; Mr Brian O Dea; Mr Michael
Gallagher.

Address by John Redmond, General Secretary, AGSI

Introduction

The Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (AGSI) was established under SI 135/ 1978 (The Garda Síochána (Associations) Regulations 1978) to represent the interests of members of An Garda Síochána holding the ranks of Sergeant, Station Sergeant and Inspector in the areas of welfare, pay and conditions of service in An Garda Síochána . The Association represents 2007 members of Sergeant and Inspector Ranks.

AGSI welcomes the opportunity to address the Committee today (1st November 2012) and hopes that the issues surrounding Allowances in An Garda Síochána which may be raised by the Committee can be discussed and explained by this Association.

AGSI is anxious to dispel the myths surrounding the payment of allowances to members of An Garda Síochána, including ambiguity surrounding the amounts of payments made, taxation liability, the numbers to which the payments refer, and the widespread belief that all members of An Garda Síochána get all allowances.

Serving at the Frontline of Change

The Croke Park Agreement is working. It has saved in or around €1.5 billion in costs to date. As you know, it guarantees no further wage cuts in return for industrial peace and a far reaching aggressive agenda for change across the public sector. An Garda Síochána has progressively pursued these changes. Moreover our members have delivered what was required to date and this has been publicly acknowledged by Garda commissioners, Mr PJ Fitzpatrick Chair of the Garda Implementation Body and Ministers Howlin and Shatter. Significantly, An Garda Síochána was one of only three sectors where third party dispute mechanisms were not required to determine disagreements.

I would like to remind this Committee that we were subject to a wage cut, Universal Social Charge, increased PRSI, increased Insurance levies, and a pension-related levy, all of which resulted in a +20% reduction in pay for our members. Coupled with this, a 6% increase granted under T 2016 was withdrawn and of course will not be paid now.

One noteworthy change under Croke Park to An Garda Síochána comes in the form of working patterns of members. Since new Rosters have come into effect, officers now work a 10-hour day with a more relevant supply/demand ratio. The resulting availability of more members on the streets has been commented on by the public.

The CSO in a 2011 report cites figures which show that public sector pay has fallen since 2008, while private sector pay has increased. And the computations exclude the public sector pension levy. In addition, working time has increased across the public sector by an average of 5%, while in most private sector employments it has decreased. Employee numbers have reduced by 10% since 2008 with further reductions to come. In An Garda Síochána the numbers are expected to be at a maximum of 13,000 by the end of 2013. That is a significant reduction from current figures of 13,350 and well down on our peak numbers a short couple of years ago.

Considering pay across the public sector, 60% of employees earn under €55,000, with 25% earning less than €35,000. More decreases in pay through allowance reduction or elimination, at a time when costs are rising in utilities, bank charges, and mortgage rates, merely further constrict the spending ability of, and increase financial pressures on, moderate income earners

Allowances in An Garda Síochána - History

When we talk about public sector allowances, the message is often delivered through the media in general terms. Members of An Garda Síochána are unique in their role in society.

Allowances form a significant part of the core pay in An Garda Síochána. This was borne out in two Government commissions- Judge Conroy and Professor Loudon Ryan - and the two Government Benchmarking reports. It should be remembered that despite reports of huge increases under Benchmarking, members of the AGSI were awarded a 5% increase while senior civil and public servants were awarded 16% increases

The Report on Remuneration and Pay in An Garda Síochána (The Conroy Report) was presented to the Minister for Justice in January 1970. The Minister's Commission under Judge Conroy was established in September 1968 to 'examine, report and make recommendations on the remuneration and conditions of service in An Garda Síochána'

In Chapter two of that report, Conroy makes reference to the type of person burdened with being a policeman, and the benefits to Government of his role (Page 5):

'... his powers and duties are with him whether he is in or out of uniform and whether on or off duty. He is responsible for any error of judgement in exercising these powers and is answerable for any such error.'

Some 43 years later, this remains the case. Members of Sergeant and Inspector ranks are tasked with responsibilities that no other individual in the civil or public service must bear. Solely, we can deprive a person of their liberty; make life changing decisions in split seconds; expose ourselves to prosecution/investigation by carrying out our statutory role; have our decisions scrutinised by an outside agency in the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission or internally through Discipline Regulations; be suspended without pay or at best with 90% of basic pay; be left without professional legal assistance (apart from the AGSI provision of such) and ultimately be open to losing one's job for relatively minor infringements of the Regulations.

This Association has yet to see any other public servant targeted in the same way for the performance of their duties. Most faults in other agencies are referred to as '*systems failures*' and often the result is that an undertaking is given that procedures have been put in place to ensure the same thing can't happen again.

Rationale for the Protection of Allowances

To contemplate reducing garda pay through allowance elimination while utility and other costs continue to rise is unacceptable. The historic nature of allowances means that they make up 20 -25% of core pay. With further wage cuts imminent coupled with the cuts/tax increases as stated earlier, we will see more and more members avail of our Members Benevolent Fund which has already seen a huge increase in the past 36 months, due to more prevalent hardship cases.

Historically the above allowances evolved to restrict knock on pay claims, for example the rent allowance. Operational unsocial hour's allowances or other allowances were granted specific to an individual grade or for carrying out a specific role. The payments were made in the form of an allowance in order to control a cross sectoral escalation of payments in particular during the time period of National Wage Agreements and all allowances payable had to first go through the agreed procedures set down in the Garda Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme, before sanction for payment was granted.

Concluding Remarks

These allowances form part of the basic pay of our members and are something that they cannot do without given the ever-increasing costs of living. AGSI cannot countenance any negotiation or buy out of allowances by the official side.

Finally, Chairman, I would like to thank the committee for the opportunity to meet and discuss the allowances in An Garda Síochána. I hope that you get a better understanding of our position following these discussions

Thank you, Mr Chairman and members of the Committee.