



Oifig an Ard Rúnaí
Office of the Secretary General

An Roinn Cosanta
Department of Defence

3 April, 2019

Ms. Margaret Falsey,
Committee Secretariat,
Committee of Public Accounts,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.
D02 XR20

Ref: 2019 PAC 32-I-1110

Dear Margaret,

I refer to your recent correspondence regarding the Committee meeting on 11 October, 2018 and I have set out my response below.

The White Paper on Defence sets out the roles assigned by Government to the Defence Forces and looks at the associated capability requirements. The Naval Service, as the maritime component of the Defence Forces, and the State's principal sea-going agency, is tasked with a variety of defence and other functions including fishery protection and security roles.

The Naval Service flotilla includes three vessels in excess of thirty years old and nearing end of life. In addition, two ships are due to undergo a planned mid-life refurbishment programme so as to extend their useful life. This programme has recently commenced and is projected to take 9-12 months for each vessel.

In order to ensure the continued operational capability of the Naval Service, an investment programme in replacement vessels has seen the delivery of four new ships over recent years. This investment ensures that the Naval Service has the ships necessary to deliver on their roles, as set out in the White Paper. The ships withdrawn from service were over thirty five years old.

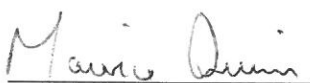
The strength of the Naval Service at 31 Dec 2018 was 989 which is 90% of establishment and there is ongoing recruitment in an effort to increase these numbers. During 2018 over 100 personnel were inducted into the Naval Service, including General Service Recruits, Naval Service Operations Cadets and Direct Entry Service Operations Officers. Additionally, a recent Naval Service General Service Recruit competition closed on 21 January 2019, attracting 969 applications and these are currently being processed.

The Naval Service conducted 1,076 fishery protection patrol days in 2018 which is 99% of the target agreed with the Sea Fisheries Protection Authority. It should be noted that the Naval Service also took part in Operation Sophia during 2018, which specifically sought to counter human trafficking and smuggling in the Southern Central Mediterranean.

I can assure the Committee that the funding provided for Defence is expended in ensuring that operational capability is maintained across the Defence Forces, including the Naval Service, in accordance with Government policy set out in the White Paper.

I trust the foregoing will be of assistance to Committee members. Please revert to me if any further information is required.

Yours sincerely,



MAURICE QUINN

SECRETARY GENERAL