

Chair, Committee Members,

You have asked us to address a number of complex topics within five minutes. I will give a brief overview of each issue and then we will be happy to take questions.

In relation to the Crowe Horwath report, as we stated during our public session with the Policing Authority two weeks ago, and I will repeat here today, An Garda Síochána unreservedly apologises for the unacceptable behavioural and governance failures which led to the widespread inaccurate recording of mandatory alcohol breath tests over a period of time. Significant organisational failures have undermined both the validity of statistical data produced by An Garda Síochána and the contribution of breath tests to road safety.

The systems and governance failures that led to the wrongful prosecution and conviction of individuals for road traffic offences is again an unacceptable failure by the Garda organisation for which we unreservedly apologise.

Our focus now is on ensuring such failures cannot and do not occur again. A series of measures relating to governance, systems, data quality, culture, ethics, policy, oversight, allied with individual and collective accountability have either been put in place or are in the process of being put in place. Our approach to regaining public confidence must be centred around achieving the right behaviours, guided by the right values.

Regaining public confidence to levels previously enjoyed will not be achieved overnight, and that is why we are focussing on strategic initiatives which will provide solid foundations for public confidence in the medium and long term. These will be matched with actions in the short term to address any outstanding governance, systems, policy and technical failures which caused this crisis.

Measures to be taken include ethics training for all personnel; reckless or deliberate mis-recording of information will be treated as a serious disciplinary breach; the employment of a Chief Data Officer and a number of data quality initiatives; individual and team performance reviews; the restructuring and strengthening of the traffic corps units into

Roads Policing, with increased personnel and new functions; to enhance front line supervision 250 Sergeant and 50 Inspector vacancies will be filled in 2018 with further supervisors provided to front line policing through civilianisation during 2018.

We are also considering proposals to extend training recently conducted for all senior managers under the auspices of the Kennedy Institute Maynooth College, to all members of staff, to address this issue through a restorative process. It is intended that this restorative approach will have a greater impact on changing behaviour than the adversarial approach which focuses on who is to blame and what punishment or sanction is required, but ultimately does not necessarily change behaviour.

Chair, in relation to the O'Higgins Commission of Investigation, we have written to the Committee in advance of today to advise you the matter you wish to discuss forms part of the terms of reference being considered by the Protected Disclosures Tribunal being chaired by The Hon Mr Justice Peter Charleton and I have been advised that we cannot say anything here today that would put at risk the ongoing work of the Tribunal. I trust the members of the Committee share that concern, consequently we are strictly precluded from commenting on matters before the Tribunal.

At all times, our aim is to assist in establishing the facts and truth relating to all matters before the Tribunal. In that regard, we have furnished the Tribunal with tens of thousands of pages of material and we will continue to provide the Tribunal with all assistance it requires.

On the Garda budget, it is critical that An Garda Síochána provides an efficient and effective policing and security service within the budget available to us. An Garda Síochána is keenly aware that this is taxpayers' money and we have a duty to spend it wisely ensuring value for money.

Our overtime budget in 2017 was under significant strain throughout the year. This required a supplementary budget for overtime for 2017. In order to ensure that we could stay within the funding made available to us for 2017 it was necessary to reduce non-essential overtime for a period of six days at the end of November.

Policing services continued during those six days including tackling organised crime (Operation Hybrid in the Dublin Metropolitan Region), Operation Thor the nationwide anti-burglary initiative, as well as routine road safety initiatives.

We were provided with a significant overtime budget in 2017. The same level of budget will not be available to us in 2018. It is incumbent on all senior managers in the organisation to ensure they stay within their budgets for 2018, particularly in the light of increasing number of Garda members and civilians that have joined the organisation in the last year and that will join during 2018. This has been re-iterated to all senior managers.

As we outlined two weeks ago at the Public Accounts Committee, as part of the Programme for Government, six Garda stations were to be re-opened on a pilot basis. The Commissioner was asked by the Department of Justice & Equality to identify those six stations with specific criteria to include a mix of urban and rural with a minimum of one in Dublin and a good geographical spread.

Furthermore, the Department advised the stations to be considered for re-opening must be in State ownership. In total 139 stations were closed nationally. Of these, 78 stations could potentially be re-opened. In Dublin, for example, four stations could potentially be re-opened.

Based on the criteria provided, a scoping exercise was conducted by an Assistant Commissioner with views taken from each Regional Assistant Commissioner following consultation with local stakeholders. Census data was also examined, as was data on crime trends from the Garda Síochána Analysis Service.

Following a report from Assistant Commissioner O'Driscoll, the Acting Commissioner approved the re-opening of the following stations, in alphabetical order – Ballinspittle, Bawnboy, Donard, Leighlinbridge, Rush and Stepaside.

A station close to the border, two in Dublin - but at either end of the county, one of them large and the other smaller, another in the most southerly part of West Cork, along with a spread across five of the six Garda regions reflects consideration given to the criteria provided to us.

We are liaising with the Office of Public Works to determine what remedial works need to be done at each station and the length of time it will take to complete the work and the associated costs of the works. Furthermore, an examination of the resources required will be undertaken which will examine the numbers of staff, equipment, vehicles and ICT infrastructure required to determine in what order these stations are opened and the timeline for when they are likely to be opened. This review will also take into account the Garda personnel available and any pressing existing resource requirements.

To conclude, the procedures governing communication between the Commissioner and the Department of Justice & Equality are set out in legislation, in the Garda Síochána Act 2005. The Commissioner is obliged to keep the Department of Justice & Equality informed of relevant matters relating to policing and security issues. An Garda Síochána and the Department of Justice & Equality are currently finalising a joint communications protocol governing all communications between the Department of Justice and Equality and An Garda Síochána. This includes the circumstances and issues which would give rise to the Commissioner informing the Minister for Justice & Equality of matters of concern under Section 41 of the Garda Síochána Act.

Thank you.