

A Chathaoirligh, Deputies and Senators,

I am grateful to the Committee for giving me the opportunity to brief you today on the extensive organisational change that the Department of Justice and Equality has recently undertaken. We have just completed the biggest ever restructuring of a Government Department in the history of the State and I welcome this opportunity to set out our aims and objectives, the process involved and what that means in terms of the work we do and the services we provide.

[I am accompanied today by:

- Assistant Secretary Doncha O’Sullivan, Head of Corporate
- Assistant Secretary Martina Colville, Head of Legislation, Civil Justice Pillar, and formerly Transformation Programme Manager
- Principal Officer Layla de Cogan Chin from our Transparency Function]

### ***Introduction and Vision (see Slide 2)***

As you know, the Department works to build a “*safe, fair and inclusive Ireland*”. Our mission is to advance community safety and national security, promote justice and equality, and safeguard human rights. Employing over 2,600 people, and with 25 state agencies within our remit, our brief ranges from policy making and legislating to service delivery on criminal justice, civil justice, immigration and equality matters.

The world in which we all operate today has been described as “volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous” and we recognise the challenges this new environment poses for our organisation and indeed for the whole Civil and Public Service. The aim of the Transformation Programme is to create a Department that is better able to address the challenges and opportunities of this new world by being more agile, more evidence-based and more open, while remaining loyal to traditional civil service values of integrity, impartiality and professionalism.

The Transformation Programme fulfils a Government decision in July 2018 on foot of the recommendations of the independent Effectiveness and Renewal Group (ERG) for a radical restructuring of the Department, one that the ERG itself viewed as a potential model for the whole civil service.

The challenge was an ambitious one – to take a transformative conceptual design, build the detail and implement the operating model, within nine months from January to September this year. We took on that challenge and, I am pleased to report, completed the Programme on time and within budget.

The ERG recommended the procurement of an external resource to assist our internal team in the Department to implement the new operating model. Following a procurement process (supported by the Office of Government Procurement), EY were appointed to partner with the Department on the project at a cost of €2.9m (excl. VAT) and commenced work with us on 7 January of this year.

### ***The Functional Model (see Slide 3)***

The process of Transformation involved changing how we do our work, putting in place new structures, work processes and skills to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This meant changing completely from a conventional subject-based model (organising ourselves by what we *know*) to a functional model (what we *do*). Our work was previously structured by subject areas such as policing, prisons, equality, etc. relating to different parts of the justice and equality sector. In our new model, work is structured into five functional areas e.g. policy development, governance of agencies, preparation of legislation, operations & service delivery, and transparency.

### ***Programme Approach and Timeline (see Slides 4-7)***

Throughout the transformation programme our Management Board met on a weekly basis for 9 months making all key decisions in relation to design and implementation.

Our internal Transformation Programme team, assisted by EY, worked for 6 months with over 300 representatives from across the Department to design and shape our new organisational structure. Multiple design workshops took place almost every week from January through to June. A substantial amount of time was taken to tease out issues, gaps and concerns.

Following sign-off of the final design by our Management Board, we began transitioning staff into new roles in early August. We adopted a phased approach whereby we “stood down” old Divisions and “stood up” new functions over a very compressed 6 week period. In this time, over 500 staff moved across our Justice estate while all of our IT, HR and Finance systems were updated to reflect the new structural changes.

The new organisational design was fully implemented two weeks ahead of target on Monday 23 September. The scale and volume of activity undertaken within the implementation phase was remarkable – slides 6&7 will give you a flavour of just how much was involved in practical terms. I remain extremely grateful to all of our staff who worked so tirelessly to ensure that we successfully delivered on our commitment of designing and implementing a new and transformed Department in nine months.

Despite the huge amount of work involved in the transformation programme, these same staff also continued to provide normal service to Ministers, the Oireachtas and the public. I consider this a remarkable achievement and a great tribute to the staff involved. I would caution however that the period of greatest risk is now and over the next few months, as we seek to stabilise the new organisation and adapt to the new ways of working. I must therefore ask for your forbearance, if in this period we do not meet the high standards that you might reasonably expect of us.

### ***ERG and Programme Board (see Slides 8-10)***

It is also important to say that the process was also subject to detailed external oversight and validation. The ERG produced quarterly reports for the Government on the Department’s progress in relation to the transformation project, and senior external civil servants (the Secretary General to the Government / Department of Taoiseach, the Secretary General of the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation and Assistant Secretary

General from DPER) served on our Transformation Programme Board. I am very grateful to all of them for their advice during the process.

We are now looking forward to the sixth and final report of the ERG, which will be presented to Government by the end of the year and which will review the entire process from their initial report to implementation.

### ***Introducing the Functional Model (see slides 11-13)***

So what does that level of change look like in terms of our day-to-day work?

In our old model, staff were expected to work across a wide range of activities, continually reprioritising competing tasks of varied natures, importance and urgency. So in a subject area, a member of staff might, in a typical day, review a policy document, write responses to Parliamentary Questions, provide policy observations on international or European proposals, work with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel on the drafting of new legislation, and typically, pause each of those tasks to respond to urgent media queries.

In addition the Department itself has grown over time in an unplanned and unstructured manner in response to various needs and crises. In this regard it is no different to other Departments.

In contrast our new model is built around a carefully designed structure which groups our work by functional areas. Work is now grouped together in line with the Department's core functions, for example, creating and managing the passage of legislation, or providing governance and oversight of our agencies and bodies. This new functional model allows staff to work in a more focused way on well-defined areas of work.

The Department has also been realigned under two pillars, one covering civil justice, equality and immigration, and the other, criminal justice, each led by a Deputy Secretary General. Each pillar contains policy, legislation, governance, and operations & service delivery functions. Supporting the work of both pillars are the enabling functions of Transparency, Corporate, and European Affairs. Slide 12 sets out the top level structure of the realigned Department

and the identified the heads of function, and slide 13 briefly describes the mandate of each function.

What are the benefits of the new model? Overall, it means that the Department is in a better position to deliver on its strategic objectives. More clearly defined roles and responsibilities mean improved accountability. We can deliver services more efficiently through streamlined functions. We have established a dedicated Transparency function that will engage with stakeholders and share information more proactively within and outside the Department.

While the restructuring element of our Transformation has formally concluded, in some ways the real work has only just begun. As I have said, we now have to focus on stabilisation of the new model and actively realising our new ways of working to safeguard against reverting to more traditional and siloed work methods and structures. I am personally determined to ensure that we keep striving for greater openness and transparency; customer-centric service delivery; professional legislation; and evidence-based and joined-up policymaking and governance. The entire Management Board and Senior Team in the Department is united behind these objectives.

We recognise that in order to become more evidence-based, we need the relevant data and research. The Department has invested in expertise and has begun to build capacity in this area. For example two weeks ago we launched a report by Dr. Deirdre Healy (UCD) on the findings of her review of research evidence of best practice in relation to victims interactions with the criminal justice system. This is the first report in a series of policy focused pieces of research that have been commissioned by our new Research and Data Analytics unit.

### ***Collaboration (Slide 14)***

Our new ways of working require a strong culture of collaboration across the different functions and pillars. If we are to realise the true value of this new model, teams have to engage with colleagues from across other areas and work in a cross-functional way.

This openness to collaborative work will also be reflected in our engagement with colleagues in other Departments and agencies, and with our stakeholders. In this current phase of Transformation, we will continue to work hard to embed a culture of collaboration, where Department of Justice and Equality officials at all levels are working transparently and with integrity, and with consideration for the perspectives of our customers and stakeholders. The Department's Management Board has the task of ensuring that the Department's culture fully reflects and supports our values as we adjust to the changed structure and ways of working.

An example of this collaborative model in practice is the way we have approached the issue of how we should tackle hate speech and hate crime and our recent launch of a consultation on updating the law in this area. Our Criminal Legislation function is best placed to analyse issues in relation to the actual legislative provisions. Traditionally, the people dealing with the legislation would have issued a call for submissions in the national papers, published them on the Department's website, and used them to inform the drafting of new or amended legislation.

This time however, our Transparency function has used its, still developing, expertise to ensure we were able to reach more people and give them the opportunity to engage in variety of ways, including by submission, by survey and by attending workshops. We were able to target minority and lesser-heard communities and people to whom this legislation will really matter. Within the first 24 hours of the launch, we had received around 2,000 submissions; that, to me, shows that this new way of doing business is effective. Our Data Analytics Unit is also developing surveys that can be used in a meaningful way to ensure that the data we receive is usable and useful, and can properly inform the decisions we make across the various functions.

### ***Remaining Activity and Functional Outcomes (see slides 15 – 17)***

I am well aware of the considerable work still ahead of us. For example we will need to leverage modern technology properly if we are to meet the expectations

of Transformation fully. But frankly the Department is behind the curve in the development of ICT systems, especially in our service delivery areas, and in the collation and analysis of data. We have received an assessment of our technology platform from EY and this now provides us with the basis for the urgent development of an ICT Strategy and investment plan, which I regard as a matter of the highest priority.

We also obtained assessments of our corporate functions and our immigration service delivery function from EY. Our corporate functions play a key role in supporting the new organisation model and we need to reflect further how best to continue building our capability in this area. Immigration is our largest Service Delivery function and is subject to major demands and stresses at present. We have already developed a service delivery improvement plan for this area and have brought all relevant operations together into one coherent Service Delivery unit. Further developments in this area will be closely related to our work on ICT development.

Of course, we will need to be able to assess the Department's performance in a constructive and objective way so that we can continue to improve and realise the potential of the new ways of working. We must also be able to show the Government, this Committee and others that we really are a new and better organisation. To this end, we have identified key outcomes and performance indicators that would demonstrate success for each of the new functions. By being clear about our goals, what we need to do to achieve them, and studying the outcomes and impacts, we will develop the tools we need to measure our own performance honestly and transparently, and to allow others to do so also. Moving beyond reacting to the crisis of the day to responding and planning thoughtfully through the measurement and tracking of core metrics, openly reported, represents another fundamental step-change for our Department, which I hope will prove of interest and practical use to this Committee.

I am grateful to have had this opportunity to set out some of the details of our Transformation Programme. I would like to repeat that I hope Members will be tolerant and supportive over the next few months as we adapt to our new structures and ways of working, but I hope and believe we are now well embarked on building a new and better model that other Departments may seek to follow in the future.