



INVITATION FOR WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS TO THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE ON THE TOPIC OF POLICING MATTERS

Views on the topics



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Former Inspector in An Garda Siochana, attached to Dublin North Central Division for the last 20 years, served in the Mountjoy/Fitzgibbon Street District. The total service in An Garda Siochana was 38 years, retired in June 2022.

1. Challenges related to recruitment and retention; rostering and general morale within the force.

1.1 Recruitment.

It is important that An Garda Siochana would be an appealing career and the €180 a week allowance whilst in training needs a serious reflection, greater roadcraft training should be the emphasis, learning on the job at stations rather than a long spell at the Garda College and their first-year wage should commence at that point.

1.2 Retention

I was an early voice on stating that there should be exit interviews. A significant amount of time and expense has been invested in the recruitment and training of personnel, an equally strong focus should now be placed on retention led by the HR / Employee Relations Department.

1.3 Rostering

The present Covid Roster was devised in response to the covid pandemic. It must be stated that higher visibility of policing was present during times when there were national lockdowns and every available resource was utilized to support the frontline, many of these resources have now returned to their specialized areas. However, a revised Roster is required to meet the demands placed on policing that has long returned to a normal environment, community policing requires a greater continuation of availability and contact with the public.

1.4 Morale

Improving morale involves creating a positive working environment where Gardai on the frontline need greater support, changes to the 30-year-old Public Order Legislation and new offences of offensive conduct directed at a member of An Garda Siochana / Public Official.

Involve more Garda Staff (Civilians) in frontline administration (e.g updating crime reports and other operational administrative reports to allow Gardai to spend more time on high visibility policing, if you involve Garda Staff you will interest them, and it may create a separate recruiting stream to the Gardai.

Do not deplete frontline units to such an extent that the Uniformed section carries the greater burden, this has a significant bearing on morale.

2. Policing Dublin City – perceived increase in street crime – is the current approach working?

Garda resources must follow the footfall, if there are 100 million visitors to Dublin City each year then it is logical that the level of policing at city center stations needs to increase, the frontline high visibility policing should be the priority and maintained. The City should be policed on the basis that every day is an Event Day, there must be a mandatory and consistent staffing of foot patrols. The method of policing of O'Connell Street is a barometer on how policing nationally is judged, if we are not capable of sufficiently policing our National Promenade this will have an influence on public opinion and the perception of safety.

2.1 Panhandling & Methadone Dispensing Services.

It is almost impossible to enjoy alfresco dining outside any premises without been intruded upon by panhandlers or addicts approaching customers more than once in an evening, it is enough to convince a diner not to return. There is also an undertone to begging outside and obstructing entrances to retail stores, the staff inside the shops are afraid of them as they also turn to shoplifting, it is intimidating for staff.

Methadone dispensing centers are another issue and again these facilities are in the city center, addicts from all over the city use these services, the sight of such gatherings causes great alarm to the business community and invariably they also revert to crime. There needs to be an even distribution of these services including to the suburbs.

2.3 Hostels & Social Housing

Intensification of hostels in the city center, most of the inhabitants are people with addiction issues such persons will never become self-sufficient in a city hostel, it is not an educational environment.

The presence of intensified Social Housing within a short radius of the City is another significant issue, there is an inadequate provision for recreational activity as a distraction, so they will gather amongst their own peers and descend on the city, the rise in juvenile crime has been significant and continues to be, from shoplifting, assaults, anti-social behaviour and substance abuse.

Comment

If these issues are not attended to, the situation escalates to more serious crime.

2.4 Thornton Hall

Prison Capacity needs to be addressed, recent report, Inspector of Prisons Annual Report on the overcrowding at Mountjoy Prison complex, the Thornton Hall project needs to be revived.

3. Policing of protests – is the correct balance being struck in the context of the right to assemble peacefully.