

Chair, Committee Members,

Thank you for the invitation to speak to you about the shocking events in Dublin city centre last Thursday.

Firstly, our thoughts remain with the teacher and the three children and their families who were victims of the terrible knife attack.

Our investigation is progressing and we are not looking for anyone else in relation to this crime. I want to thank the public for their assistance and support with this investigation.

It is terrible that a minority then corrupted the suffering of others in an attempt to further their narrow-minded, and vicious agenda. They should be truly ashamed for this and the destruction they caused.

An Garda Síochána is determined to bring them to justice.

We have arrested 38 people and our investigation is assisted by significant CCTV and reports from the public, this will enable us to prepare investigation files for the Director of Public Prosecutions.

In addition, we have established another strand of investigation under the Garda National Bureau of Criminal Investigation into those who we suspect are inciting serious public order incidents and hatred via social media.

There has, understandably, been much commentary on the Garda response to the serious public order incident.

At the outset, I want to once again pay tribute to the Gardaí who so bravely and professionally put themselves in harms way to protect the people of Dublin.

I also want to set out a timeline of events so that Committee Members are aware of the significant work undertaken in a relatively short period of time to restore order to the city.

At approximately 1.30pm, the knife attack on the teacher and three children occurred. Garda resources were immediately deployed to the scene, to maintain the cordon so the crime scene was preserved to enable the gathering of evidence for a prosecution, begin the investigation, determine the motive and liaise with distraught parents, teachers and the local community.

In addition, a 25-strong Garda National Public Order Unit was at the scene at 2pm.

At approximately 3.35pm, there was a small, spontaneous anti-immigration protest nearby at the Garden of Remembrance, which passed off peacefully.

At 4.30pm, a group blocked the Luas at Parnell Street/O'Connell Street junction. At 5.40pm a large number of people – around 200 – charged towards Gardaí and attacked them physically and verbally. Garda vehicles were also damaged.

In an extremely serious and unprecedented situation, some of the group sought to break through the crime scene cordon, but they were repelled by Gardaí.

Around 6.30pm, fire attacks started on public transport and Garda vehicles, criminal damage and looting began, and Gardaí had fireworks thrown and fired at them.

At this time, there was already a significant Garda presence in the city and by 7pm further Gardaí arrived. The numbers involved in rioting had grown considerably in this short time.

By approximately 8pm, the number of trained and equipped public order Gardaí had grown to 250. This was our largest ever public order deployment. The total number of Gardaí in the city centre was over 400 with support from the dog unit, the mounted unit, and air support unit.

While the intense violence was shocking and distressing, calm was largely restored to the city centre by 10pm and full order was restored by 11.30pm.

While these terrible events were occurring, it must be said that routine and necessary policing also continued throughout the DMR.

Thanks to great work by Gardaí, all the emergency services, Dublin City Council, public transport companies, and the business community, Dublin was back open for business the next morning.

While I fully appreciate the hardship and damage caused by the extreme violence of these thugs on Thursday night last, other capital cities who have had similar such disorder have seen normal society shut-down for days.

Having said that, it is clear that we are facing a different form of disorder than we have experienced before and we must evolve our tactics to address this. We have started a review into our response to last Thursdays disorder under Assistant Commissioner DMR.

On Saturday, I meet the four Garda Associations to seek their immediate feedback, which was very valuable, and there will be further engagement with the Associations in the coming weeks.

We will also work with the Policing Authority on its review.

We are already making changes. By Friday evening we had two water cannons ready to deploy.

We will be adding to the already 1,000 trained public order Gardaí. This is in addition to the 100 Gardaí we added to the public order unit in the Dublin Metropolitan Region during this year.

We will be providing Gardaí with even stronger incapacitant spray and more personal safety equipment.

In conjunction with the Minister for Justice, we have sought amendments to legislation to allow us to access audio from CCTV, which will enable us to advance incitement crimes, and to utilise facial and object identification technology for certain crimes including serious public order incidents, which will speed up the current manual review of CCTV material.

From mid-next year we will also start to deploy body cams.

In order to provide public reassurance, since Thursday evening last we have four public order units deployed in Dublin city centre, along with high visibility patrolling supported by specialist units such as the dog unit, mounted unit, and air support. This policing operation will continue throughout the Christmas period.

There has been much commentary about An Garda Síochána's approach to policing protests.

I have been involved in many policing operations in extremely volatile situations; I know that at times the use of the full extent of our powers is required when all other options have been exhausted.

When it comes to policing protests, we take a graduated response that balances the constitutional right to protest with protecting people and property.

Already this year, 50 people have been arrested following anti-migrant protests in the DMR, while files are with the DPP for decision relating to allegations of criminal activity at other protests.

It is our duty and our obligation to confront such individuals, and this requires a graduated response with the use of force a last resort, but we have and will resort to use of force in order to protect the public and protect Gardaí.

I want to thank the Gardaí of all ranks who were on duty last Thursday and indeed many who were not, but returned to duty to help their colleagues and the public. They exemplify the best of An Garda Síochána – professionalism, dedication and the commitment to put their own personal safety at risk to keep people safe.

To conclude Chair, I want to offer my sincere thanks to the people from Dublin and beyond who have shown their support for An Garda Síochána on the night and the days following.

My colleagues and I are happy to take any questions.

Thank you.