

Chairman, Committee Members,

Thank you for the invitation to meet and to address you this afternoon.

I note your interest in discussing recruitment and retention, the operating model, community policing, and roads policing. And so, I propose providing a brief update on these important issues and then I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Recruitment and Retention

As of April 30, 2025, An Garda Síochána's strength stands at 18,194. This includes 14,221 Gardaí; 304 Garda Reserves and 3,669 Garda Staff.

Over the last year, overall Garda numbers have increased by approximately 200, the rate of resignations has slowed, the level of retirements has not been at the expected rate, and a small, but encouraging number of Gardaí that had resigned have re-joined.

Efforts to address recruitment and retention within An Garda Síochána are ongoing, and we continue to work with the Minister for Justice, Home Affairs and Migration and the Department's Recruitment and Training Capacity Group to attract personnel into this great organisation.

Since we last met, there have been a number of positive developments.

Following proposals from myself, the retirement age for Gardaí has increased from 60 to 62 and this has helped us to retain a number of highly experienced Gardaí.

Meanwhile, the Government increased the age limit for new recruits to 50, and the Garda trainee allowance has gone up to €354 per week. In our last recruitment campaign, 41 per cent of applicants were over the age of 30.

In addition, our recent Garda trainee recruitment competition from earlier this year showed the attractiveness of a career in An Garda Síochána with more than 6,700 applications received.

A new recruitment campaign will launch in the Autumn, providing us with a strong pipeline of new recruits going into 2026.

Last week, a further cohort of Gardaí passed out of the Garda College, and another intake began their training yesterday.

Of those that started yesterday, 20 were from the 2025 campaign, which only closed in mid-February.

There are currently 477 Garda trainees in the Garda College and there will be further intakes into the College in the coming months.

We are committed to meeting the Government target of recruiting 5,000 Gardaí over the next five years.

There has been much comment on our level of resignations. We don't want to lose any Gardaí, but last year 140 Gardaí out of 14,000 resigned. Or just 1 per cent of Gardaí. This was down 29 on the year before.

The average resignation for UK police services is much higher and in some international police services it is up to 10 per cent.

Another indicator that more people want to build a long lasting career in An Garda Síochána is the strong interest in promotion competitions at all Garda ranks.

We are making progress, but we recognise there is more to do.

This includes work we are currently doing with the OPW to enhance the physical capacity of Garda College to enable individual intakes of up to 250 trainees, running two recruitment competitions per year, and discussions with other third-level institutions.

Operating Model

Up until the introduction of the Operating Model, the structure of the organisation had not changed since its formation in 1922.

That was not sustainable at a time of rapid and constant change for the country and policing.

The Operating Model is based on best international practice, and recommendations from the Commission on the Future of Policing, the Garda Inspectorate, and our own Modernisation and Renewal programme.

Its implementation was overseen by the Department of An Taoiseach as part of the Government's A Policing Service For Our Future programme.

It has been the biggest organisational change in the history of our organisation, and given this scale it has been not without its challenges.

Everything done under the Operating Model has been to enhance the service we provide to the public, particularly the most vulnerable in society.

A good example is the investment we have made in our Divisional Protective Service Units (DPSUs).

These units are in every Garda Division, and are staffed by highly trained detectives, with more than 300 specialist Gardaí assigned to DPSUs nationwide, providing a tailored professional service to vulnerable victims.

These changes have delivered tangible results for domestic abuse victims. For example, we have seen 67 prosecutions for non-fatal strangulation, 52 prosecutions for coercive control, and, under the relatively new legislation, 12 prosecutions for stalking have been initiated.

This great work has made a difference to victims, and is a real, positive policing outcome of the Operating Model.

Under the old structure, the Superintendent in the area would be responsible for all the crime investigation, engaging with local representatives and groups, and dealing with administrative, HR and financial matters.

Under the Operating Model, Superintendents are now dedicated to particular key areas - community engagement, and performance and accountability.

In addition, specially trained Detective Superintendents oversee crime investigation in a Division.

While Assistant Principals were appointed in each Division to oversee HR, finance, and administration.

This has lifted a significant burden off Superintendents and allows them to focus on important areas in the service we provide to local communities.

In addition, the Operating Model has seen a significant and historic increase in the number of Sergeants and Inspectors. Sergeant numbers are up by over 200, and Inspectors by 140.

This benefits the front-line Gardaí who asked in our Cultural Audit for more supervisors, and the public in terms of ensuring a quality policing service is delivered locally.

The roll-out of the Model was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but as of last month, it has been successfully implemented in all 21 Garda Divisions. We will now bring the regional offices and national bureaus into the Operating Model.

Community Policing

An Garda Síochána's ethos as an unarmed, community-focused police service has served the people of the country well over our 103 year history.

The most recent Garda Public Attitude Survey of over 7,000 people showed high levels of satisfaction with the service we provide at local level (73 per cent), 75 per cent saying we are community-focused, and a public trust rating of 89 per cent - one of the highest among European police services.

In the area of Community Policing, a new policy is being developed called Community Policing Principles.

This will standardise our approach to Community Policing. It will enable the delivery of an effective community policing service, one which is responsive to the needs of a modern and diverse community. And one which will provide a suitable mechanism for the integration of community policing into the Garda Operating Model.

These principles comprise of:

- Community Engagement
- Community Partnerships
- Problem Solving
- Crime Prevention
- Law Enforcement
- Accountability

An Garda Síochána remains committed to its model of community policing, and along with a wide-range of partners has established initiatives such as Neighbourhood Watch and Community Alert schemes; Campus Watch; the Garda Schools Programme; Garda Youth Awards, and Garda late night leagues that provide important touch points between Gardaí and local communities.

Road Safety

The recent loss of our colleague Garda Kevin Flatley served as a stark reminder of the risks our Gardaí face while on duty, but also put into sharp focus the dangers that exist on our roads today.

Last year, a range of measures were introduced by An Garda Síochána to enhance road safety and reduce road deaths and serious injuries.

These included the 30 minutes of roads safety activity initiative, introduction of six safety cameras, the use of unmarked vehicles including an unmarked truck for detection purposes, and access to the driver insurance database on the mobility device that every Garda has.

Enforcement of key life saver offences such as speeding, drink and drug driving, not using a seat belt, and mobile phone use is up.

During 2024 the following roads policing enforcement took place:

- Arrested on average more than 1 driver, every hour, every day for Driving under the Influence of Drugs or Alcohol - over 7,500+ drivers
- Issued a Fixed Charge Notice (FCN)/ Penalty points for Mobile Phones to over 60 Drivers every day (approx. 21,750 FCNs) - an increase of 14% on 2023
- Seized over 85 vehicles every day for offences such as No Insurance, No Driving Licence, Unaccompanied L Driver, No NCT/ CVRT, approximately 31,500 vehicles - an increase of 36% over 2023

Despite significant roads policing enforcement there are 70 road fatalities as of June 5, this year, that figure is 5 less than the same period last year, however that reduction is no consolation for the bereaved families.

There was also a reduction in road deaths in 2024, but every road death is one too many.

And so, I want to reiterate the importance of responsible driver behaviour.

I appeal to all road users - in the interest of their safety and those around them - that they slow down, never drive under the influence of an intoxicant, wear a safety belt; and never use a mobile phone while driving.

Finally, recent crime figures for the first quarter of 2025 show year-on-year reductions in many key crimes such as burglary, robbery, crimes against the person, and theft.

We recognise that we will always have more to do and we are engaged in a process of constant improvement, but thanks to the great work of Gardaí across the country every day, Ireland is by any international measure, a safe place.

Thank you for your time and I am happy to take any questions you may have.