

DÁIL ÉIREANN

JOINT COMMITTEE ON THE IRISH LANGUAGE, THE GAELTACHT AND THE IRISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY

COMHCHOISTE NA GAEILGE, NA GAELTACHTA AGUS PHOBAL LABHAR- THA NA GAEILGE

Dé Céadaoin, 12 Bealtaine 2021

Wednesday, 12 May 2021

Tháinig an Comhchoiste le chéile ag 2 p.m.

The Joint Committee met at 2 p.m.

Comhaltaí a bhí i láthair/Members present:

Teachtaí Dála/Deputies	Seanadóirí/Senators
Dara Calleary,	Lorraine Clifford-Lee,
Catherine Connolly,	Seán Kyne,
Pa Daly,	Rónán Mullen,
Joe McHugh,	Niall Ó Donnghaile.
Aindrias Moynihan,	
Fergus O'Dowd,	
Marc Ó Cathasaigh.	

* In éagmais/In the absence of Senator Barry Ward.

Teachta/Deputy Aengus Ó Snodaigh sa Chathaoir/in the Chair.

Tuarascáil Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga: An Garda Síochána

Chairman: Tá leithscéal faighte ón Seanadóir Barry Ward. Iarraim ar na comhaltáí suí sna suíocháin ina bhfuil na micreafóin curtha ar fáil dóibh agus atá saor. Táimid anseo chun plé a dhéanamh ar thuarascáil Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga, tuarascáil faoi fho-alt 26(5) d'Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla, 2003 de Thithe an Oireachtais maidir le cur i bhfeidhm moltaí imscrúdaithe a rinneadh faoi fho-alt 21(f) d'Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla, 2003 ar An nGarda Síochána.

Ba mhaith liom ár mbuíochas a ghabháil le Coimisinéir an Gharda Síochána agus a n-oifigigh, Anne Marie McMahon, leas-choimisinéir póilíneachta agus slándála; Alan Mulligan, stiúrthóir feidhmiúcháin gníomhach acmhainní daonna agus fhorbairt daoine; agus Eimear Ní Cheallaigh, oifigeach Gaeilge, mar ionadaithe ar son An Gharda Síochána. Cuirim fáilte rompu ar fad.

Ba mhaith liom a chur ar ár dtairfead go bhfuil na finnéithe lonnaithe i Seomra na Dála le linn an chruinnithe seo. Ba mhaith liom a chur ar a n-aird go bhfuil de bhua alt 17(2)(l) den Acht um Chlúmhilleadh, 2009, finnéithe faoi chosaint lánphribhléid maidir leis an bhfianaise a thugann siad don choiste seo, chomh fada is atá siad lonnaithe sa seomra coiste féin. Má ordaíonn an comhchoiste dóibh, ámh, éirí as an bhfianaise a thabhairt i leith ní áirithe agus má leanann siad dá thabhairt, níl siad i dteideal dá éis sin ach pribhléide cáilithe i leith na fianaise acu.

Ordaítear dóibh nach dtabharfar ach fianaise a bhaineann le hábhar na n-imeachtaí seo agus fiafraítear dóibh cleachtadh parlaiminte a urramú, nár chóir más féidir daoine nó eintiteas a cháineadh ná líomhaintí a dhéanamh ina n-aghaidh, ina ainm, ina hainm nó ina n-ainm ar shlí a bhféadfaí iad a aithint. Ba mhaith liom iad a chur ar an eolas go ndéanfar na ráitis tionscnaimh a chur siad faoi bhráid an chomhchoiste a fhoilsiú ar shuíomh gréasáin an chomhchoiste tar éis an chruinnithe seo.

Meabhraím chomh maith do chomhaltáí an cleachtadh parlaiminte atá ann le fada nár chóir dóibh tuairimí a thabhairt maidir le duine atá taobh amuigh de na Tithe nó le hoifigeach ina ainm nó ina hainm ar shlí a bhféadfaí iad a aithint.

Beidh mé ag cinntiú go gcloíonn gach duine leis an ábhar atá os ár gcomhair agus Coimisinéir an Gharda linn; sé sin, an tuarascáil faoin easpa gardaí le Gaeilge i stáisiúin Ghaeltachta. Má théann aon duine ar strae ón ábhar sin, beidh orm an cruinniú a chur ar athló. Thug muid cuireadh don Choimisinéir agus a chomhghleacaithe ón nGarda Síochána teacht anseo chun go dtabharfadh muidne éisteacht dóibh agus go gcuirfeadh muid ceisteanna orthu maidir leis an ábhar sin agus an t-ábhar sin amháin. Ní phléifear aon ábhar eile atá i mbéal an phobail anois nó a bhí i mbéal an phobail roimhe seo. Go háirithe, agus tá sé seo tábhachtach, ní phléifear aon rud atá os comhair na gcúirteanna faoi láthair. Beidh sé as ord agus, más gá, beidh orm an cruinniú a chur ar athló.

Cuirim fáilte anois roimh Coimisinéir an Gharda, Drew Harris, labhairt leis an gcomhchoiste.

Mr. Drew Harris: I am grateful for the opportunity to respond to An Coimisinéir Teanga's reports and for the opportunity to set out the response of An Garda Síochána in respect of our legislative and overall responsibility to provide a policing service which is bilingual and which meets the needs of Irish society. In particular I am struck by a remark in An Coimisinéir Teanga's correspondence with me and which is a public remark. His remark was to the effect that if a member of the public deals with a member of An Garda Síochána, there can be an imbalance

in power in that relationship and that if they wish to converse in Irish and the member of An Garda Síochána can only converse in English, that is putting them at a disadvantage right from the start and in effect a power imbalance is created.

From our inception, respect towards the Irish language and the provision of services in the Gaeltacht has been in legislation on An Garda Síochána. We accept the responsibility we are given in that regard. I will turn to Ms Ní Cheallaigh to read out our opening statement in full.

Ms Eimear Ní Cheallaigh: Gabhaim buíochas as an gcuireadh a bheith sa choiste inniu agus as ucht an deis a thabhairt don Gharda Síochána labhairt faoi na bearta atá curtha i gcrích againn chun moltaí an Choimisinéara Teanga a chur i bhfeidhm. Tá áthas orainn go bhfuil an seans againn cur síos a thabhairt ar na céimeanna atá tógtha againn chun seirbhísí póilíneachta dátheangacha a sholáthar do na pobail ar a bhfreastalaíonn muid.

Is fórsa póilíneachta náisiúnta é An Garda Síochána a fhostaíonn beagnach 18,000 pearsanra garda. Tá misean simplí ach thar a bheith tábhachtach againn; is é sin daoine a choinneáil sábháilte. Tá An Garda Síochána ag tabhairt faoin gclár claochlaithe is uailmhianaí atá tógtha ag an eagraíocht ó bunaíodh é beagnach 100 bliain ó shin. Tá sé seo ar fad ag tarlú i gcoinne athrú agus díshocraíocht macra-leibhéal de thoradh Covid-19 agus an Breatimeacht. Tá na rudaí seo tar éis cur isteach go mór ar chúrsaí earcaíochta, oiliúna agus pleanála le bliain anuas agus is cosúil nach mbeidh mórán athrú ar seo in 2021. Chruthaigh an neamhchinnteacht seo ar fad dúshlán maidir le soláthar agus éileamh a bhainistiú do chomhaltaí agus d'fhoireann An Gharda Síochána, ach beag beann ar an gcomhthéacs, thóg muid ár ndualgais i leith na teanga dáiríre agus leanfaidh muid ag déanamh amhlaidh.

Tá béim mór curtha ar an nGaeilge ag an eagraíocht ó bunaíodh é agus tá infheistíocht déanta sa teanga ar bhealaí éagsúla. Aithníonn An Garda Síochána an tábhacht a bhaineann leis an nGaeilge mar scil póilíneachta laistigh den eagraíocht agus an tábhacht atá léi sna pobail ar a bhfreastalaíonn muid. Tá sé seo le feiceáil sna straitéisí agus pleananna gníomhaíochta ar fad a d'fhorbair agus a chuir an eagraíocht i bhfeidhm thar na blianta. Tá muid lán-tiomanta do chomhlíonadh na dualgais reachtúla teanga ar fad atá orainn agus tá muid dírithe ar sholáthar seirbhísí dátheangacha a fheabhsú dár bpobail Ghaeltachta. Tá sé mar chuspóir againn seirbhísí ardchaighdeáin i nGaeilge a sholáthar, de réir mar is gá, don phobal ar a bhfreastalaímid orthu.

Tagraím do mholtaí an Choimisinéara Teanga a chur i bhfeidhm. Tá bearta curtha i gcrích ag an eagraíocht chun a chinntiú, an méid is indéanta, gur comhaltaí atá líofa sa Ghaeilge a chuirtear ar fónamh i stáisiúin Ghaeltachta. Tá sé seo á dhéanamh againn trí chainteoirí Gaeilge a earcú agus trí chomhaltaí leis na scileanna cuí sa teanga a leithdháileadh ar cheantair Ghaeltachta. Chomh maith leis sin, cuireadh deiseanna ar fáil dár bpearsanra ar fad lena n-áirítear iad siúd i gceantair Ghaeltachta a gcuid scileanna Gaeilge a fheabhsú agus táimid ag forbairt sraithchúrsaí Gaeilge ar líne le Gaelchultúr.

Ón uair a eisíodh tuarascáil an Choimisinéara Teanga in 2011, tá méadú 12% tagtha ar líon na ngardaí le Gaeilge i gceantair Ghaeltachta. Cinnteoidh ár mbeartas nua, a bhí á leagadh againn inár gcóras tríd an straitéis nua Gaeilge atá á fhorbairt, go leanfaidh líon na gcomhaltaí le Gaeilge ag méadú i stáisiúin Ghaeltachta. I bhforbairt nua eile atá thar a bheith dearfach, aontaíodh go mbeidh Coimisinéir An Gharda Síochána é féin ina chathaoirleach ar ghrúpa rialachais Gaeilge na heagraíochta as seo amach. Is é seo an chéad uair a bheidh an grúpa rialachais Gaeilge ag an leibhéal is airde san eagraíocht. Creidimid gur céim tábhachtach chun tosaigh é seo, ceann a léiríonn ár dtiomantas don teanga agus a chinnteoidh go gcuirtear ár straitéis nua Gaeilge i bhfeidhm go hiomlán. Creidimid freisin go bhfuil sé riachtanach an straitéis nua seo

a spreagadh ón mbarr anuas, rud a chinnteoidh go dtuigeann an eagraíocht ar fad an tábhacht a bhaineann leis.

Táimid lán-dáiríre go dtabharfar fíor-rogha teanga dár bpobail Ghaeltachta agus tá bearta tógtha againn agus tógfar cinn eile chun go leanfaimid orainn ag feabhsú caighdeán na seirbhísí a sholáthraíonn muid dár bpobal a labhraíonn Gaeilge.

Chairman: Iarraim ar chomhaltaí ceisteanna a chur ionas go mbeidh an deis ag an gCoimisinéir freagraí a thabhairt seachas óráid nó ráiteas mór fada a thabhairt. Iarraim ar chomhaltaí cloí le cúig nóiméad an duine agus tabharfaidh sin seans do gach comhalta.

Deputy Pa Daly: Tá fáilte roimh Coimisinéir an Gharda. D'iarr mé ar an gcoiste seo cuireadh a thabhairt don Choimisinéir teacht os ár gcomhair mar bhí sé soiléir ón tuarascáil a bhí ag an gCoimisinéir Teanga go raibh fadhb againn. Mhaígh an Coimisinéir Teanga in 2011 go bhfuil ar An nGarda Síochána gach céim riachtanach a ghlacadh le cinntiú gur gardaí atá iniúil sa Ghaeilge a bheidh i stáisiúin Ghaeltachta. Mhaígh sé an bliain seo caite go raibh níos mó cumarsáide idir a oifig agus An Garda Síochána ná le haon chomhlacht poiblí eile. Mhaígh sé: “Is trua liom nach bhfuil toradh níos fearr le feiceáil ann” agus gur beag an obair atá déanta ag An nGarda Síochána le deich mbliain anuas.

Tá a fhios agam go bhfuil Coimisinéir an Gharda ina phost le trí bliana anuas. Cathain a fuair sé amach go raibh fadhb ann leis an tuarascáil ón gCoimisinéir Teanga? Tá súil agam gur léigh an Coimisinéir an tuarascáil ón gCoimisinéir Teanga. An bhfuil brón nó aiféala ar an gCoimisinéir faoin moilleadóireacht sa chás seo? Dúirt an Coimisinéir Teanga gur sheol sé litir chuig An Garda Síochána i mí Aibreán 2019 agus nach bhfuair sé freagra go dtí Meán Fómhair na bliana sin. An aithníonn an Coimisinéir go bhfuil fadhb ann agus go bhfuil An Garda Síochána ag briseadh an dlí? Dá bharr sin, an bhfuil níos mó acmhainní á lorg ag an gCoimisinéir? Ar lorg an Coimisinéir níos mó acmhainní ón Rialtas? Maíodh sa ráiteas tosaigh go bhfuil ardú 12% ar líon na ngardaí ach nuair a léitear an sliocht ón gCoimisinéir Teanga, tá sé soiléir nach raibh sa mhéadú sin ach ceathrar gardaí mar dhún An Garda Síochána a lán de na stáisiúin Gharda i gcontaetha cosúil le Ciarraí, Maigh Eo, Gaillimh agus Tír Chonaill. Níl Gaeilge ag gach garda. Níl Gaeilge ach ag 12% díobh siúd atá sna stáisiúin Ghaeltachta. An bhfuil an Coimisinéir sásta leis sin? Maíodh go bhfuil straitéis nua Gaeilge ag An nGarda Síochána. An bhfuil spriocdháta ann chun go mbeidh gardaí le Gaeilge i ngach stáisiún agus an bhfuil spriocdháta ann chun an straitéis nua a chur i bhfeidhm? Tá 14,000 garda sa tír. Cé mhéad de na gardaí sin an bhfuil caighdeán 2 nó 3 acu? Léirigh an Coimisinéir go raibh cúrsaí Gaeilge á dhéanamh sa Gharda Síochána. Cé mhéad garda a raibh ar chúrsaí Gaeilge, go pearsanta nó ar líne, sa bhliain seo chaite nó in 2019?

Is minic nuair a bhímse i gCiarraí agus ag iarraidh an stáisiún Garda sa Daingean a fháil, cuirtear an glaoch ar aghaidh go dtí an stáisiún i dTrá Lí, mar shampla. An bhfuil aon phlean ag an gCoimisinéir go mbeadh garda le Gaeilge i ngach unit chun freagraí a fháil do dhaoine ón Ghaeltacht, seachas an glaoch a chur ar aghaidh go stáisiún mór cosúil leis an gceann i dTrá Lí nó fiú ceann i nGaillimh?

Deputy Dara Calleary: Cuirim fáilte roimh Coimisinéir an Gharda agus a fhoireann. Gabhaim buíochas le hEimear Ní Cheallaigh as an ráiteas. Bhí tuarascáil an Choimisinéara Teanga an-díreach agus bhí an coimisinéir an-mhífhoighneach faoi cad a bhí ag tarlú. Leagtar amach sa ráiteas go bhfuil méadú 12% tagtha ar líon na ngardaí le Gaeilge i gceantair Ghaeltachta ach níl ansin ach ceathrar gardaí breise. Cad é an phlean maidir leis na huimhreacha? Tá straitéis leagtha amach agus fáiltim go bhfuil an Coimisinéir ag tabhairt bainistíochta don straitéis mar

gheall ar ghrúpa rialachais Ghaeilge. Cad iad na huimhreacha a bheidh sé ag iarraidh cur go dtí na stáisiúin sna ceantair Ghaeilge? Cad faoi na daoine le Gaeilge nach bhfuil ina gcónaí i gceantair Ghaeltachta ach a úsáideann an Ghaeilge mar phríomhtheanga? Tá ceart ag na daoine sin seirbhís a fháil. Cad é an plean le haghaidh stáisiúin nach bhfuil sa Ghaeltacht, chun gur féidir le daoine a bhaineann úsáid as an Ghaeilge mar phríomhtheanga seirbhísí agus cearta a fháil ón nGarda Síochána?

Deputy Catherine Connolly: Cuirim fáilte roimh na finnétithe go léir. Ní pionós saoil é seo ach cúpla uair anseo i Seomra an daonlathais. Tá súil agam go bhfuil an tuarascáil léite ag na finnétithe. Tá sí léite agamsa. An nglacann Coimisinéir an Gharda leis gur beart thar a bheith neamhghnách a bhí ann nuair a bhí ar an gCoimisinéir Teanga an tuarascáil seo a leagan os comhair an dá Theach den Oireachtas? D'éirigh an tuarascáil as gearán a rinne duine den phobal i nGaoth Dobhair thart ar deich mbliana ó shin. Bhí imscrúdú ann ag an am agus ní raibh ach cúig mholadh ann. Tá siad anseo i nGaeilge agus i mBéarla. Deich mbliana tar éis na tréimhse sin, níl na moltaí comhlíonta. Ar a laghad ba chóir go mbeadh siad san óráid oscailte inniu.

Nach bhfuil an t-aistriúchán ag feidhmiú?

Chairman: Tá fadhbanna teicneolaíochta againn.

Deputy Catherine Connolly: An chéad cheist a chur mé ná an nglacann na finnétithe leis go bhfuil an rud atá déanta ag an gCoimisinéir Teanga thar a bheith neamhghnách.

Níl tagairt ar bith in óráid oscailte an Gharda maidir le cén fáth nár comhlíonadh na moltaí ón imscrúdú. Níl i gceist ach cúig mholadh agus tá siad thar a bheith bunúsach. Baineann péire acu le Tír Chonaill agus tá an trí cinn eile ginearálta. Go sonrach, ceann de na moltaí ná:

Nach mbainfí leas as cinneadh ná as moltaí an imscrúdaithe [seo] mar leithscéal le laghdú nó maolú a dhéanamh ar sholáthar seirbhíse cuí póilíneachta don limistéar atá i gceist.

Deir sé freisin gur chóir go mbeadh “córas tástála teanga chuí” dá rogha féin ag an nGarda agus leanann sé ar aghaidh maidir leis sin. Níor luaigh na finnétithe focal ar bith faoin moladh sin. Dar liom, an moladh is tábhachtaí ná:

Go scrúdódh [Coimisinéir an Gharda] Síochána an raibh impleachtaí ag cinneadh [agus moltaí] an imscrúdaithe seo [sin an t-imscrúdú a rinneadh in 2011] ó thaobh na ndúichí ar fad de chuid an Gharda Síochána ina bhfuil limistéir Ghaeltachta agus, má bhí, go rachfaí i ngleic leo sin le géilliúlacht do na dualgais reachtúla teanga a chinntiú.

Níor léigh mé amach na cúig mholadh ach tá siad os ár gcomhair. Cén fáth nár comhlíonadh na moltaí sin? Cad atá á dhéanamh ag An nGarda Síochána anois maidir leis na moltaí sin agus cad é an sprioc ama? Ní dea-shampla é go bhfuil an dlí - sé sin, Acht an Gharda Síochána, 2005 agus Acht na dTeangacha Oifigiúla, 2003 - á shárú ag An nGarda Síochána. Níos mó ná sin, is rud tromchúiseach é go bhfuil an dlí á shárú ag an nGarda. Tuigim go bhfuil deacrachtaí ann ach is í an teanga oifigiúil í. Tá dualgais dhleathacha ar an nGarda agus níl siad á chomhlíonadh aige. Sin an fáth go bhfuilimid anseo inniu.

Ba mhaith liom oibriú leis na finnétithe ar thuras dearfach chun an Ghaeilge a chur chun cinn. Ba mhaith liom go mbeadh siad ar ais os ár gcomhair ag obair i mbealach atá thar a bheith dearfach, ach tá muinín ag teastáil. Ar dtús báire ba mhaith liom a fháil amach cén fáth nach bhfuil na moltaí curtha i bhfeidhm agus cén uair a bheidh siad curtha i bhfeidhm. Cothóidh sé

sin muinín ionam chun oibriú as lámha a chéile leo.

Cé mhéad garda atá ar liosta chun aistriú go ceantair Ghaeltachta? An bhfuil na figiúirí sin ag na finnétithe inniu? Rinne na Teachtaí Dála eile tagairt don 12% a luadh san óráid oscailte. Níl comhthéacs ar bith ann maidir leis an 12% sin so ní féidir liom an céatadán sin a thuiscint. Cé mhéad cúrsa Gaeilge atá curtha ar siúl ag an nGarda? Cé mhéad garda atá á ndéanamh? Uaireanta mottaím mar dhroch-mhúinteoir - táim pósta le múinteoir so is féidir liom é sin a rá - ach ní sin an chaoi go maith liom déileáil leis an Ghaeilge. Bíonn mé féin ag streachailt leis an Ghaeilge ach tá orainn é seo a dhéanamh. Is teanga na tíre í agus baineann sé sin go háirithe leis an Gharda. Nuair a thagann finnétithe os ár gcomhair tar éis tuarascála mar seo, tá dualgas thar a bheith tromchúiseach orthu rá linn agus míniú dúinn cad a tharla go raibh ar an gCoimisinéir Teanga tuarascáil a chur os ár gcomhair tar éis tréimhse deich mbliana.

Bhreathnaigh mé ar liosta den chomhfhreagras. Tá ocht leathanach agus liosta mór fada ann ag cur síos ar an méid comhfhreagras a bhí idir Oifig an Choimisinéara Teanga agus An Garda Síochána. Ní dóigh liom gur rith an coimisinéir go Tithe an Oireachtais. Ní dhearna sé é sin ar chor ar bith. Dúirt sé gur údar díomá é seo. Dúirt an Teachta Daly é sin ach is fiú é a athrá. Dúirt an Coimisinéir Teanga, “Is bocht an scéal é nach bhfuil moltaí uile an imscrúdaithe a rinneadh sa bhliain 2011 curtha i bhfeidhm.” Tá na scórtha de phíosáí teagmhála ann agus ocht leathanach ag cur síos orthu. Rinne an Coimisinéir Teanga tagairt do rud a dúirt Coimisinéir an Gharda. Téann sé ar ais go dtí an Coimisiún Gaeltachta in 1926 agus an tagairt shonrach a rinne an coimisiún sin ag an am.

Tá sé ann i mBéarla agus i nGaeilge. Maíodh:

Ionas go dtuigfí [Coimisiún na Gaeltachta] an scéal go hiomlán, níor ghá ach beairic de chuid an Gharda Síochána ina bhfuil Gardaí ar Béarlóiri iad a shamhlú i gceartlár ceantair Ghaeltachta; nó Oifig Poist i mbaile Gaeltachta nach bhfuil Gaeilgeoir ar bith inti; nó oifigeach nach bhfuil Gaeilge aige de chuid na Roinne Talmhaíochta, nó na Roinne Custam agus Máil, ag feidhmiú as measc phobal na Gaeltachta. [Tá seo tábhachtach agus láidir] Is gníomhairí díreacha iad na hoifigigh seo maidir le bunú agus leathadh an Bhéarla.

Tá sin ó 1926 agus tá cúrsaí beagnach mar an gcéanna 100 bliain ina dhiaidh sin. Tá ceithre nó cúig ceisteanna curtha agam ansin agus ba mhaith liom freagraí díreacha a fháil.

Mr. Drew Harris: I will start with overall commentary I wish to make and hopefully I will then be able to provide some reassurance. One of our biggest issues is around the workforce resource challenge we face in matching the skills, in this case Irish language fluency, with allocation to the Gaeltacht areas. The original complaint in 2011 was made at a time when An Garda Síochána was going through a period of contraction and this negatively impacted on recruitment in those years in the Gaeltacht areas.

Chairman: I am sorry to interrupt but if the Commissioner feels more comfortable he can take off the mask while speaking and then put it back on again.

Mr. Drew Harris: In 2014 we commenced recruitment again and we had a specific Irish language recruitment stream with 10% set aside. Regrettably, that has been unsuccessful for us. The rationale at the time was that this would create a pool of qualified individuals who could serve in Gaeltachtaí and other areas and provide a service through the medium of the Irish language. There are some other human resource issues around where members can serve. We have a general rule around how close an individual can serve to one's original residence, that

of a relative or that of a spouse's relative. These restrictions are there for good reasons, namely reducing the risk of familial influence and maintaining impartiality in policing. Garda members who are recruited through the Irish language stream are initially allocated to larger training stations but they undertake to undergo a period in a Gaeltacht station. Only 55 gardaí have been recruited through the Irish language stream since 2013, 18 of whom are not serving in a division with a Gaeltacht but 13 of those 18 did serve in such a division and then subsequently asked for a transfer. I have insisted that for anyone who comes through that stream or for any individual who expresses a wish to serve in a Gaeltacht area, after they have passed the competency test, which is level 4 and which is a stringent standard, they are available to transfer at the next available opportunity to a Gaeltacht area. That is the situation.

The longer-term solution lies in a number of areas. We will continue with the recruitment stream for gardaí. We also want to encourage the same approach with our Garda staff. More of our Garda staff are becoming front-line workers in their interaction with the public and in Gaeltacht areas we want to encourage those who may be from the local area to provide the policing service and their service in particular through the medium of the Irish language. Beyond that, I would look to the recruitment of the Garda Reserve. We wish to use the Garda Reserve as a means to increase the representation of the whole Garda organisation. One of those areas is in respect of those who can speak Irish. We want to have a recruitment campaign for reserve gardaí and that will focus on the Gaeltacht areas.

To provide a service more nationally, we have procured a contract of service for Irish language phone interpretation. As is well known, we have issued a mobility device, which is a telephone and it has many apps for policing purposes but it can also be used for interpretation at the side of the road at any location. Beyond that again, we have 80 members of the organisation whose names are on the portal and who are confident that should an Irish language speaker be required anywhere in the country, they can either respond or be available on the phone. We have an Irish language proficiency panel, which has on it those members who are proficient at level 4. That has been extended to Garda staff as well.

When we look to ensuring that gardaí are competent in Irish and deployed to Gaeltacht stations, things have moved on since 2011. One of the most significant areas is the competency test. At the recommendation of an Coimisinéir Teanga, the competency test has become more stringent. It is an EU standard at level 4 and I have details of this. Level 4 means that one is very proficient in both normal and professional conversation. It is true that within the Gaeltacht stations we have people at levels 2 and 3. That is an obvious point where we can seek to increase their skills so that they can move, in a tested process, from level 2 to level 3.

As part of our initial training process, all Garda trainees must meet certain critical goals, one of which is that no matter what stream one joins from, one gets the optimum exposure to policing experiences. That means trainees are placed in the busier towns before being transferred to more rural stations. I have insisted that once that probation and training period is over, they are then transferred to Gaeltacht stations. We have an Irish language proficiency panel. We also have other campaigns ongoing, including an information and awareness campaign, throughout the organisation. We have looked to those divisions where there are Gaeltachtaí and we have a strategy group which includes all of the divisional officers and the chief superintendents from those Gaeltachtaí together with the executive director of human resources. They meet twice a year to give feedback on the provision of services in Gaeltachtaí.

There is quite a bit of detail on staffing but in summary we have 12 stations where 100% of members are fluent; one station where over 50% of members are fluent; and eight stations

where fewer than 50% of members are fluent. In those stations, we have individual members who have a fluency of either level 2 or level 3. As I have said, that is an obvious place for us to try to build on that fluency.

I first met an Coimisinéir Teanga in March 2019 during my first six months in the organisation. Correspondence flowed between An Garda Síochána and an Coimisinéir Teanga and in September 2019 he made contact again with my office and I intervened to make sure there was a prompt and expeditious response to his correspondence.

We intend to increase the resources we have put towards this. We recently appointed an inspector with responsibility for Gaeltacht areas. In the north-western region, the office of Irish language champion has been created in each division. We are going to replicate this nationally. Where we have Irish speakers stationed outside Gaeltacht areas, they are used in innovative ways. We have seven such officers in the Dublin metropolitan region, DMR. These are used for interviews in the media and to operate on social media platforms.

In respect of our deadline or target with regard to deployment to Gaeltacht areas, part of this will depend on recruitment and the supply of Irish speakers to the organisations while another part depends on our success in upskilling individuals. I have set out details of our phone translation service and our internal website which outlines 80 Irish-speaking members who are available. They are on 24-7 duties and are contactable in that regard. I accept that this is an unusual situation. I believe there are things we can remedy as we move forward. The organisation recruits hundreds and hundreds every year between Garda members and Garda staff, so there is still an opportunity for those with Irish skills to join An Garda Síochána. That will be the same in the years to come. We are very committed to meeting our responsibilities, which we take seriously. The steps we have taken show our determination to ensure we are fully compliant with our legislative responsibilities.

Senator Seán Kyne: Cuirim fáilte roimh Coimisinéir an Gharda agus a fhoireann go léir. Chas mé leis in 2019 ag cruinniú de choiste póilíneachta Chomhairle Cathrach na Gaillimhe. Chuir mé ceisteanna faoin ábhar seo air ag an am. Ar an lá céanna, chas an Coimisinéir leis an gCoimisinéir Teanga chun na rudaí seo a phlé. Tá sé leagtha amach i ráiteas tosaigh an Choimisinéara go mbeidh sé ina chathaoirleach ar choiste nua de chuid An Gharda Síochána maidir le seirbhís trí Ghaeilge, earcaíochta agus líofacht ghardaí. An míneoidh sé an ról a bheidh aige go díreach? An gceapann sé go ndéanfaidh sé difríocht? Is rud tábhachtach é sin. An ndéanfaidh sé difríocht ó thaobh na n-uimhreacha agus ó thaobh líofachta sa Gharda Síochána?

Níl chuile stáisiún Garda mar a chéile. An bhfuil an Coimisinéir sásta go bhfuil na príomhstáisiúin Gharda sna ceantair Ghaeltachta is láidre ag cur seirbhísí dátheangacha ar fáil don phobal? Tá áiteanna i ngach uile Ghaeltacht atá fíorláidir. Tá príomhbhailte nó príomháiteanna eile ann ina bhfuil rátaí arda de dhaoine le caighdeán maith Gaeilge. An bhfuil an Coimisinéir sásta go bhfuil gardaí ag cur seirbhísí ar fáil go dátheangach sna stáisiúin sin? Is iad sin na ceisteanna atá agam faoi láthair.

Deputy Aindrias Moynihan: Gabhaim buíochas leis an gCoimisinéir as a chur i láthair. Tá roinnt mhaith ann. Bhí deis agam an tuairisc a léamh níos luaithe. Táim cinnte go n-aontódh an Coimisinéir liom gur rud ollmhór é go mbeadh an Coimisinéir Teanga ag seoladh tuairisce. Ní tharlaíonn sé ach anois is arís trí na blianta. Is mór an ní é. Leis an tuairisc seo a sheoladh chuig Tithe an Oireachtais, léirigh an Coimisinéir Teanga an frustrachas atá air agus an easpa dul chun cinn a bhraitheann sé a bhí ann. Tá sé sin soiléir. Chaithfí cothrom na Féinne a thabhairt do mhuintir na Gaolainne agus do mhuintir na Gaeltachta, pé slí ina bhfuiltear ag freastal

orthu.

Tá taithí agam ar an gcur chuige i gCorcaigh agus, má tá rud ag obair go maith, tabharfaimid aitheantas air sin. Tá cúrsaí báuil i gCorcaigh. Nuair a bhí poist le líonadh, chuir An Garda Síochána gardaí chugainn i mBéal Átha an Ghaorthaidh agus i gceantar Mhúscraí. Is é sin mar ba chóir. Is maith é. Tá bearnaí ann a fhanann ann. Tá sé ag tógáil an-fhada ar fad le sáirsint a fháil i gcomhair Bhaile Bhuirne, mar shampla. Táthar ag fanacht bliain go leith chun an post sin a líonadh. Tá sé soiléir nach bhfuil daoine ar fáil chuige. An dóigh leis an gCoimisinéir gurb é an líon Gaeilgeoirí atá i gceist ansin?

An bhfuil aon éifeacht ag liúntais ag cúrsaí? Bhí liúntais ann cheana féin i gcomhair daoine a bhí ag feidhmiú sna Gaeltachtaí. Bhíodar ábalta aistriú ó cheantar Gaeltachta go ceantar Gaeltachta eile agus an liúntas sin a choimeád. Bhí sé sin fíor i gcás cuid de na Gaeltachtaí ar aon nós. Tuigim nach féidir daoine a rinne aistriú ar chuid de na ceantair Ghaeltachta an liúntas a aistriú leo. Shamhlófaí go mbeadh leisce ar dhaoine sa chás sin agus sa chás go bhfuil an cheanncheathrú lasmuigh den Ghaeltacht, b'fhéidir i mbaile seirbhíse i gceantar Mhúscraí nó i bPort Láirge. Cén éifeacht a bheadh aige sin? Is amhlaidh gurb é An Garda Síochána féin a leagann amach na ceantair Gharda agus gur féidir leis rudaí a athrú má tá an liúntas sin ag cur isteach ar chúrsaí.

Cad iad na hiarrachtaí atá á ndéanamh anois? Luaigh an Coimisinéir roinnt rudaí ach, in ainneoin sin, sheol an Coimisinéir Teanga an tuairisc ar aghaidh toisc go raibh sé míshásta faoin easpa dul chun cinn. Cad atá difriúil anois, agus cad a bheidh difriúil amach anseo, chun rudaí a cheartú? Luaigh an Coimisinéir gur leag An Garda Síochána síos sprioc de 10% d'earcaithe in 2014 agus nach raibh siad sásta go raibh siad ag baint an sprioc sin amach. Cé saghas sprioc ar bhaineadh amach? Cén t-athrú nó feabhas atá déanta ó shin i leith? Tá 2014 sé bliana ó shin. Tá roinnt mhaith earcaithe tagtha isteach ó shin. Cén saghas figiúirí atá ann ó shin? An bhfuil feabhas ag teacht ar rudaí? Tá daoine a gcailleadh idir an dá linn. An bhfuil an bhearna sin á líonadh?

Tá an-chuid ceisteanna gur mhaith liom a chur ach fágfaidh mé leis sin é. Má tá seans agam níos déanaí, fillfidh mé ar na ceisteanna eile. Má tá rudaí ag obair go maith, tabharfaimid aitheantas air sin. Is samplaí maithe iad na rudaí a tharla i mBéal Átha an Ghaorthaidh agus i mBaile Bhuirne. Má tá bearnaí ann, agus tá sé soiléir go bhfuil, caithfear é sin a cheartú. Caithfear freastal a dhéanamh ar mhuintir na Gaeltachta agus ní hamháin muintir na Gaeltachta ach muintir na Gaolainne ar fud na tíre. Tá na bailte seirbhíse sin, Maigh Chromtha mar shampla, ag freastal ar mhuintir na Gaeltachta agus tá siad ag freastal ar gach éinne ar fud na tíre chomh maith. Táim ag caint faoi dhaoine i mBaile Átha Cliath, i gCorcaigh agus i ngach aon áit eile. Níl muintir na Gaolainne srianta isteach chuig na ceantair Ghaeltachta. Ón tseachtain seo caite, táimid ábalta gluaiseacht mórthimpeall lasmuigh dár gcontaetha. Tá Gaeilgeoirí ar fud na tíre.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Cuirim fáilte roimh an gCoimisinéir agus roimh a fhoireann uilig. The Commissioner and his team are very welcome. Tá cúpla ceist agam. Roimh dhíospóireacht an lae inniu, bhí mé ag smaoineamh ar mo chara, Garda Odhrán Mac Ghiolla Bhríde, a bhí lonnaithe i nGleann Cholm Cille agus ag obair sa cheantar. A friend of my mine, Garda Odhrán McBride was based in Gleann Cholm Cille in Donegal a couple of years ago. Bhí suim mhór aige sa teanga. Fuair sé spreagadh mór, tacaíocht mhór agus cuidiú mór ón bpobal uilig sa cheantar sin. He had an interest in the language and got a lot of support, help and inspiration from the people around him. D'fhoghlaim sé an teanga arís. He learned the language again. Táim ag smaoineamh faoi na daoine uilig timpeall na tíre atá lonnaithe sna ceantair leathGhaeltachta nó sna ceantair nach Gaeltacht iad. Tá mé ag smaoineamh faoi na daoine uilig atá suim

acu sa Ghaeilge. I am thinking of all the gardaí who have that same interest but who do not have that same chance to learn that Odhran did in Gleann Cholm Cille. An bhfuil buiséad suntasach ar fáil fá choinne na ngardaí uilig atá ag smaoineamh ar an teanga a athfhoghlaim nó a fhoghlaim arís? Is there a significant budget for gardaí who are thinking of going back to learn Irish or to relearn Irish? Chas mé le níos mó daoine leis an suim agus b'fhéidir go mbeidh deis buiséad traenáil a fháil fá choinne na ndaoine sin. If there was a budget ready for that training for na daoine uilig atá ag smaoineamh ar dul go dtí an ionad oideachais i nGleann Cholm Cille, i gContae Chiarraí, i bPort Láirge nó cibé áit, so whether they want to learn Irish in Gleann Cholm Cille, Kerry, Waterford or wherever, that would be níos fearr fá choinne na ndaoine uilig. Mar a deir an seanfhocal, there is a great Irish saying, "Má theastaíonn uait aithne a chur orainn, mair inár dteannta" or "If you want to get to know us, live with us". Sin í an fhadhb sna ceantair Ghaeltachta. If gardaí are not able to converse with the people of the Gaeltacht that creates a barrier straight away. Sin í an fhadhb atá ann.

Bhí an Teachta Aindrias Moynihan ag labhairt faoi na bailte seirbhíse. Tá Leitir Ceanainn creidiúnaithe mar an chéad baile seirbhíse sa tír. Letterkenny has accreditation as the first baile seirbhíse in the country. An bhfuil aon seans acmhainní nó seirbhísí a bhogadh ar aghaidh ar son na teanga sa stáisiún sa bhaile sin, Leitir Ceanainn i nDún na nGall? Tá a fhios ag na daoine uilig agus na gardaí uilig atá aithne agamsa orthu sa Gharda ansin, dá mbeadh deis ag an stáisiún sin an tseirbhís a fháil, a spreagadh agus a chur i bhfeidhm sa cheantar sin, bheadh sin iontach dearfach. Letterkenny is a Gaeltacht service town so is there a chance to put some sort of services or scheme together there to enhance and promote the language as part of that language plan?

Mr. Drew Harris: I will address the last point on Letterkenny first. The chief superintendent for that area in Donegal has informed me that she has discussed the matter with her other business partners, including Tusla and the local authority, and that they are working together to put dedicated teams in place to provide a service in Irish. A divisional officer who is a fluent Irish speaker was recently appointed as a new member of staff and we are encouraging that person to be one of the front-facing members for the provision of policing services in Letterkenny. We are also going to draw together a cohort of our other personnel to ensure that a service can be provided in Letterkenny through the medium of Irish. That has all been in response to Letterkenny becoming a Gaeltacht service town, as announced last August. The divisional officer and her staff have been at the forefront in making sure An Garda Síochána is responding effectively to that.

I will turn to Mr. Mulligan to assist me on the issue of training. There is a budget and there is support for training. There is a desire within the organisation for people to be fluent and we want to support them in those terms. I ask Mr. Mulligan to outline all the training provisions we have put in place.

Mr. Alan Mulligan: Members are probably aware that all Garda trainees in the training college undergo Irish training, particularly to equip them to deal with operational and traffic issues, as well as making arrests etc. That is done, it is part of the degree programme and it has to be passed.

One of the things we homed in on is that, as the Commissioner mentioned earlier, we were disappointed with the results and the numbers we got in over the last five to six years under the Irish stream of the competition we run with the Public Appointments Service. To put that into perspective for members, we have brought in and attested 3,000 new gardaí in that period and we have only got 55 trainees in the Irish language stream. The numbers applying have been

disappointing. For example, the last time we ran the competition in 2019 we got 132 applications to the Irish language stream. We will be running a competition later this year and we are talking to our partners in the Public Appointments Service to see if there are reasons for this and why is it happening. My understanding from talking to the Public Appointments Service is that it has had those issues with other competitions as well. One of the things that was mentioned is that there is a huge demand for many of the people who have good language skills so we are competing for that in the marketplace.

We will look at it again and as the Commissioner said, we will particularly target the new Garda Reserve competition when we run it. We have done a lot of research on that and the Garda Reserve is a good way to get to the hard-to-get communities. We will also advertise that differently. While we will announce nationally, rather than just having a national competition, we will recruit locally and we will go into the communities themselves. I hope there will be a lot of interest from people. There is a great tradition of volunteerism in Ireland. We hope that when we target Gaeltacht areas we will get a big interest. That will be a first and an important step.

On training, if we are not getting trainees in we have to look at what else we can do. One of the areas we have targeted is that of our governance structures because we have an opportunity coming out of Covid to tackle this and to get it moving as we go forward. One of the things we have done is we have asked and paid Gaelchultúr to devise courses for us, which it is doing. The first step will be to bring our people who are at level 2 up to level 3. We have also asked that when we achieve that we will bring them from level 3 up to level 4. Those courses will be online. We are working with the Garda College on it to make it easier for our people to do the courses. It will be a combination of people doing it online and other situations we will design in which we bring people together. For the last two years, one of the most popular initiatives we had on Irish were Gaeltacht trips. We used to have three or four every year and they were always very popular and oversubscribed. We went to Gaeltacht areas in Waterford, Kerry and Donegal. Last year and so far this year, because of Covid we have not been able to do that, unfortunately, but we intend on getting that out again.

We are devising a new strategy as well. As I said, this is a chance for us to start again and to try to get these numbers up, particularly in areas such as Donegal and in parts of Mayo, to make sure we can provide those services in Irish. Between governance, recruitment, the training programmes and some of the other initiatives the Commissioner mentioned, it is an opportunity for a fresh start. We are determined to do what we need to do.

The allowance was mentioned earlier. This was done away with in 2012 after the downturn in the economy when different allowances across different sectors, including An Garda Síochána, were looked at. It used to be 7.5% of salary but that is no longer there for anybody new. Our officers who already had it did not lose it but any new gardaí we have put in do not get that allowance.

Mr. Drew Harris: On the allowance, it is hard to determine how successful that was because our position has not significantly changed since we have been without it. I have been asked about specific figures, etc. We need to be ambitious and not think about just the Gaeltacht areas when we are thinking about proficiency. There is more we can do around technology and even communication. We have all become proficient with Zoom and dealing with things over the telephone. We have had a large investment in technology so there are alternative means by which we can also provide services in Irish and we need to explore that.

In terms of chairing the overall governance of this, it will make a difference in the prioritisation of where resources go in the organisation. This will require investment. Some of that investment is in respect of the training and assistance we provide to each other. We always have a large requirement and great demand for training. We must make sure this does not get muscled out by the many other demands on training, particularly at this time as we come out of Covid. We have had a period when much of our normal training has not happened, which will create a particular tail. My involvement is to ensure this area remains an important one.

Referring back to one of the other points made, I think there is a desire in the organisation for this. From my point of view, I often speak in public. It is a matter of courtesy, and to save myself some embarrassment, that I can at least top and tail my graduation and passing-out speeches with some Irish. I was engaged in one-to-one tuition but Covid brought that to an end. I think there is a strong recognition of the central importance of it in terms of public confidence in the organisation and the diversity of the service we must provide.

Senator Lorraine Clifford-Lee: Tá cúpla ceist agam anois. B'fhéidir go mbeidh an t-am agam chun teacht isteach arís ag an deireadh. I dtús báire tá ceist agam maidir le cúrsaí earcaíochta. An bhfuil gá ann earcaíocht de níos mó ná 20% nó 30% a dhéanamh ar feadh tréimhse chúig bliana chun líon na ndaoine le Gaeilge mhaith acu a mhéadú sa Gharda? Faoi mar a dúirt mo chomhghleacaí, an Teachta Moynihan, táimid ag díriú ar na ceantair Ghaeltachta, ach tá lucht labhartha na Gaeltachta scaipthe ar fud na tíre. Tá gá ann seirbhísí a chur ar fáil do lucht labhartha na Gaeilge taobh amuigh de na ceantair Ghaeltachta.

Luadh an sruth Gaeilge atá ar siúl sa Gharda faoi láthair. Dúradh go mbeidh feachtas ar siúl an bhliain seo chugainn maidir leis an sruth sin. An bhfuil An Garda Síochána ag dul isteach go dtí na gaelcholáistí atá scaipthe ar fud na tíre chun an feachtas sin a chur in iúl dóibh? Tá gá ann le seo. Tá daoine ann le hardchaighdeán Gaeilge taobh amuigh de na ceantair Ghaeltachta, mar shampla anseo i mBaile Átha Cliath. I mo dháilcheantar féin, tá daoine ann. An bhfuil plean ann chun dul isteach ann? Muna bhfuil plean ann, tá gá ann le plean.

Tá cúpla ceist eile agam ach fágfaidh mé iad go dtí deireadh an bhabhta. Tá sé náireach go bhfuilimid anseo, i ndáiríre. Níl feabhas ag teacht ar an scéal. Níl tionchar ag na hiarrachtaí atá sna cáipéisí sin. Níl aon tionchar ann mar níl an scéal ag feabhsú agus is cúis náire í sin.

Chairman: Is féidir leat do cheisteanna a chur anois, más mian leat.

Senator Lorraine Clifford-Lee: Fágfaidh mé iad go dtí go bhfuil na freagraí tugtha.

Deputy Aindrias Moynihan: Gabhaim buíochas as na freagraí atá tugtha. Teastaíonn uaim díriú isteach arís ar an liúntas, mar n'fheadar an bhfuil míthuiscint ann nó pé scéal é. Bhí liúntas ar fáil - tá sé fós ag daoine atá tar éis fanacht sa Ghaeltacht, ach níl sé ag daoine nua. Nuair a aistríonn na daoine sin ó Ghaeltacht go Gaeltacht is féidir leo an liúntas sin a thabhairt leo má théann siad go dtí cuid de na Gaeltachtaí. Mura bhfuil an cheanncheathrú laistigh den Ghaeltacht, tuigtear nach féidir an liúntas a thabhairt leo. Cur i gcás, i gceantar Mhúscraí, más rud é go bhfuil duine ag aistriú isteach sa dúthaigh agus an liúntas acu cheana féin, caithfidh sé nó sí é a scaoileadh. An dóigh leis an gCoimisinéir go bhfuil a leithéid ag cur bac ar Ghaeilgeoirí cáilithe freastal ar, nó aistriú isteach chuig, na ceantair Ghaeltachta cosúil le ceantar Mhúscraí? Tá cúpla Gaeltacht eile ann go bhfuil rudaí mar sin iontu. Tá an tslí inar leagadh amach ceantair An Gharda Síochána go huile is go hiomlán faoi cheannas ag an nGarda. Is féidir leis An Garda Síochána féin feabhas a chur ar an scéal sin. Iarraim ar na finnétithe mé a cheartú má tá botún á dhéanamh agam, ach sin an tuiscint atá agam. Teastaíonn soiléiriú uaim

maidir leis an bpointe faoin liúntas, go háirithe.

Léiríonn na figiúirí - 55 duine le Gaeilge, as 3,000 san iomlán, tagtha isteach - go bhfuil rudaí fós ag tosnú, sé bliana níos déanaí. Damn it lads, ba cheart go mbeadh iarracht éigin déanta roimhe seo. Bhí an Coimisinéir Teanga sa tóir ar an bhfórsa ar feadh an tréimhse sin agus ag lorg feabhas. Tá go maith. Tá rudaí ag teacht chun cinn anois ach surely níor chóir go thógadh sé an Coimisinéir Teanga ag cur tuairisc os comhair an Oireachtais chun rudaí a spreagadh. Cad a spreag ar deireadh é? Is maith an rud é go bhfuil feabhas ann ach caitheann a mbeifear ag súil le torthaí ó na figiúirí sin? An mbeidh spriocanna níos airde ann i gcomhair catch-up a dhéanamh nó cén cur chuige a mbeidh ag An Garda Síochána? Tá tuairim an-dearfach ag an Seanadóir Clifford-Lee mar gheall ar na scoileanna. Caithfear féachaint ar shlite difriúla chun dul i ngleic leis. Pé moltaí atá ann, bheinn buíoch iad a chloisteáil.

Deputy Catherine Connolly: Tá sé deacair uaireanta gan frustrachas a bheith orm. Bhí tréimhse deich mbliana i gceist agus ní fear radacach é an Coimisinéir Teanga. Is fear stuama réasúnta é. I ndeireadh na dála, ghlac sé an chéim dheireanach, an chéim a bhí fágtha aige. Anois, tá sé orainne mar Theachtaí rud a dhéanamh. Is maith an rud é go bhfuil na finnétithe anseo agus d'éist mé go cúramach leo. Faraor, caithfidh mé imeacht roimh dheireadh an chruinnithe. Níl níos mó eolais agam faoi na figiúirí. Bheinn buíoch de Choimisinéir an Gharda más féidir leis teacht ar ais chuig an gcoiste agus léiriú go sonrach i litir cén moltaí, as an gcúig moladh, atá curtha chun cinn. Ní raibh ann ach cúig cinn. Níor fhreagair sé an cheist - cén fáth nár chomhlíonadh na moltaí? Cén uair a bheidh na moltaí comhlíonta? Cad iad na bearta atá beartaithe ag An nGarda Síochána chun na moltaí a chur i bhfeidhm? Téann na ceisteanna ar aghaidh mar sin.

Beidh cruinniú againn an tseachtain seo chugainn. Ceapaim go mbeidh tuarascáil á réiteach ag an gcoiste ó thaobh an ábhair seo agus cuirfear os comhair na Dála é. Tá mise den tuairim go bhfuil gá práinneach le díospóireacht sa Seomra seo ag leibhéal na Dála ina iomláine.

Labhair an Coimisinéir faoin Garda Reserve. Tá dualgas dlíthiúil ar An nGarda Síochána Gaeilge a chur chun cinn agus tá an dlí á shárú aige. Dá mbeadh an dlí á shárú agamsa, bheinn ag impí ar an nGarda deis a thabhairt dom, mar a dhéanann gnáthdhaoine i gcónaí, le go gceartóinn mo chuid iompair. Tá deis faighte ag an gCoimisinéir. Níl sé ina phost le deich mbliana ach tá sé ann le cúpla bliain. Cad atá á dhéanamh aige chun an dlí agus na dualgais atá air agus ar An nGarda Síochána a chomhlíonadh? Tá an-mheas agam ar an nGarda agus ceapaim go ndéanann siad an-obair. Ní gá dom é sin a rá, ach níl muinín agam go dtuigeann an Coimisinéir an tábhacht a bhaineann leis an nGaeilge ó thaobh an Gharda de agus ó thaobh seirbhísí Gaeilge a chur ar fáil timpeall na tíre, ach go háirithe sna Gaeltachtaí.

Luaigh an Coimisinéir go raibh sé ag foghlaim na Gaeilge ach ansin tháinig Covid. B'fhéidir go raibh míthuiscint ann faoi sin. Ar lámh amháin dúirt sé gur deis é Covid mar gheall ar Zoom agus chuile rud so is féidir leis féin Zoom a úsáid chun an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim. Is gá sampla ón mbarr anonn a chur in iúl. Níl sé sásúil a rá go bhfuil ar na gardaí óga i Templemore an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim agus na daoine ar an leibhéal is airde a bheith gan Gaeilge. Tá sé tábhachtach ceannaireacht a chur in iúl ón mbun agus ón mbarr anonn.

Tá mo dhóthain ráite agam. Ba mhaith liom a bheith ag dul amach le níos mó muiníne. Tá súil agam gurb é seo an chéad chéim agus go mbeidh na finnétithe ar ais os ár gcomhair laistigh de shé mhí nó bliain ag rá go bhfuil na moltaí uilig comhlíonta agus go bhfuil straitéis agus plean dearfach acu le céimeanna áirid agus spriocanna ama.

Mr. Drew Harris: I recognise the frustration of the Coimisinéir Teanga with An Garda Síochána and the progress that has been made over the last ten years. We can supply the answers we provided since I wrote to the commissioner on 20 November, which set out our specific responses. Rather than going through each of those answers in turn we will provide them. They can be provided very quickly.

Deputy Catherine Connolly: Tá an comhfhreagras uilig agam agus tá sé léite agam. Ní sin a bhí i gceist agam. In ainneoin an chomhfhreagrais uilig, rinne an Coimisinéir Teanga cinneadh an tuarascáil a chur os comhair Tithe an Oireachtais. Sin é an fáth go bhfuil an cruinniú seo againn inniu. Níl an comhfhreagras ag teastáil. An rud atá ag teastáil uaim ná na bearta atá beartaithe ag an nGarda.

Mr. Drew Harris: I recognise that a lot of reliance is placed on the stream of recruitment providing sufficient members to service the needs of the Gaeltacht and wider Irish society. That has not happened so while that policy can continue, it gives us very limited numbers. We have to then look within the organisation and at those who would wish either to learn or relearn the Irish language.

I agree entirely about the importance of practical leadership being demonstrated by those in senior positions in the organisation. That is why I referred specifically to myself. I have no Irish language skills but I felt I should learn some due to a sense of good manners and respect for my audience, as well as to save my own embarrassment as I could at least open and close events in Irish. Covid interrupted that learning but I will re-engage with it.

Deputy Joe McHugh: Gleann Cholm Chille is a very good place if the Commissioner is looking to learn, or even Downings for that matter.

Senator Lorraine Clifford-Lee: Téigh go dtí An Rinn.

Chairman: Tá Baile Átha Cliath chomh maith céanna

Senator Niall Ó Donnghaile: Agus Béal Feirste.

Mr. Drew Harris: We need a new approach to this because what we have done over the last eight to ten years has not moved the situation on. I do not know that the situation has deteriorated but what we have done has not actually found sufficient traction to move the matter on.

Other police services have had more success than ourselves and we are looking at what has happened in those. We can draw some examples from how they have improved their services in a second language and we intend to do that. We can come back quickly then with the overall plan and I will be responsible for its governance. I give that undertaking to the committee.

In respect of the hiring process, we had 10% set aside for an Irish language stream and there were advantages involved for those individuals. They gave a commitment that they would serve for a period of time in the Gaeltacht but the advantage for them was that they would be, in effect, fast-tracked and would gain admittance to the organisation more quickly. Last year we swore in 600 Garda members, of whom only three had level 4 proficiency in Irish. If we were anywhere near that 10% target it would just take an administrative decision and a stroke of the pen to increase it to 15% or 20% but we are not actually in that position. That is regretted. I do not think we will be in that position but if we got to it then we would obviously look at it afresh. Given the requirement on us to provide a bilingual service, we would look very favourably on increasing that target from 10%.

We are looking towards how to address our recruitment campaign for next year. As I said, we are recruiting both full-time members and Garda reserves. I ask Mr. Mulligan to set out some of the specific actions we hope to take to have better outreach for our recruitment.

Mr. Alan Mulligan: We have already done a good piece of work in the last six or seven months with hard-to-reach groups in preparing for recruitment and how to overcome the barriers to that. We will deal with the Coimisinéir Teanga regarding the Garda Reserve, for example. Senator Clifford-Lee mentioned going into the Gaelcholáistí, which is a very good idea, although I assume it would have come up. I thank her for that suggestion and we will take it on board. She is right that we need to engage with them. We already engage with career guidance teachers at second level and college level and have done so for our next competition. We have a relationship with them. To be clear, the Public Appointments Service runs these competitions for us. As members are aware, that service is responsible for recruiting public servants across the public sector. It is very professional in what it does and would engage in a lot of these issues. We would support that as we move forward.

We are now going to take a number of different actions. Communication is a huge part of this. That is the first thing that struck us from the research we have done to date. The bottom line on recruitment is that we need to concentrate more. Rather than running a national competition, we need to start going to the communities and that would include Gaeltacht areas as well. We need to start doing that and that is one thing we will definitely do. We are drawing up a communication plan at the moment with our press office and that will be part of the campaign as we go forward. We will probably have the main garda trainee competition first and it should be advertised around the end of October. We will then follow very quickly with an advertisement for the Garda Reserve. We are preparing at the moment to do things a little differently. For the reserve recruitment, rather than everybody doing a competition in Dublin or a national competition we are going to go down to the areas themselves. We are in discussions with the Public Appointments Service at the moment because we are not sure whether we will do that on a regional basis, for the four operational regions in An Garda Síochána, or whether we will go down to divisional level. I imagine that if we want to target areas such as the Gaeltacht, we will have to go down to divisional level and go into those areas when we are recruiting. They are some of the things we are looking at.

Mr. Drew Harris: In respect of the allowances, the allowance finished in 2012 in terms of new applications, so a dwindling number of people are receiving the allowance. Deputy Moynihan asked specific questions about the administration of that allowance and I do not have the detail on that in terms of what happens for an individual who moves from a Gaeltacht area. We are going through a restructuring, in which the district structure we have had for decades is being replaced by a divisional structure, so we will have to have a look at the impact of that because people may be moving within a division.

I do not know the answer in respect of how the allowance is administered in respect of people moving. It might be better for us to give Deputy Moynihan a written response because it will be bound by regulation.

Deputy Aindrias Moynihan: Táim sásta leis seo. Ní gá go mbeadh an t-eolas ar bharr na teanga ag gach aon duine. Más maith leis litir a sheoladh ar aghaidh leis an tuairisc sin, bheadh an-suim agam ann.

Ms Eimear Ní Cheallaigh: Níl an t-eolas sin agam ach an oiread ach ó thaobh na stáisiúin seirbhíse Ghaeltachta de, tá liosta curtha le chéile d'os cionn 60 stáisiún. Cosúil leis na bailte

seirbhíse Ghaeltachta atá ann anois, tá stáisiúin sheirbhíse Ghaeltachta, mar shampla, Leitir Ceanainn.

Mar a dúirt an Coimisinéir ansin, tá rudaí ag athrú ó thaobh an struchtúir de. Ach tá muidne ag breathnú ar na stáisiúin seo agus tá súil againn go mbeidh cohórt má bhíonn na huimhreacha ann. Is í an deacracht atá againn ná na huimhreacha agus nach bhfuil siad ann. Beimid ag breathnú ar na stáisiúin sin chomh maith agus ag iarraidh cohórt chainteoirí Gaeilge a bheith sna stáisiúin sin. Táimid ag féachaint ar na rudaí seo ar fad agus ag breathnú síos an bóthar agus ag iarraidh na fadhbanna seo ar fad a réiteach.

Deputy Pa Daly: Tá ceist ghairid agam ar Alan Mulligan. Bhí sé ag caint mar gheall ar chúrsaí i nGaeilge. An bhfuil a fhios aige cé mhéad garda a rinne na cúrsaí an bhliain seo caite nó in 2019?

An bhfuil an Coimisinéir in ann gealltanas a thabhairt dúinn? Is líon an-bheag é 80 as 14,000 garda a bhfuil ardchumas acu sa teanga. An mbeadh buntáiste ag baint leis do na daoine atá ag iarraidh poist a fháil sa Ghaeltacht? Bhíomar go léir anseo le haghaidh Acht na Gaeilge agus táimid go léir ag iarraidh spriocdhátaí a fháil don chomhlacht poiblí go ginearálta.

An bhfuil an Coimisinéir in ann spriocdháta le haghaidh garda le Gaeilge a bheith i ngach stáisiún sa Ghaeltacht a thabhairt dúinn? Is iad 2025 nó 2030 na spriocdhátaí eile. If we do not set a deadline we will not get there. An bhfuil an Coimisinéir in ann spriocdháta a thabhairt mar gheall ar an rud chomh bunúsach le go mbeadh gach garda in ann Gaeilge a labhairt sna stáisiúin sa Ghaeltacht?

Nuair a bheidh sibh ag recruiting na saoránaigh ar an teileafón agus na sibhialtaigh, go mór mór i gCiarraí theas agus in iarthar Chiarraí, ba cheart go mbeadh ardchumas sa teanga ag gardaí mar, go minic, cuirtear an glaoch sin isteach go dtí Cill Airne, Cill Orglan nó Trá Lí. An bhfuil aon phlean ag An nGarda Síochána le haghaidh na mbailte sin ionas go mbeidh daoine i ngach unit in ann Gaolainn a labhairt? Ní bhfuair mé aon fhreagra ar an gceist sin.

Senator Niall Ó Donnghaile: Ar dtús báire, gabhaim mo leithscéal leis an gCoimisinéir agus leis an gCathaoirleach. Bhí orm seasamh amach ón ggeruinniú ar feadh tamaill ansin. Má tá an cheist seo curtha ag comhghleacaí eile, is féidir leis an gCathaoirleach mise a stiúradh chuig an taifead. Ní miste liom amharc siar air sin.

Cuirim fáilte roimh an gCoimisinéir Harris, ar dtús báire. Ba mhaith liom díriú isteach ar an gceist arís faoin riachtanas Gaeilge fá choinne na ngardaí. Mar is eol dó, roimh 2005, bhí Gaeilge riachtanach le bheith i do gharda. Ní raibh gach garda líofa ach bhí na rudaí bunúsacha ag gach garda, ar a laghad. Ghlac Rialtas Fhianna Fáil, ina raibh an Teachta Éamon Ó Cuív mar Aire na Gaeltachta ag an am, cinneadh fáil réidh leis an riachtanas seo, in ainneoin go ndúirt Sinn Féin, an Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors, AGSI, agus cuid mhaith daoine eile ag an am go dtarlódh na fadhbanna atá tar éis tarlú. Ba mhaith liom an méid a bhí le rá ag an tAire Dlí agus Cirt, Comhionannais agus Athchóirithe Dlí ag an am, an Seanadóir McDowell, faoin gelár oiliúna do ghardaí a bhí á chur le chéile aige leis an Aire ag an am, an Teachta Ó Cuív, a lua:

Some people have expressed concern that these changes will be damaging to the Irish language. On this point, I want to make my position clear. Our native Irish language will continue to have an important place in An Garda Síochána. All Garda recruits will be required to achieve an appropriate standard in Irish before becoming full members of the

force, and basic training in Irish will be given to recruits who have no qualification in the language.

An aontaíonn an Coimisinéir Harris go raibh an cinneadh seo, mar a dúirt an Seanadóir McDowell, “damaging to the Irish language” agus gur theip go hiomlán ar an sprioc sin go mbeadh caighdeán cuí ag gach garda sa Ghaeilge? Ar chóir an riachtanas Gaeilge a thabhairt ar ais chun an bhfadhb seo a réiteach?

Bhí mé ag éisteacht le comhghleacaithe ón nGaeltacht agus iad ag caint ag an gcruinniú seo agus cruinnithe eile. Ba mhaith liom ceist dhíreach a chur ar an gCoimisinéir. Ó thaobh a bheith ag póilíníú leis an bpobal de, nach síleann sé go hiomlán doghlactha go bhfuil gardaí ann atá ag feidhmiú agus ag obair sa Ghaeltacht nach bhfuil Gaeilge acu, mar bhunphrionsabal den chóras póilíneachta agus gur cheart aithint go bhfuil air sin athrú agus athrú go tapa?

Senator Lorraine Clifford-Lee: Tá cúpla ceist eile agam maidir leis an earcaíocht. Is teip iomlán é an sruth Gaeilge dar leis na figiúirí a thug an Coimisinéir dúinn. As 600 garda níl ach triúir ag teacht amach ón Teampall Mór a bhfuil Gaeilge acu. Is teip iomlán é. An bhfuil náire ar an gCoimisinéir maidir leis na figiúirí sin?

Conas is féidir fios a bheith ag an bpobal go bhfuil Gaeilge ag garda áirithe? An bhfuil an fáinne á chaitheamh aige nó aici? An bhfuil badge faoi leith ann? An bhfuil aon phlean ann i gcomhair badge de shaghas éigin a dhéanamh chun na scileanna teanga atá ag an ngarda a chur in iúl don phobal?

An raibh an Coimisinéir riamh i dteagmháil le hAontas na Mac Léinn in Éirinn nó Conradh na Gaeilge maidir leis na féidearthachtaí atá ann sa Gharda? Bíonn siad i dteagmháil le neart mac léinn agus daltaí scoile timpeall na tíre chun iad a mhealladh an saol a chaitheamh trí Ghaeilge agus post a fháil le Gaeilge. An raibh an Coimisinéir riamh i dteagmháil nó an bhfuil plean aige chun dul i dteagmháil leis na heagraíochtaí sin? Tá a lán eagraíochtaí eile ann seachas na cinn sin. Tá cúpla ceann breise ann.

Mr. Drew Harris: There was quite a bit in that. We could certainly look at target dates. I recognise that a target date and an effective deadline concentrates the mind but a lot of this is wrapped up with the low numbers of those who are proficient in Irish joining the organisation. We will obviously carry on with that. More has been suggested to us with regard to outreach. We will take that on. Our competitions are run through the Public Appointments Service. There are typically between 5,000 and 7,000 applicants to become sworn members of An Garda Síochána. There is good deal of interest in becoming a member of An Garda Síochána among young people. If we wish to expand that further, we will. I do not have specific information regarding the Union of Students in Ireland. Is Mr. Mulligan aware of that?

Mr. Alan Mulligan: It is one of the things we have targeted in connection with the Garda Reserve.

Senator Lorraine Clifford-Lee: Gabh mo leithscéal ach caithfidh An Garda Síochána dul i ngleic leis an bhfadhb sin. Caithfear na deiseanna a chur in iúl do dhaltaí agus daoine le caighdeán áirithe Gaeilge a mhealladh isteach. Theip ar an nGarda go hiomlán maidir leis an riachtanas agus maidir leis na dualgais atá aige. Níl siad á gcomhlíonadh. Caithfidh sé a bheith cruthaitheach. Níl sé inghlactha an córas earcaíochta sin a chur ar leataobh. Caithfidh an Garda oibriú leis an gcóras sin chun daoine breise a mhealladh isteach. Níl na rudaí atá á ndéanamh faoi láthair ag obair. Tá sórt frustrachais orm agus mé ag éisteacht leis na figiúirí. Níl sé ingh-

lactha a thuilleadh. Níl sé ag obair.

Mr. Drew Harris: I accept that the organisational initiative to set aside 10% has not worked. That is why we wish to revisit our approach, as I have said. We will do that. We also have to look to the skills that lie within the organisation. I thank the Senator for her suggestions as to how we might do that. We will take those forward.

As to the way in which a member of the community would know whether a member of An Garda Síochána is competent in Irish, the fáinne is the only emblem outside of our uniform emblems that a member of An Garda Síochána may wear. We allow both the silver fáinne and the gold fáinne and we are having specific badges designed to show that members are in the process of learning Irish. These are the only emblems allowed outside of the normal uniform commitment.

There are possibilities for us overall with regard to recruitment. It is not only about members, but also staff. I take the point that was made in respect of members of Garda staff who are working on our front desks and answering our phones and their competency in the language. That is obviously another important point. Again, there is a technological answer to this issue. Although a phone call may at the moment be transferred to Tralee, it could be transferred further to a specific Irish language speaker who could then deal with the individual and input into our systems appropriately. I would suggest there is a technical fix to that issue. We need to be innovative in responding to that.

In comparison to the situation in respect of how we test people now to that in 2011 or even in the 2000s, the test we now apply, this level 4, undoubtedly represents a more stringent standard. This level indicates a far more fluent and competent speaker of Irish, one who can engage in everyday business and professional policing business in an entirely acceptable manner with regard to the service we provide. I may ask Mr. Mulligan or Assistant Commissioner McMahon to comment on the training provided to students in Templemore.

Mr. Alan Mulligan: With regard to the training in Irish which students get, everybody has to pass Irish as part of the degree course. A lot of the training relates to practical matters such as dealing with road traffic, arrests and so on. We have full-time Irish teachers who work with the students. Feedback from the college suggests that those students who go to areas in which they are not using Irish find it harder to keep their skills. That is one of the new challenges we have to look at in the new strategy we are drawing up at the moment.

To come back to another point, it is important to state that we are one of the few public sector organisations that sets aside 10% of positions for people with Irish. We and the Public Appointments Service advertise this. We make sure it is advertised right across the country in both Gaeltacht areas and all other areas. Nobody is more disappointed than ourselves by the response we have had but that is the response. As I said earlier, we have attested 3,000 new Garda members since 2014. We would have thought that, with a fair wind, that would have given us 300 people through the Irish stream but the reality is that we got 55. I already gave some statistics as to the number of applications we got and I can certainly send in others going back through each competition over the years if the committee wishes. This outcome was not, however, the result of any lack of trying to make sure that people in those communities knew about the competition, that 10% of jobs were to be allocated to an Irish stream and that such applications would be fast-tracked. As I have said, nobody was more disappointed than ourselves. When we set out at the time, we really did expect a bigger response but that is the fact of the situation as it is.

Ms Eimear Ní Cheallaigh: Ar an bpointe faoi na figiúirí, is í sin an fhadhb is mó atá againn. Níl na daoine le Gaeilge againn. Rinne muid iniúchadh ar na figiúirí sin a bhí againn agus tá thart ar 240 comhalta san eagraíocht le Gaeilge líofa. Is é sin an méid a tháinig ar ais le rá go bhfuil Gaeilge líofa acu. Maidir leis an bpainéal inniúlachta Gaeilge atá againn faoi láthair, is painéal é sin a chuir muid le chéile le fáil amach cé hiad na daoine a raibh suim acu aistriú go stáisiún Gaeltachta. Cuireann muid amach fógra ar an tairseach dhá uair in aghaidh na bliana chun ceist a chur ar na comhaltaí ar mhaith leo an measúnú a dhéanamh le bheith ar an liosta seo. Chuir muid an fógra sin amach mí ó shin agus níor tháinig ach duine amháin ar ais le rá go bhfuil siad ag iarraidh an measúnú a dhéanamh agus a bheith ar an liosta chun a bheith ar dualgas i stáisiún Gaeltachta. Is í sin an fhadhb is mó atá againn agus is í sin an fáth go bhfuil muid ag breathnú ar oiliúint.

Rinne muid na cúrsaí Gaeltachta ansin ó 2011. Cuireadh ceist faoi na figiúirí. Tá os cionn 400 comhalta agus ball foirne tar éis na cúrsaí sin a dhéanamh ó 2011. Bíonn suas le 60 duine ar na cúrsaí sin. Tá an-mholadh faighte ó na comhaltaí maidir leis na cúrsaí sin. Bhí siad ar bun ar fud na tíre, i nDún na nGall, ar an gCeathrú Rua, i bPort Láirge agus ar fud na háite. Is rud é sin a rinne muid ó 2011 nuair a d'fhág Gaeleagras. Is cúrsaí gearra iad sin agus tuigfidimid é sin. Is é sin an fáth go bhfuilimid anois ag breathnú ar chúrsaí ar líne le Gaelchultúr. Tá siad sin á bhforbairt faoi láthair. Is cúrsaí ar líne a bheidh ansin mar gheall ar na deacrachtaí a bhíonn ag gardaí ó thaobh sealobaire agus ragoibire agus ó thaobh na ndualgas ar fad atá orthu. Mar gheall air sin, beidh cúrsaí ar líne againn. Mar gheall go bhfuilimid ag iarraidh go mbeidh an idirghníomhaíocht sin ann freisin, táimid ag breathnú isteach ar chúrsaí lae timpeall ar na cúrsaí sin ar líne i gColáiste na nGardaí. Is iad sin na cúrsaí ar fad. Arís, tagann sé síos go dtí na figiúirí.

Deputy Pa Daly: Cé mhéad duine a bhí á lorg nuair nach raibh suim ach ag garda amháin dul ar ais go dtí an Ghaeltacht?

Ms Eimear Ní Cheallaigh: Is painéal inniúlachta Gaeilge an painéal atá againn. Tá fadhb againn leis. Beidh Alan Mulligan in ann níos mó a rá faoi sin. Tá liosta ann ar a bhfuil, b'fhéidir, 20 comhalta taobh istigh den eagraíocht atá toilteanach bogadh go dtí stáisiún Gaeltachta.

Deputy Pa Daly: An bhfuil sé sin sa tír ina iomlán?

Ms Eimear Ní Cheallaigh: Tá, tá siad ar fud na tíre. Is í an fhadhb leis sin ná go bhfuil siad ar fad ag iarraidh dul go dtí stáisiún ina bhfuil cainteoirí Gaeilge ann cheana féin.

Deputy Pa Daly: An bhfuil tuairim ag An nGarda Síochána maidir le traenáil nó cúrsa a thabhairt do dhaoine? Nuair a chaith mé seacht mbliana nó mar sin ag obair sa Bridewell, bhí a lán gardaí i ngach stáisiún ó Chiarraí agus bhí leath díobh ag iarraidh dul ar ais go Chiarraí. Táim cinnte go mbeadh scuaine níos faide ná mar a raibh i bPenneys an tseachtain seo caite dá mbeadh seans acu dul ar ais, agus dá dtabharfá seans dóibh cúrsa a dhéanamh chun a gcuid Gaeilge a fheabhsú. Chuala mé go raibh buntáiste ag na gardaí a bhí i gCiarraí cheana féin agus go dtéann bainistíocht an Gharda chucu siúd ar dtús sula ndéanfar aon tairiscint do na gardaí atá lasmuigh de cheantar Gharda Chiarraí cheana féin. An bhfuil sé sin fíor?

Ms Eimear Ní Cheallaigh: Tá go leor ceisteanna ag baint leis seo. Ní féidir le garda, díreach mar a bhí á rá ag Alan Mulligan, bogadh ar ais go dtí an ceantar arbh as iad. Is dócha go bhfuil go leor daoine ón nGaeltacht i gCiarraí nó i gConamara ag iarraidh bogadh ar ais go dtí na ceantair sin ach tá impleachtaí aige sin ar chúrsaí póilíneachta.

Deputy Pa Daly: An bhfuil an Garda chun cúrsa-----

Ms Eimear Ní Cheallaigh: Tá ná cúrsaí ar líne á bhforbairt faoi láthair. Táimid ag tosú amach ar leibhéal 2 agus ansin bogaimid ar aghaidh go dtí leibhéal 3.

Deputy Pa Daly: An gceapann Eimear Ní Cheallaigh nach bhfuil a lán muiníne ag na gardaí sin chun dul ar ais ach dá dtabharfaí cúrsa dóibh go mbeadh meon aigne difriúil acu?

Chairman: Rachaimid go dtí Alan Mulligan anois.

Mr. Alan Mulligan: The Deputy is right when he says that Kerry is very popular. There is a queue. Many people do not necessarily want to go to a Gaeltacht area. Having said that, I can assure the Deputy that with regard to the panel of people who have done the assessment and attained the level 4 standard, we do not have a problem with Kerry or Galway. In some other areas, we do not have the numbers we want. I mentioned Donegal earlier as one of those.

The organisation would be well aware that there is an assessment in Irish for people want to get on to that panel. A previous one was done by the college, but it was not as stringent as this one. We changed it and adapted it to European levels based on the advice we received from An Coimisinéir Teanga.

This gives me an opportunity to speak on the numbers. There have been improvements. If I recall correctly, An Coimisinéir Teanga said we have 37% who are fluent in Irish. It is down from 42%, but that is not counting like with like because the earlier figure was under the old testing regime which was not as stringent. If we applied that testing regime now we would be up to 52% because we have increased by 11 or 12 points on that. However, as I said, the new testing regime which we have now is more stringent and fit for purpose, to be honest.

The opportunity is there. The missing piece, which we mentioned earlier, is the work we will be doing with Gaelchultúr on a course which will enable our police officers and our Garda staff who wish to transfer to these areas to avail of an opportunity to bring their Irish up to the requisite standard. The advantage of what we are having done at the moment is that they will not have to go to classrooms. Many of them could be living in rural areas or other areas where it is more difficult to do that. This will be online. The Garda College will facilitate that. There will be an opportunity to do that. The point made by the Deputy is very good. When we have the Gaelchultúr courses online, they will give a better opportunity to people who might wish to go. Hopefully, some of them will look to the north west, to the Donegal area, and we will facilitate that.

Chairman: Glaoim ar an Teachta Ó Muineacháin, an Seanadóir Clifford-Lee ansin, agus ansin mé féin.

Deputy Aindrias Moynihan: Is amhlaidh go bhfuil an cheist seo ag teacht ó pháosa eolais a luaigh Alan Mulligan cheana. Dúirt sé go bhfuil thart ar 250 chomhalta cáilithe ar an gcéad agus an dara leibhéal is airde. Ina measc siúd tá an 55 comhalta nua ann. An bhfuil aon bhaol ann go bhfuil an chuid eile díobh ar tí éirí as? An bhfuil siad scaipthe i measc na n-aoiseanna agus trí na blianta? An mbeidh fadhb eile ag teacht go luath? An bhféadfaí aon saghas próifíl a thabhairt ar cén saghas aois atá i gceist leis an 250 sin? An dtiocfaidh fadhb eile chun cinn mura mbeifear in ann breith suas leis an líon sin?

Ms Eimear Ní Cheallaigh: Níl an t-eolas nó na figiúirí sin agam faoi láthair ach bheimis in ann breathnú air sin agus teacht ar ais go dtí an Teachta leo.

Deputy Pa Daly: Cinnte. Má tá an grúpa seo ar tí éirí as, nó má tá siad ag dul in aois, beidh

brú breise ag teacht ar An nGarda Síochána an-tapa arís. An féidir an gné sin a chinntiú dom?

Senator Lorraine Clifford-Lee: Tá ceist bheag amháin agam. Tá easpa tithíochta i gceantair Ghaeltachta áirithe. An dtugann An Garda Síochána aon chabhair do na gardaí atá ag dul ar ais go dtí na ceantair sin chun teach a fháil? Tá a fhios agam go bhfuil fadhbanna ann i nGaeltachtaí áirithe cosúil leis An Rinn agus An Seanphobal thíos i bPort Láirge agus go bhfuil easpa tithíochta ann. Tá sé an-deacair d’aon duine teach a fháil.

Mr. Drew Harris: I am not aware of any scheme. No, we have no scheme to assist with that.

Senator Lorraine Clifford-Lee: An bhfuil aon scéim “wraparound” chun cúrsaí tithíochta, scolaíochta agus na rudaí eile a chur ar fáil chun teaghlaigh a mhealladh ar ais?

Mr. Drew Harris: No, we do not.

Senator Lorraine Clifford-Lee: Gabhaim buíochas leis an gCoimisinéir.

Chairman: Tá cúpla ceist ghairid agamsa. Tá súil agam go mbeidh ár n-aíonna in ann iad a fhreagairt. Bhí roinnt díobh siúd a bhí agam ardaíthe ag daoine eile.

Níor chuala mé mórán faoi cheist amháin. Nuair a bhí mé óg agus ag fás aníos i mBaile Átha Cliath, anois is arís bhí meon ag roinnt de na gardaí go raibh mé ag cur as dóibh toisc go raibh mé ag lorg seirbhís as Gaeilge. Ní bhaineann an meon seo leis an nGarda amháin. Dúirt duine de na breithiúna móra, an Breitheamh Onórach Úna Ní Raifeartaigh, go raibh an rud céanna fíor sna cúirteanna. Cad é tuairim nó meon an ghnáthgharda anois má tá duine ag déileáil leo as Gaeilge, mar shampla má tá siad chun duine a ghabhadh agus go bhfuil an duine sin ag iarraidh an Ghaeilge a úsáid? An bhfuil an duine sin ag cur bac ar An nGarda Síochána? An ualach breise é? An aithníonn gach garda go bhfuil cearta acu siúd a labhraíonn Gaeilge? Cloistear anois is arís ó Ghaeilgeoirí nuair a bhíonn siad ag lorg seirbhís nó má tá siad ag tabhairt a n-ainmneacha agus a seoltaí as Gaeilge go mbíonn coimhlint ann. Tá sé sin ann thar na blianta.

B’fhéidir go mbeidh ár n-aíonna in ann cuidiú linn, nó go mbeidh muidne in ann cuidiú leo, maidir leis an gcéad cheist eile atá agam. Tá siad tar éis liosta a thabhairt dúinn den mhéid atá le déanamh ag An nGarda Síochána. Aithníonn an coiste seo go bhfuil obair ag tarlú. Rinne Coimisinéir an Gharda iarracht thar na blianta. Luadh an méid atá á dhéanamh. Tá súil agam go n-oibreodh sé seachas go mbeimis ag déileáil le tuarascáil sa bhealach seo amach anseo. Cén easpa atá ann ó thaobh acmhainní de? An bhfuil go leor acmhainní ann ó na hAirí Airgeadais, Oideachais, nó Dlí agus Cirt, chun cuidiú leis an bhfórsa ó thaobh cúrsaí Gaeilge sa Gharda Síochána?

Ba mhaith liom ceist beagáinín casta a ardú. Bíonn daoine ag caint faoin Garda Síochána. Molaim dár n-aíonna cóip de thuarascáil Choimisiún na Gaeltachta ó 1925 a fháil, mar is é An Garda Síochána a rinne é don Stát. Nuair a bhí siad ag déanamh fiosrú ar an agricultural census, tugadh jab breise dóibh daonáireamh a dhéanamh ar na ceantair Ghaeltachta. Níl fáil ag aon duine ar an gcáipéis seo. Níl a fhios agam an bhfuil bosca in áit éigin istigh sa Gharda Síochána agus na bundoiciméid seo istigh ann. Tá spéis ag a lán daoine iontu ó thaobh stair na Gaeltachta agus na teangeolaíochta freisin. Is é a príomhrud atáim ag iarraidh a rá faoi ná go bhfuil na fadhbanna céanna ann beagnach 100 bliain níos déanaí agus a bhí ann in 1925. Deir an tuarascáil:

In the case of the Garda Síochána, all native Irish Speaking Gardaí, all Gardaí with the Fáinne qualification in Irish, and others with a good knowledge of the language, should be

transferred, forthwith, to the Gaeltacht, concentrating, in the first instance, on Court districts ...

Thuig siad an fhadhb ag an am sin. Is í ceann de fadhbanna a bhí ann mar a deir an tuarascáil níos faide anonn:

So as to meet any deficiency in the supply of Officers, volunteers might be asked for from among Officers with a fair knowledge of Irish, to go to Irish Speaking Districts, with a view to perfecting themselves in their knowledge of the language. Steps should be taken to select some of the most intelligent and diligent members of the Gárda, who are Native Speakers, for training as Officers for those Districts. The Commission recommends that existing members of the Gárda retained in or transferred to the Gaeltacht, as competent to perform their work entirely in Irish should be paid, under conditions similar to those in the case of Civil Servants (paragraph 99), the following special grants ...

Tógann sé sin muid ar ais go dtí an liúntas a bhíodh ann. Bhí aitheantas ann an tráth sin gur ualach a bhí sa mhéid seo do daoine óga leis an gcáilíocht seo, agus b'fhéidir go mbeidís ag iarraidh dul go dtí an chathair. Dá bhrí sin, bhí siad lacáiste á thabhairt dóibh chun cuidiú leo. Níor éirigh go maith leo leis an earcú in 1923, mar a léiríonn an tuarascáil freisin:

The percentage of Native Speakers among the Gárdaí generally is 3.4. It is essential that a much larger number of Native Speakers should be recruited. Evidence was given that early in 1923, 500 recruits from the Gaeltacht were called for, but that no recruits came forward in response. This failure was no doubt due to the disturbed state of the country at the time ...

Bhí an Cogadh Cathartha ar siúl sa tír ag an am. Ach mar aitheantas ar an gceost seo, lean an tuarascáil ar aghaidh:

The Commission recommends ... that 75% of the annual vacancies be reserved, forth with, for them until such time as 500 Gárdaí at least have been recruited from the Gaeltacht.

Ag an am sin chuir an coimisiún leibhéal i bhfad Éireann níos airde chun cinn maidir leis an dúshlán a bhí orthu. Táim ag iarraidh go smaoinoidh An Garda Síochána, má tá an fhadhb seo ann i gceann bliana nó dhá bhliain gur gá dúinn céim níos airde a ghlacadh agus lacáiste a thabhairt isteach arís, nó áiteanna nó spásanna a choimeád dóibh siúd a bhfuil Gaeilge acu. Tagann sé seo ar ais go dtí an pointe a rinne an Seanadóir Clifford-Lee - go gcaithfidh comhaltáí den Gharda Síochána dul isteach sna coláistí Gaeilge timpeall na tíre ar fad, agus sna bunscoileanna freisin más gá, chun daoine a mhealladh i dtreo An Gharda Síochána ionas go dtuigfidh siad gur slí bheatha é amach anseo.

B'fhéidir go dtiocfaimid ar ais go dtí Baile Atha Cliath mar fhocal scoir. Bhíomar i gcónaí ag gearán go raibh na gardaí ar fad ó lasmuigh de Bhaile Átha Cliath agus go raibh siad mór agus groí. Bhí Gaeilge ag a lán díobh, ach ní raibh siad ag iarraidh fanacht sa bhaile sa Ghaeltacht. B'fhéidir gurb é sin ceann de na fadhbanna a gcaithfidh tabhairt faoi amach anseo. Más féidir freagra gasta a thabhairt dom ar na ceisteanna sin, bheinn buíoch dár n-aíonna agus cuirfidh críoch leis an gcruinniú ansin.

Mr. Drew Harris: On the initial point made by the Chairman about people who want to use Irish outside of the Gaeltacht, I will go back to what we are doing there by way of a translation service which is available to all members via telephone. Without wishing to create any confu-

sion, we have 240 members with competence but we have 80 members who have said that they are ready and able to assist in operational scenarios as well. That is known on our intranet, and their services are available.

On resources, we are a growing organisation and our budget grows commensurately with that. The situation in Letterkenny illustrates that if one pump-primes some money, ourselves and other State bodies can act accordingly and do small works, in money terms, which have a big impact in the service that we provide. We are very interested in seeing what success we will have with other agencies in Letterkenny in providing our service through the Irish language. That is interesting in itself.

I cannot say that I can put my hand on the 1925 commission report, but we can certainly have a look for it. I understand that it is quoted in some of the documents. They set a target and I appreciate that a target concentrates minds. We want to concentrate our minds on this. Overall, we do not want to find ourselves in these precise circumstances. I have no objection whatsoever in coming back to explain what we have done in the interim, as I am sure the committee will understand. We want to be coming back with a better news story - number one on recruitment; number two on training; and number three on the overall picture, not just the placement of individuals in the Gaeltacht but the overall service we are providing in the medium of the Irish language.

Chairman: Gabhaim buíochas leis an gCoimisinéir. Leis sin, cuirfimid críoch leis an gcrúinniú seo. Ba mhaith liom mo bhuíochas a ghabháil leis na finnétithe a tháinig os ár gcomhair inniu agus a thug freagraí oscailte agus soiléire dúinn ar na ceisteanna a bhí á gcur ag na comhaltaí. Is é an rud atá i gceist againn anois ná tuarascáil bheag a dhéanamh bunaithe air seo agus í a chur chuig an Dáil má tá sé i gceist aici díospóireacht a bheith ann maidir leis an tuarascáil féin. Ní gá dúinn tabhairt faoi sin mar déanann an Dáil an cinneadh air sin. Cuirfimid an tuarascáil ar aghaidh chuig ár n-aíonna chomh maith.

Gnó an Chomhchoiste.

Chairman: Táim buíoch díobh mar tá giota beag oibre le déanamh agus ní thógfaidh sé ach cúpla bomaite lena dhéanamh. Ag an gcrúinniú príobháideach de chuid 10 Márta 2021 thug an tOllamh tOllamh Pádraig Ó Duibhir, Leas-Déan in Institiúid Oideachais, Campas Phádraig, Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath, aitheasc dúinn ar ábhar an chórais díolúine ón nGaeilge. D'aontaíomar ag an gcrúinniú sin an t-aitheasc scríofa a chur ar thaifead poiblí an chomhchoiste agus é sin a dhéanamh ar ár gcéad cruinniú poiblí eile. Molaim mar sin go glacfaimid leis an t-aitheasc a chur ar bhonn poiblí inniu, go gcuirfimid é sin san áireamh i nguth iomlán i miontuairiscí an chruinnithe seo, agus go gcuirfí cóip de ar fáil ar shuíomh Idirlín an chomhchoiste seo. An aontaítear leis sin? Aontaítear.

Cuirfimid an cruinniú seo ar athló go dtí an 19 Bealtaine nuair a phléifimid craoltóireacht i nGaeilge leis an Aire Turasóireachta, Cultúir, Ealaíon, Gaeltachta, Spóirt agus Meán, an Teachta Catherine Martin, agus le hionadaithe ó Údarás Craolacháin na hÉireann.

Cuireadh an comhchoiste ar athló ar 3.58 p.m. go dtí 2 p.m. Dé Céadaoin, 19 Bealtaine 2021.