

DÁIL ÉIREANN

AN ROGHCHOISTE UM DHLÍ AGUS CEART AGUS COMHIONANNAS

SELECT COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Dé Céadaoin, 18 Aibreán 2018

Wednesday, 18 April 2018

Tháinig an Roghchoiste le chéile ag 10.20 a.m.

The Select Committee met at 10.20 a.m.

Comhaltaí a bhí i láthair / Members present:

Teachtaí Dála / Deputies	
Colm Brophy,	
Clare Daly,	
Peter Fitzpatrick,	
Charles Flanagan (Minister for Justice and Equality),	
Mick Wallace.	

I láthair / In attendance: Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire.

Teachta / Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin sa Chathaoir / in the Chair.

Business of Select Committee

Chairman: As we now have a quorum, we are in public session. Apologies have been received from Deputies O’Callaghan and Jack Chambers, who are unfortunately unable to join us for this select committee meeting. I propose that we go into private session for a few minutes.

The select committee went into private session at 10.27 a.m. and resumed in public session at 10.40 a.m.

Estimates for Public Services 2018

Vote 20 - An Garda Síochána (Revised)

Vote 21 - Prisons (Revised)

Vote 22 - Courts Service (Revised)

Vote 24 - Justice and Equality (Revised)

Vote 25 - Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (Revised)

Vote 41 - Policing Authority (Revised)

Chairman: I request all attendees, members *et al*, to ensure their mobile phones are switched to silent mode because they can interfere with the recording and broadcasting equipment. I have already noted the apologies of Deputies Jim O’Callaghan and Jack Chambers.

The purpose of the meeting is to consider the 2018 Revised Estimates for the justice group of Votes. I welcome the Minister for Justice and Equality, Deputy Charles Flanagan, and his officials. The proposed format is that we deal with the Revised Estimates on a Vote by Vote basis. The Minister will begin by making an opening statement. We will then move to the individual Votes and programmes when we will open up the floor for questions from members who will be called in the order in which they indicate. The Minister will respond and we will then move to the next Vote. Members have been furnished with an additional briefing document which was prepared by the secretariat. I encourage them to refer to it for the purposes of facilitation.

Members are reminded of the long-standing parliamentary practice to the effect that they

should not criticise, comment on or make charges against any person outside the Houses or an official, either by name or in such a way as to make him or her identifiable.

I invite the Minister to make his opening statement.

Minister for Justice and Equality (Deputy Charles Flanagan): I am pleased to present to the select committee the Revised Estimates for 2018 for the Justice Vote group. We have not put a timeframe on the meeting. In the context of the previous item, it was my hope I would be in a position to attend the Dáil Chamber for Leaders' Questions. Oftentimes there are justice issues when I would like to be near the Taoiseach who in such cases likes to have me near at hand. I am, however, in the hands of the committee.

The justice Vote group is made up of six Votes with in 2018 a combined gross expenditure allocation of €2.58 billion - €2.43 billion in current expenditure and €144 million in capital expenditure. In addition, there is a further capital provision of €17.9 million in unspent capital from 2017 available for spending in 2018 under the capital carryover provisions.

By way of information for committee members, there were eight votes in the justice Vote group in 2017. However, arising from a decision of the Government, responsibility for the Votes for the Valuation Office, the Property Registration Authority and Ordnance Survey Ireland, all of which were previously part of the Justice and Equality Vote group, was transferred to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in 2018. These are constituent bodies that will eventually merge to form Táihte Éireann.

The gross expenditure Estimate for the Garda Vote - Vote 20 - is €1.650 billion which amounts to 64% of the funding for the entire Vote group. The Estimate for 2018 is increased further by an additional amount of €8.9 million carried forward from 2017 under the capital carryover provisions. The high proportion of resources again allocated to the Garda Vote in 2018 underlines the Government's commitment to ensure a strong and visible police presence throughout the State, maintain and strengthen community engagement, provide reassurance for citizens and deter crime.

In July 2016 the Government agreed an overall vision for the Garda workforce of 21,000 personnel by 2021 to include 15,000 Garda members, 2,000 Garda Reserve members and 4,000 civilians. Since the reopening of the Garda College in Templemore in September 2014, just under 1,800 recruits have attested as members of An Garda Síochána and been assigned to mainstream duties nationwide. Taking account of retirements, Garda numbers increased to 13,551 at the end of 2017. This represented a net increase of more than 600 since the end of 2016. In addition, 800 Garda trainees are scheduled to attest during 2018, 200 of whom attested over the St. Patrick's Day weekend. This will see Garda numbers, taking account of projected retirements, reach 14,000 by the end of 2018. A further 800 new Garda recruits will also enter the Garda College this year. I am encouraged that the number of civilians working in An Garda Síochána continues to increase, with the numbers at the end of 2017 showing more civilians working in the organisation than in each of the previous seven years. Funding for a further 500 additional civilians is provided in the 2018 Estimate. In that context, I expect the process of civilianisation to accelerate this year.

In addition to staffing resources, significant investment continues to be made in other areas of the Garda Vote. I am particularly pleased that an additional €157 million in capital investment was secured for the justice sector following the mid-term review of the Government's capital plan for the period 2016 to 2021, a significant proportion of which relates to the Garda

Vote. This level of funding is reflected in the national development plan that was published recently. The plan provides for significant continuing investment in Garda capital funding in the next ten years, including ICT as a central component of the Garda modernisation and renewal programme; the Garda building and refurbishment programme; development of Garda training facilities; and continuing investment in the Garda fleet. In 2018 the ICT and telecommunications budget is €40 million. There is a further €5 million available for expenditure on the transport fleet and almost €25.6 million in the Garda capital building and refurbishment programme. The total Garda capital expenditure budget in the period 2018 to 2021 is in the region of €400 million.

With these unprecedented levels of investment come responsibilities and deliverables and the resources are intrinsically linked with the modernisation and renewal programme, which is the vehicle for implementation of the agreed recommendations made in the Garda Inspectorate's report *Changing Policing in Ireland* and the commitments given in *A Programme for a Partnership Government* aimed at increasing the visibility of An Garda Síochána. Members will be aware that the Policing Authority is overseeing implementation of the recommendations and reports on a quarterly basis. To date it has submitted four reports, which have been published. As evidenced in the reports, good progress is being made in a number of areas, with more to be done on a number of the other recommendations made. A prioritisation exercise under way is an effective strategy. In that context, An Garda Síochána acknowledges that there are key recommendations that, if implemented, will have the capacity to leverage significant change in the organisation.

I am particularly pleased that positive progress has been made in embedding the code of ethics throughout the force. Also, the divisional model of policing will shortly be rolled out on a pilot basis in four divisions. Under this model, responsibilities will be allocated on a functional, rather than a geographical, basis, subject to modifications, to ensure the close relationship with communities is maintained in large rural divisions. The Commissioner has selected the four divisions - the Dublin metropolitan region south central, Cork city, Galway and Mayo - for the pilot scheme in order to provide a mix of urban and rural policing environments. Members will also be aware that the Independent Commission on the Future of Policing commenced work in May 2017. It is due to report in September. It is consulting widely in the course of its work, including with the public and civic society and other bodies or individuals it considers appropriate, including all of the major stakeholders. It also held a meeting with Members of the Houses, with a strong cross-party attendance. I acknowledge the contribution of members of the committee in that regard. The commission issued a request for submissions on all aspects of its terms of reference. It has also held public meetings in a number of venues across the State, including Dublin, Cork, Donegal, Waterford, Athlone and Limerick, among others. Commission members have visited urban and rural Garda stations in a number of counties and also undertaken study visits in Ireland, Great Britain, Northern Ireland and the United States of America. I look forward to receiving the output of this extensive body of work later this year.

Vote 24 - Justice and Equality - has a gross Estimate provision of just under €444 million and is broken down into five separate programmes comprising almost 60 separate subheads reflecting the Department's strategy. Programme A is leadership in and oversight of justice and equality policy and delivery. It includes areas such as the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission, GSOC, and the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner, both of which are important bodies in the deliberations of the committee. An additional €4 million is being provided for the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner, bringing the total budget to almost €11.7 million in 2018. The increased budget is reflective of the additional staffing and other resource requirements of

the office in view of the fundamental transformation of the data protection environment arising from implementation of the general data protection regulation this year. The increased funding fully reflects the importance of a stable and effective data protection regulatory environment in terms of the personal data of individuals but also in relation to the broader economy and in particular the continuing expansion and growth of the digital technology sector. It was also possible to provide an additional €300,000 to the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission to strengthen staffing resources including a new unit established on protected disclosures. The resource requirements will continue to be monitored on an ongoing basis.

Programme B, a safe and secure Ireland, includes funding for front-line support services and agencies such as Forensic Science Ireland, FSI, the Probation Service, and Services to Victims of Crime, Cosc and State Pathology. I am pleased that the building of a new forensic science lab on a site at Backweston in County Kildare will proceed this year. Site enabling and other preparatory works commenced this year. A total of €9 million is being provided this year, with significant funding capital provided in the capital plan to complete the construction over the next couple of years. Forensic Science Ireland makes a most significant expert contribution to the criminal justice system. Funding to continue to develop the new facility is most important. Not only will this provide a state-of-the-art facility to enable FSI to provide a much improved service in analysing samples submitted from crime scenes, providing expert witness in criminal trials, but also it will facilitate the merger of FSI with the Garda Technical Bureau.

Programme C, access to justice, includes the provision for the Legal Aid Board, the coroner service and the costs associated with commissions and special inquires.

Programme D, an equal and inclusive society, provides for funding for the Office of Migrant Integration as well as provision for Traveller initiatives, gender equality, disability awareness and social inclusion measures across a wide spectrum of areas. The Estimate for 2018 includes a provision of €3 million for the Decision Support Service under the aegis of the Mental Health Commission. This funding will facilitate the implementation of the Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015. The role of the Decision Support Service is to support decision making by and for adults experiencing capacity difficulties.

Programme E, an efficient responsive and fair immigration, asylum and citizenship system. This mainly includes funding for the Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service and asylum seekers accommodation. Additional funding this year of €4 million is provided to establish the new passenger information unit, the primary role of which is to protect the safety and security of individuals through the prevention and detection of terrorist offences and serious crime. Turning to the prison's Vote, Vote 21, the current estimate in 2018 is for €341 million plus an additional €2.23 million in unspent capital from last year. The funding this year includes the provision for the financing of a step-down facility for women prisoners in the Dublin area. It will accommodate women for a period of time following custody or on probation supervision who are assessed as suitable to reside in the community and have accommodation or other needs that require support. The prison's capital budget over the period 2018 to 2021 will be in the region of €120 million. It will enable construction of the new wing in Limerick Prison as well as the improvement of facilities in Portlaoise and other prisons including the development of a masterplan for the Mountjoy campus aimed at centralising and enhancing shared services on that site. A total Estimate in gross terms of €132 million is being provided for the Courts Service, Vote 22, plus an additional €6 million in unspent capital from last year. The unspent capital from last year mainly relates to payments in respect of the regional public private partnership projects, PPPs, including a VAT payment to the Revenue Commissioners, which did

not fall due until this year. The estimate for this year includes €55 million in capital funding, including the carryover amount, mainly relating to the repayments related to projects delivered under the PPP, mechanism but also including continuing investment in information and communications technology, ICT. An additional €5 million in ICT investment is being made available over the period 2019 to 2021 for enhanced courtroom technology to assist the efficient running of the courts as well as facilitating increased collaboration within the justice sector in criminal matters and the development in data sharing between agencies across the justice system. A gross Estimate of €3.34 million has been provided for the Policing Authority, Vote 41, which includes an increase of €600,000 compared with 2017 to provide for additional staffing, accommodation and other costs associated with the important work of the Policing Authority. The gross expenditure budget for the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, IHREC, Vote 25, is €6.7 million to enable it to continue its important work in promoting and protecting human rights and equality. In conclusion, a Chathaoirligh, that is a synopsis of the very broad justice sector group and I would be happy to take questions.

Chairman: Go raibh maith agat a Aire. I refer to Vote 20, which I think is the substantive block in all of this. I now invite questions from members on this Vote. I ask members when putting questions, to indicate the particular subhead to which they are referring. That would facilitate us. I call Deputy Ó Laoghaire.

Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire: I will be brief enough. I have two questions on this Vote. I refer to Garda pay and numbers in a general sense. It has been indicated that the 2021 target is 15,000 sworn members of the Garda. It is not terribly far off that or it will not be at the end of this year by my understanding. Having said that, from my conversations with gardaí in Cork and I am sure it is the case elsewhere, what seems to be happening is that with the very welcome establishment of specialist units, an awful lot of experienced gardaí are being drawn away from core units and into specialist units, with the effect that a lot of the core units are still where they were in 2009 or 2010, even at this stage, with the additional recruits. There are still more or less the same numbers in core units. I ask the Minister in that context if he believes that the 2021 target for sworn members of the Garda should be revised to try to ensure that the core units that are serving communities, that are visible in communities, are at an adequate level. An awful lot of the spare capacity is indirectly going into the specialist units. I do not necessarily have a problem with that. A lot of those are very valuable, particularly the protective unit, but it does mean that sergeants are struggling, even at this stage, to make sure that the gardaí are visible in their communities. It is not just rural areas, there are areas of big population where there could be just two cars between two stations and they are stretched between areas of big population.

The other question I have is on the administration subhead 5, office equipment and external IT services. There was a reduction of 3%. I am not sure if that is the exact subhead that is relevant. I ask the Minister in a general sense whether it relates to that head or not. The national development plan makes reference to ICT being a central component of Garda modernisation and renewal. We have heard for years and years about the inadequacy of PULSE. It has manifested itself across a wide range of areas in terms of poor data or data being inputted incorrectly and the implications that has. That was broader than PULSE but PULSE is a factor here and it is vitally important that it is completely overhauled and replaced. I want to know what commitment has been made to the IT upgrade in An Garda Síochána for 2018, or whether that is reflected in that subhead and if that is a 3% reduction in the relevant subhead.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: In respect of Garda numbers, I accept what Deputy Ó Laoghaire

has said in so far as we are moving rapidly towards the year 2021 and the ambitious targets for Garda recruitment. I am quite satisfied that these numbers will continue to grow until we have the overall Garda force of 15,000 sworn members by 2021, ably assisted by 4,000 civilians and 2,000 reservists, bringing a total complement of 21,000. I note the point Deputy Ó Laoghaire makes about experience being drawn to specialist units. I acknowledge the importance of the Garda reform and modernisation programme. As Minister, I will not interfere in this programme. The Garda and the Policing Authority are best placed, in that they have the expertise to deal with the issue. I am pleased at the level of expertise involved in the specialist units to which the Deputy referred.

Of the current intake of 800 recruits annually, some 200 attested over the St. Patrick's Day weekend. All of these fully attested probationary trainee gardaí are in the service of the State at stations throughout the country. In the context of those 800 recruits annually, we provide for 250 to 300 retirements, which leaves a net intake of more than 500 gardaí. I do not intend to review that figure but I am anxious to ensure I am in a position to pledge resources to allow this state of affairs to continue in a way that was not the case during the years of difficult economic challenge. My aim for An Garda Síochána is to ensure visibility and availability. I meet regularly with the acting Garda Commissioner and senior gardaí to discuss these issues and it is my aim to ensure these Government targets are met.

I note the Deputy's interest in what he might describe as "core units" of An Garda Síochána. There is a period during which new recruits are probationers working for the most part in larger stations. They go through that period of 18 months prior to being stationed around the country. This is positive. As the committee is anxious to ensure its input, advice and guidance are appreciated fully, I am happy at all times to convey its concerns and priorities directly to An Garda Síochána itself or to bodies such as the Policing Authority.

In respect of IT services, I accept there have been shortcomings and that there is a need to ensure ICT at the best possible level is available to An Garda Síochána. Capital spending of €40 million is available in 2018 increasing to €60 million, €83 million and €63 million over the years 2019, 2020 and 2021, respectively. That is in accordance with the phasing of projects.

In summary, as we accommodate the new recruits in their stations and work, it is important to add to that manpower the necessary technological and other equipment and Garda fleet vehicles, all of which have seen increases this year and will see further considerable increases in the next three years.

Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire: On that last point, for clarification, what is being spent this year on ICT as distinct from last year? What is the difference in spending between this year and last year?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: It is €40 million this year, increasing to €60 million for next year.

Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire: What was it last year?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I do not have the figure for last year. I understand it was just under €40 million.

Chairman: I have an ancillary question before bringing in Deputy Wallace. My understanding is that an analysis would show there is actually a small decrease in the current year's provision under IT services. A decrease of 3% is what we have been advised in advance of this

particular engagement. In the context of all the committee has addressed with representatives of An Garda Síochána and interested other parties during the course of this year, it has been reflected time after time that the equipment and PULSE system are not fit for purpose. I am not, hopefully, stealing his opportunity, but it is absolutely ancillary to what Deputy Ó Laoghaire has said. It causes me some concern as Chairman and a member of the committee that, notwithstanding all of the indications that a new system would be secured and put into service, there is nothing in what we read here that it will happen in the current year.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: A small sum of money was diverted last year from the building fund to ICT and that has given rise to the figure the Chairman mentions. The ICT capital allocation is €40 million this year, rising to €60 million for next year. It is €83 million and €63 million for the years thereafter, respectively. The new ICT strategy document is being developed and it will align with the vision of the organisation, which is extremely positive. That strategy will cover the three-year period from this year up to 2021. The acting Garda Commissioner is scheduled to come to the Oireachtas on ICT issues over the next few weeks. I share the Chairman's view that every effort must be made to ensure the ICT equipment and regime within An Garda Síochána is a beacon of 21st century policing.

Deputy Mick Wallace: On the same issue, not only is it unfit for purpose, it is costing a fortune and I wonder to what extent the Minister and the Department are on top of it.

On breaches of public procurement rules, I acknowledge these figures are an estimate and I do not expect the Minister to know how many breaches will take place in 2018. Is there any indication that the issue is being addressed properly? If one looks at the most recent year for which we have figures, namely, 2016, the number of breaches of public procurement guidelines by An Garda Síochána alone was 94, which amounted to €27.8 million. Does the Minister expect to see a decrease for the 2017 and 2018 accounts? The figures suggest that breaches are increasing year on year, rather than decreasing. In 2015, there were 73 breaches of public procurement rules by An Garda Síochána. In July 2017, the director of finance for the Garda, Mr. Michael Culhane, told Deputy Connolly that he accepted 73 was a high number but the Garda was addressing actively all of those issues and working with the Office of Government Procurement. If we fast-forward to the 2016 accounts for An Garda Síochána, which were released in September 2017, there were 94 contracts which breached public procurement guidelines. As I said, that amounted to €27.8 million.

Is the Minister concerned that no one seems to be responsible for this? I asked Ms Josephine Feehily, chair of the Policing Authority, about this issue last month. She said that one thing that frustrated one of her colleagues was that if the Garda wants to hire a clerical officer, it must get approval from the Policing Authority whereas if it wants to spend €10 million on ICT, it does not. She said the authority had a very narrow competence in respect of money and she believes it should be broadened. What are the Minister's thoughts on that? To give him an example from today's figures, An Garda Síochána's expenditure on external ICT services for 2018 is estimated to be €41 million. In 2016, it was €50 million. An audit by the Garda internal audit section found that €26.5 million of that was paid to Accenture, dated from a contract of 2009 and was in breach of public procurement guidelines. Does the Minister have an indication as to whether the €41 million estimated to be spent on external ICT for 2018 has been properly tendered for?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: This is an issue the Deputy has been addressing in the Dáil. I am aware of an internal audit report last August which raised some concerns and made a number of recommendations regarding the procurement by An Garda Síochána of certain ICT

services. I understand from Garda authorities that the contract in question commenced in 2009. It ran for an initial two-year period with a further two-year extension until the end of 2013. It was extended after this time without recourse to tendering. I understand that there was a delay in the tendering for the contract due to a combination of factors, including the complex nature of the process but also a lack of resource in An Garda Síochána to prepare a new tender and run an appropriate procurement competition. It can be recalled that the Garda ICT area suffered from the general reduction in the ICT cohort throughout the public sector. However, another factor was that ICT management was awaiting the development of the national procurement framework. I am concerned by this issue and any breach. No breach in what is a specifically designed arrangement would in the circumstances be accommodated or accepted. Steps are now being taken to ensure all the recommendations in the internal audit report are implemented. Progress in this regard is being monitored internally by An Garda Síochána and by my Department. I understand the position regarding the main contract will be addressed. The Office of Government Procurement, OGP, framework has been in place since last August. It is currently being utilised by An Garda Síochána to tender for its skills requirements. I am keen that the issue be addressed and that any criticisms or shortcomings identified in the internal audit report be dealt with in a way that ensures full alignment with the regulatory regime.

Deputy Mick Wallace: Is the Minister confident that there will not be breaches of procurement guidelines in the new year?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I am anxious to ensure that all the recommendations to improve matters are embraced fully by An Garda Síochána and I am happy to keep the Deputy and the committee updated, as has been said in reply to parliamentary questions. If there are weaknesses and shortcomings, they need to be addressed in an urgent manner.

Deputy Mick Wallace: It is incredible, given there is so much money at stake. Accenture was one of only two companies. Most of this expenditure relates to man hours. They were not even obliged to clock in or out and they were paid in advance. There are not many industries in which people are paid in advance, yet it seems to be difficult to hold anyone to account regarding what went wrong and who was responsible. Is there no accountability in this area? I do not understand this. Surely the Government must be alarmed at the money involved. Has the work that Accenture will do in 2018 been properly tendered? Was there a competition or is Accenture just getting it anyway? Has anything changed? Was there a proper tendering process this time or will Accenture just get the money again and we will carry on as normal?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: In the context of the internal audit report completed last August, the new OGP framework has been embraced. It is currently being utilised by An Garda Síochána. Appropriate sanction is required from that office for the placing of ICT contracts. A number of such sanctions have been provided in respect of the tendering process. I have outlined the history of this issue going back to 2009 and circumstances have changed substantially since then to ensure best practice is deployed. My Department is in constant contact with An Garda Síochána to ensure shortcomings are addressed. The Garda ICT governance board was established, building on a recommendation of the Garda Inspectorate. Its role is to provide strategic direction and oversight for the ICT programme in the context of Garda reform and to ensure best practice. I will continue to monitor this issue.

Deputy Mick Wallace: When we asked Ms Josephine Feehily about this, she said the Policing Authority found it frustrating that if the Garda wants to hire a clerical officer, it must get approval from the authority but if it wants to spend €10 million on ICT, it does not and that the authority has a narrow competence in respect of money. Should that change or does the Minis-

ter want to keep the authority away from dealing with this area?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: Absolutely not. The Policing Authority has an important role to play in oversight. I meet authority members on a regular basis. Issues raised by the authority have been, or are in the course of being, addressed by An Garda Síochána but the authority plays a fundamental role in the reform and modernisation programme.

Deputy Mick Wallace: When we asked Ms Feehily why the person being audited was on the audit committee, she said it was out of her hands and she had no role in that regard. She was hinting that it probably requires a change in the legislation in order that the head of the Policing Authority would have a role. She was at pains to highlight that the head of the authority currently does not have a significant role in this area. Has the Government any appetite to amend the legislation in order that the Policing Authority would have a serious role to play in this area?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I am anxious to ensure that the authority continues to play a full and meaningful role. I am satisfied that this is the case. However, this must be seen against the background of the existence of the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland to which I made reference. The commission has engaged in a broad body of work, including the relationship between the Policing Authority, other agencies and the Department. I expect to have a comprehensive report from the commission by September this year and I would be happy to embrace any recommendations that are made, whether in respect of the authority, the Garda Inspectorate, the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission, GSOC, or other bodies in this area.

Deputy Mick Wallace: So until the report is published, the Government has no interest in dealing with what amounted to a complaint from Ms Josephine Feehily to the effect that she is powerless in this area because of the legislation and it was not her fault.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: Absolutely not. I refer again to the structures in place for ICT procurement and the audit committee, which plays an important role and produced the report last August to which I referred. The membership of the committee includes persons appointed by the Policing Authority.

Deputy Mick Wallace: The person they are looking to audit is also on the committee. We could go around in circles forever. I do not see an appetite to achieve what I suggest.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: What I am saying to Deputy Wallace is that the issues that he has raised publicly and has raised again this morning are matters of some concern, I am keen that all of these issues are addressed and I am satisfied that there has been a measure of progress as far as procurement is concerned. If there are wider issues on the matter of the relationship between An Garda Síochána and the Policing Authority, I suggest that the best vehicle for dealing with these in the overall context is the Commission on the Future of Policing and I look forward to its reports.

Deputy Clare Daly: I have just a couple of brief questions. This is virtually an impossible task given the scale of each of the Votes and projects that we have before us. It gives an indication of the scale of the Department and the job of scrutinising it is not that easy.

I have a couple of quick questions on the Garda Vote. In terms of recruitment, especially civilianisation, I note that the pay Estimate is lower for 2018 than the outturn on pay last year. In the context of the Minister's opening remarks about improved civilianisation inside the Garda, and particularly given that the Policing Authority told us, and indeed the Minister, that the tar-

gets for civilian recruitment are way off and the authority has huge concerns about this, why are we allocating less money to pay this year than was spent last year? Maybe the Minister could address as part of that why the Department has had a Supplementary Estimate on pay every year for the past 14 years. Why do we get it so wrong? Will we get it wrong again this year?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: There is the matter of overtime which is flexible, obviously meeting the demands of certain circumstances. I am pleased that, again, for this year, we will have made available a sum of almost €100 million for Garda overtime in order to meet the demands of society in terms of criminal activity. The point the Deputy makes about the apparent reduction is due to the fact that there is a particular subhead for the Garda training college and that technical decrease in pay is a relocation of some of the existing budget to a new subhead, which is for the Garda training college.

Deputy Clare Daly: If that is merely a transfer and the Minister is taking it out on one side and putting it in on the other, it still does not address the fact of who will pay for the increased civilianisation that we are promised. Let us be clear, the 2015 Garda Inspectorate report stated enhanced civilianisation was necessary. According to the Policing Authority's reports in here, that is well off target. Is the Department stating, in essence, there are no additional moneys being provided? Who will pay for this additional civilianisation or have we sort of said that they will not recruit them anyway because they keep promising every year but they do not actually do it?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: Any issue regarding the targets for civilianisation not being reached are not due to pay. There are currently in the region of 2,250 full-time civilians in An Garda Síochána mainly undertaking administrative and technical duties. Budget 2017 provided for the recruitment of up to 500 civilians and funding for a further 500 civilians was provided in this year's budget. Any deceleration or apparent slowness in terms of numbers on civilianisation is certainly not due to pay. I acknowledge that progress has been made but as I have said, this process needs to accelerate.

Deputy Clare Daly: If the moneys were made available last year for 500 and the moneys provided for this year are the same apart from the Minister's transfer and are not a reduction, it is the same 500 who were not recruited last year whom we are now providing for this year?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: No, it is another 500.

Deputy Clare Daly: Where is the extra money coming from then because the Estimate is the same? With the Minister's qualification of the transfer of moneys, the Estimate is not a reduction now. It is the same as the outturn for last year, as what was actually spent last year.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: There is sufficient funding to allow for the appropriate level of funding.

Deputy Clare Daly: Where is that shown in the Estimate?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: The part-year cost is in 2018.

Deputy Clare Daly: Which?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: The part-of-the-year cost is in 2018. There is also the funding that was not taken up last year in terms of the 500.

Deputy Clare Daly: That is exactly my point. It is the same 500 whom we are providing

for and there is no growth. The impression is being given that we are recruiting all these civilians whereas we know for a fact that is not being done. The moneys being set aside is the same money not spent on civilianisation.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: We do not show the full-year cost in 2018.

Deputy Clare Daly: I fully accept that. Presumably, for last year's figures we did not show the full cost for them either. It is carried over, year from year. The comparison is the same.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I know, but the figure was less.

Deputy Clare Daly: Why was it less?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: Because in budget 2017 we were recruiting a greater number of civilians - 500 for last year all of whom were not reached and 500 for this year but also including those of last year's numbers who were not recruited within that period of time.

Deputy Clare Daly: How many of the 500 were recruited?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: The number was 281.

Deputy Clare Daly: The Minister is stating then the allocation for next year is 719.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: Yes.

Deputy Clare Daly: Are moneys being provided for the 719 extra civilians so? The Minister should put the word out to all and sundry that there will be loads of jobs going in the Garda for civilians now.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: An Garda Síochána is currently engaging with the Policing Authority on the civilian programme. I am keen to ensure that the civilian programme is accelerated in order to ensure that we meet the targets. The target is to have 4,000 civilian members of An Garda Síochána by the year 2021.

Deputy Clare Daly: I will not labour the point, but the Minister will be aware that the Policing Authority's December report expressed the view that targets were well off and it had huge concern about that. We will park that.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: We have been speaking to the Policing Authority about this issue. We share its views as far as the civilian recruitment is concerned. We are really keen to ensure that we address what are critical gaps in skills and capacity. I want to ensure that the target of 4,000 by 2021 is fully met.

Deputy Clare Daly: The ICT issue is complex and important. It is important in the context of the work that this committee is undertaking, but also much of the discussion in the public domain about the accuracy of information, the importance of data collection and the outdated nature of PULSE and the other IT systems. The way in which the accounts are dealt with it is difficult to see where everything lies in them. There are so many different headings. There is office equipment and external IT, etc. There is training and development and incidental expenses that come up. It is difficult to keep track. Last year the Minister told us that there would be a €330 million capital programme between 2016 and 2021. We hear today it is a €400 million capital programme between 2018 and 2021. I suppose it is beginning to sound a little like the housing strategy where the same moneys are announced and re-announced in subsequent years

and dressed up and added to. What I am trying to get to is the amount actually being spent. How much of the €330 million that was allocated for ICT for the years 2016 to 2021 has been spent to date or how much of it is included in the €400 million that the Minister announced this morning for between 2018 and 2021?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: As I stated, there is €40 million earmarked for ICT capital this year, which will increase by 50% next year to €60 million and then in excess of €80 million. We are dealing with an unprecedented level of funding for information technology for An Garda Síochána.

Deputy Clare Daly: What I actually asked was how much had been expended to date because some of the moneys had been announced previously. How much of the allocation of €330 million for ICT between 2016 and 2021 has been expended to date?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I will get the figure for the Deputy. I do not know how much of the €40 million has been spent this year. What I am saying is that there is an awareness on the part of An Garda Síochána - I discussed this issue recently with Garda management - of the need to ensure this money will be utilised in a positive and proactive way. It is an unprecedented amount of public money which needs to be discharged and disbursed in an effective way in order to deliver the ICT strategy having regard to the shortcomings of which we are particularly aware.

Deputy Clare Daly: It would be good if the Minister could give us the figure because it is very hard to keep track of it. He told us that the allocation for ICT would cover automatic number plate recognition technology in all Garda vehicles. We know that in 2015 the programme had to be suspended because of the errors in the database and because hundreds of thousands of drivers had been wrongly identified as having failed to pay their car insurance. It cost about €6 million to fix that ICT problem. Is the automatic number plate recognition system, which the Minister told us last year would be installed, fully covered in the allocation for the ICT programme? What portion of the allocation is going towards its cost? Has funding been allocated for facial recognition systems which are also described in the modernisation and renewal programme? Where are we on that aspect?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: The automatic number plate recognition system is fully covered in the budget and forms part of the overall Garda CCTV scheme to ensure crime can be tackled in a modern and effective way. On ICT spending in the past few years, I can confirm that in 2016 and 2017 an overall sum of €90 million was discharged, with a further €40 million to be discharged this year and €60 million next year.

Deputy Clare Daly: What portion was allocated for the automatic number plate recognition system? How many cars have it? Where are we with the roll-out? Has it been completed?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: We are seeing unprecedented investment in the Garda fleet. All new vehicles coming on stream are fully equipped.

Deputy Clare Daly: Is the job finished?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: No.

Deputy Clare Daly: Therefore, it is ongoing.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: The programme is still very much ongoing. Over the course

of the year I expect to see a continued level of investment in the modernisation of the Garda fleet. This year we will purchase 215 vehicles with a value of €4.7 million. Obviously, once they arrive, they will be specially equipped and fitted out.

Deputy Clare Daly: I am not asking about the new vehicles. I know that they will come with this technology. My question is about the level of expenditure on the automatic number plate recognition system as a proportion of the allocation for ICT. If the Minister needs to get the figure, we can be given it later.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I do not have the actual figure that has been discharged on the automatic number plate recognition system, but what I will say is a considerable number of new vehicles are coming on stream. Hundreds of new vehicles are coming on stream, many of which will be fitted with the equipment to which the Deputy is referring.

Deputy Clare Daly: Could we get the figure on another day?

Regarding compensation and maladministration, I know that the Minister told us last year that €7 million had been allocated to cover third party claims against An Garda Síochána. What is the figure for this year? Does it reflect the throughput of cases surrounding the fixed charge notice affair that need to be rectified? The Minister told us last year that these cases would start to go through this year. What is the figure for this year? How much of it relates to fixed charge notice cases and the summonses issued?

Chairman: In responding will the Minister confirm that he will be able to subsequently provide the information sought by the Deputy that is not available this morning?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I will.

Chairman: Would the Minister like to reply to the latter question?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I understand the total allocation for compensation is €16.6 million. I will have to provide the Deputy with the actual breakdown of specific cases in writing as soon the figures are to hand.

Deputy Clare Daly: I ask for that information because the figure represents more than a doubling of the compensation and maladministration fee against An Garda Síochána. It is a whopping amount of money in the context of what we are talking about. I would really like to know how much of it relates to the fixed charge notice and summonses scandal. If we had a breakdown of the other claims made, it would be important.

My final point concerns the level of training and development and incidental expenses. There appears to be a fall-off or the lack of a breakdown. It seems to be a grouped figure. I would be worried if that was the case, given the importance of training. The issue has come up so often that we are not paying enough attention to it.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: The figure for compensation last year was €16 million. The figure for this year is €16.6 million. The vast bulk of the money is for personal injuries suffered by members. I certainly would not like it to be interpreted as having anything to do with maladministration. It is compensation payable to-----

Deputy Clare Daly: I am not suggesting it does. Last year the Minister told us that €7 million had been allocated to cover third party claims against An Garda Síochána. I asked him what the figure for this year was and he said it was €16 million. If he is now saying the figure

includes compensation for personal injuries and that he was not comparing like with like, that error was not introduced by me. If the figure for third party claims was €7 million last year, what is the figure for this year?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: It is €8 million.

Deputy Peter Fitzpatrick: I thank the Minister for coming before the committee. It is very important that gardaí be allowed to do their job and that we see a Garda presence on the streets, motorways, back roads, etc. It is great that the Garda College Templemore has been reopened. It means that we will have extra gardaí coming out every year. I was delighted when I heard that there would be an extra 4,000 civilian staff in An Garda Síochána by 2021. I was led to believe that when this happened, between 1,500 and 2,000 trained gardaí would be back on the beat or on motorways. Will the Minister confirm how many trained gardaí will be released to carry out garda jobs when the target of 4,000 civilian staff is reached? How many civilians work for An Garda Síochána? What qualifications do they need to apply for a job with An Garda Síochána? What support and training do they receive? These civilians are coming in to do what trained gardaí do. I am all for that because if we can release this number of gardaí, it would help alleviate the problems on the streets.

I come from Dundalk where there is a very good Garda station, but over recent years, someone who has been physically or sexually assaulted has to join a queue in the station. The people in the queue might be dealing with motor tax or passports. The people who have been assaulted should get some special treatment. It is not fair that they must wait to report the crime. What plans does the Minister have for that?

The station in Dundalk has done well in getting new recruits but the station building needs work. I have said this before to the Minister. It is close to the M1 but the traffic coming off it is unattended. It has no space to expand. There is another Garda station a few miles away off the M1 called Dromad. Are there any plans to invest money in Dromad? It is so congested it is impossible for people to park in the area. The extra resources in the Garda station have helped combat crime. It is a Border county. Could the Minister come to Dundalk over the next few weeks? Is it the case that in most Garda stations there is only one garda and a queue of people? In the 21st century we have to move forward. I am delighted that we are getting more civilians in to do the administrative work which will release trained gardaí.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: The Deputy has raised four issues: civilianisation, needs of victims, Garda stations and his constituency in Dundalk. I am keen to ensure that the civilianisation programme not only continues but gathers momentum and is accelerated. There are more than 2,250 full-time civilians in An Garda Síochána doing administrative and technical duties. It is important that the process continues. Sanction has been obtained for 281 further posts. We are considering first addressing some skill gaps and capacity issues, for example, civilians with expertise in the area of finance and information and communications technology, ICT. The Garda is engaging with the Policing Authority in respect of 116 business cases. I want to see movement on these over the coming weeks. The immediate consequence of this will be redeployment. We have set a target of replacing 1,500 gardaí. I want to see as many gardaí as possible returning to core full-time duties because that is what they are best placed to do and that is what their core training equips them for. The principal focus so far has been on filling critical skill gaps. I would be happy to keep the committee fully informed. It is a priority to ensure that by 2021 there will be a civilian cohort within An Garda Síochána of 4,000. They will work with, or be an integral part of, a Garda force of 21,000, including 15,000 sworn members, 4,000 civilians and 2,000 reservists. It is important to put more emphasis on the

Garda Reserve.

I acknowledge the work of this committee in passing the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017. The Commissioner has put in place a victim service office in each of the 28 Garda divisions. These will be the central point for victims of crime in each division. They will be staffed by people who have specific training in prioritising the needs of victims and there will be specially trained civilian personnel. The focus is firmly on the second national strategy on domestic sexual and gender-based violence and the range of actions to be implemented by the State.

There is a Garda station building plan, particulars of which are, I am sure, well known to this committee. This is designed by An Garda Síochána to meet the needs of specific areas. I am sure that the Garda Síochána is considering the Border constituencies, such as County Louth and the Chairman's constituency, in the context of the changed circumstances caused by Brexit and with particular reference to the unacceptable level of cross-Border crime. I would be happy to engage bilaterally with Deputy Fitzpatrick in response to his invitation to visit the area and would be anxious to consider that favourably.

Chairman: Information technology is a multifaceted area. We tend to think of the PULSE system, but it is only an element of the overall IT needs of the Garda Síochána. Is there exploratory work under way to identify the most appropriate IT system to help ensure the needs of An Garda Síochána are met? The hands that control the input, however, determine how useful and effective it can be.

Historically, the allocation for capital expenditure on Garda stations is never fully employed. The tendency is for any residue to be transferred for so-called emergency needs within current expenditure year on year. There is €25 million set aside for repair and maintenance of Garda stations in the current provision. Does the Minister know how much of that will be employed? Is there awareness that there are moneys there? While many Garda stations are modern and up to date, many others, in a variety of settings, require updating and improvements both in terms of Garda needs and the requirements of civilians who utilise the facilities as need arises. The instance to which Deputy Fitzpatrick referred, where somebody has to present with a very sensitive and difficult issue, is something which has presented in all our experiences. One is at a public desk and has to recount one's particular issue, which can sometimes be very sensitive, with other ears conscious of it. Is there not the potential within this €25 million to provide for small private consultancy rooms? These are important improvements which could be undertaken. It concerns me that, year on year, I see that this provision is not fully taken up. In fact, in some instances it is quite seriously underutilised.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: The Chairman is quite right when he says that a sum of €25 million is available. I want to see all of that money spent because I believe there is sufficient demand throughout the country for that and more. It would be a disappointment if some of these funds remained unspent. There is a capital programme for Garda stations which is providing for new stations in Wexford, a headquarters in Galway, and the state-of-the-art premises within a stone's throw of these buildings in Kevin Street. These modern Garda headquarters have the type of facilities the Chairman referred to, all of which are necessary in the circumstances. I am very keen to see the roll-out of the next phase of the public private partnership, PPP, project within the next few weeks. This will involve capital expenditure on new Garda headquarters in Clonmel, in Macroom in north-west Cork, and in Sligo. It is important that designs under our Garda building programme accommodate suites for people in difficult and vulnerable situations. Such people visit Garda stations every day. I want to see all that money and more spent.

As far as ICT is concerned, the ICT strategy is very important. Included in it will be a complete revamp of the PULSE system. We want to ensure that the user interface and the architecture of that system is fit for purpose and can support the future needs of a modern organisation. The ICT strategy for An Garda Síochána is very important in that regard. This meets the concern to which the Deputy has referred. As I said at the outset, in excess of €300 million is available under the capital programme. This will transform Garda ICT infrastructure during the course of that plan. I want to see that strategy being developed and published so that we will know precisely what the emphasis will be on in terms of ensuring a modern and fully equipped Garda Síochána.

Chairman: Gabhaim buíochas leis an Aire. In the absence of any other questions, I propose to move on to Vote 21 in respect of prisons. I invite questions from Members on this specific Vote.

Deputy Mick Wallace: In 2016, there were 35 breaches of procurement guidelines in the area of the Prison Service representing a total of €7 million. Does the Minister have any figures for 2017? That was 2016. Are the problems in this area are being addressed?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I do not have any figures. I would be disappointed if I received figures in respect of breaches in procurement. I want to see full compliance with public procurement guidelines across all areas of the Prison Service. I do not expect that there will be any breaches.

Deputy Mick Wallace: Does the Minister have any explanation for the 35 breaches that took place in 2016? Does he have any feedback on that? What went wrong?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I would be happy to provide the Deputy with that detail in writing.

Deputy Mick Wallace: I thank the Minister. An issue that often comes up is the number of people who serve time in prison in Ireland due to non-payment of fines. What percentage of people would have spent time in prison for that reason? Are there figures available for 2017?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: That is being phased out under the fines legislation. I do not expect that too many people were given prison sentences in default of payment of fines in the year 2017. I refer to the recent enactment of the Fines (Payment and Recovery) Act 2014, which obviates the need for anybody to serve such sentences. Ultimately, the handing down or otherwise of prison sentences is a matter for the court.

Deputy Mick Wallace: Perhaps I missed it in the documentation, but is any money being allocated for creating a structure or facility for community service? We have spoken about community service a lot in recent years. It will be very difficult for the judges to use that facility if we do not build a structure for it. There has to be some sort of structure in place to allow individuals to be given community service rather than prison time. I did not see any money being spent in this area, but perhaps I have missed it. Is any money being considered in this area? I have looked at other countries where this is done and it does cost something to create the structure in the first place. Are there any plans to expand the area of community service?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: The Deputy raises an important point. That issue does not come under this particular Vote. It would come under the Probation Service subhead in Vote 24 - Justice and Equality. Again, I acknowledge the work of the Probation Service as a leader in the community service project. Once again the Probation Service received sanction to re-

cruit new supervisors in recent times. I am anxious to ensure that we continue to have sufficient community service supervisors, having regard to the growth of these schemes and the frequency with which the courts would look to the provision of a community service order as being an appropriate court order in the circumstances. The moneys continue to be put to very good use in that regard.

I point to the decrease in the committal of people to prison for non-payment of fines. Provisional figures for last year show a decrease in excess of 70%, which would be due to the fines legislation.

Deputy Mick Wallace: What was the figure?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: The figure is 2,400.

Deputy Mick Wallace: There were 2,400-----

Deputy Charles Flanagan: There were 2,400 orders of committal. In 2,400 cases, an order for committal to prison was made for the non-payment of a fine, which is a considerable decrease. We can assume the figures for this year will be less than that again.

Deputy Clare Daly: I will raise a couple of points. The Joint Committee on Justice and Equality has done considerable work on penal reform and signed off on a report on the issue earlier this morning. Attention must be paid to the way in which the accounts are laid out. It is ludicrous to have the Prison Service treated in isolation, with the Probation Service and community service under a separate heading. We could spend much less on this area and save substantial sums if the joint committee's recommendations on providing alternatives to prison and focusing more on community service were implemented. This would free up significant resources. Perhaps this matter will be considered in future.

Members do not support the establishment of a step-down for women. It is incredibly paternalistic to introduce a structure of this type for female offenders who are moving back into the community, particularly given that women are generally incarcerated for crimes of poverty and other offences with low levels of violence. We would prefer a much more empowering structure to be established to enable women to move back to their communities and live in proper accommodation rather than in some sort of halfway house. Most European countries are moving away from the halfway house model. Will the Minister set out the justification for adopting this approach as it is out of kilter with modern thinking on women in prison?

I will raise briefly the systems in place in the Prison Service for protected disclosures. We will discuss the handling by the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission, GSOC, of protected disclosures by gardaí under the next heading. With regard to protected disclosures for members of the Prison Service, of which there have been a number recently, is the Minister satisfied with the current system? Are additional moneys being allocated for dealing with protected disclosures in the Prison Service, for example, to cover compensation payments? Are plans in place to change the current system and, if so, will these give rise to costs?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: On the matter of the step-down facilities, I assure the Deputy that this is an important issue which is receiving active consideration. A joint working group of the Probation Service and the Irish Prison Service gave consideration to the option of establishing an open centre for women. Rather than recommending the development of an open centre for women, it concluded that a more practical and cost-effective approach would be to pursue a step-down facility. I understand this recommendation is under examination. It is important

to ensure we can provide assistance, especially to low-risk offenders serving lengthy sentences. Work is ongoing in that regard and I will be happy to report back to the committee on the matter.

Deputy Clare Daly: Is it proposed to establish such a facility as an alternative to a custodial sentence or would it be available to women after they had served a custodial sentence?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: The Deputy referred to it as a step-down facility. It is important in the context of those who are in prison that we move away from what is, in many respects, a cliff edge where a person who is in prison for a defined period is suddenly set free. It is important that there be a level of engagement by way of preparing people for coming out of prison and into the community. That is the type of facility we are speaking of in terms of what is called a step across into the community. I recently visited a successful engagement in Waterford which prepares prisoners for work. The project is an example of collaboration between prisoners and industry and commerce and involves a level of sponsorship. People coming out of prison are sponsored to engage in work, and many of those who have been through the project have found permanent employment. It is important we consider this approach.

The alternatives to prison in terms of community service are an important part of the criminal justice system, with particular reference to the application of restorative justice and working in the community. Funding is being provided to the Probation Service to monitor these schemes as alternatives to prison.

Deputy Clare Daly: I do not wish to labour the point but I will correct the record in case my comments are misconstrued. While I support alternatives to incarceration, a step-down facility is not suitable and in this case it appears to apply to women only. That does not mean I am not in favour of supporting people after their sentence is served. Active engagement is required to ensure former prisoners have a house, receive appropriate treatment, have access to employment etc. However, given that a step-down facility is not provided for men, it is paternalistic to provide one for women. The idea of open centres for women located in the community as an alternative to incarceration is a more modern approach and best policy. We should not spend money on an idea other countries have abandoned. Two issues are being conflated here.

Will the Minister comment on the system in place in the Prison Service for protected disclosures?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: The Prison Service is independent as far as the examination and processing of such protected disclosures is concerned. The best way to deal with them is by way of independent examination and assessment.

Deputy Clare Daly: Is additional money being allocated for this purpose this year? Has funding been ring-fenced?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: No, but I do not believe it requires an extra allocation or the voting of particular money. If money is required, I am sure it will not be an issue that would present an obstacle. There are a small number of protected disclosures and it is important that they are dealt with efficiently and in a manner that ensures that those who make them are fully accommodated. I do not see money issues as being in any way an encumbrance.

Chairman: This is an area of considerable interest to members. One of the reasons we are not engaging more expansively with the Minister on this issue is that, as Deputy Daly indicated, the joint committee signed off this morning on a report on prison reform and sentencing. We will furnish the Minister with a copy when the report is launched shortly. I make a

special appeal to the Minister to note our recommendations. They were carefully considered and unanimously agreed by members, as has been the case with all the reports the committee has produced. I hope he will be in a position to respond to the report after due consideration and indicate to the committee what actions he will take on the back of our recommendations.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I look forward to the report and I assure the Chairman it will receive early consideration in the Department.

Chairman: We will move on to Vote 22, the Courts Service, which was also a matter of some focus at this morning's meeting of the joint committee. Do members have specific questions?

Deputy Clare Daly: I have two quick questions, one of which may not be relevant. Have moneys been allocated for the judicial council under this head given the urgent need for such a council? On technology, is the digital audio recording, DAR, system in place in every court or only the main courts? Are plans in place to make this information more accessible and has funding been provided for this purpose? When people request a digital audio recording, they often find it is not available or it is prohibitively costly.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I am keen to ensure the processing of the Judicial Council Bill. It is currently before the House. In the Estimates, there is a token allocation which will allow for the establishment of the subhead. This is an issue with which the committee can be of assistance and ensure we make progress on it later in the year.

As for the matter of the digital audio recording programme, the first phase of it went live in Dublin in the Four Courts and in the Criminal Courts of Justice in January of last year. The national roll-out will conclude during the summer of this year, following which a total of 254 courtrooms will have their digital audio recording facilities refreshed. The court building programme, the most elaborate and most expensive courts programme in history of the State, is now coming on stream with the recent opening of courthouses in Waterford, Drogheda, Letterkenny and the soon-to-be-opened courthouses which were extensively refurbished in Cork and Mullingar. These are state-of-the-art courthouses. If the committee has not already done so, I suggest it might pay a visit to one of these regional court centres which have the type of equipment which modern society requires such as victim support rooms, vulnerable witness rooms, children's rooms and, obviously, jury rooms. For many years, there was the wholly unsatisfactory scenario of having litigants on both sides and having vulnerable witnesses, often times, sharing court space with perpetrators of crimes. Over the past several years, we have ensured that we are tackling this issue, accepting there is a further programme of work to be undertaken but moving towards a modern courts infrastructure which will serve the needs of our community far better than was the case in the past.

Chairman: The last report the committee signed off on related to wards of court. The oversight on investment decisions regarding wards of court comes under the aegis of the Courts Service. We sent our report to the Minister on 22 February, which I accept is not quite two months. We requested the Minister's intention and consideration of the report. Its recommendations were reflective of the committee's consideration of not only the Courts Service when it was before us but those representatives of the wards of court themselves, the families, and Justice for Wards, the primary campaigning group. We would appreciate the Minister's consideration and response as soon as he may be able to offer it.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I am happy to do that Chairman. However, I must add that the

Courts Service is giving these matters consideration too. Obviously, its input will not only be important but welcome, including the recommendation that an independent review be carried out of the disposition of the Courts Service towards the interaction with wards and their families. It is important these issues are dealt with and I am happy to ensure a reply to the committee, having regard to the Chairman's interest in it.

Chairman: We had requested the Courts Service not proceed with carrying out an independent review until at least after the committee had concluded its deliberations, following the engagement of the Courts Service and Justice for Wards. However, it did. We would have preferred a methodology which would have taken on board not only the committee's position but also the various concerns expressed by families of wards of court. Mazars has carried out that examination on behalf of the Courts Service. It covers a particular area. We believe there are other matters that also require to be addressed. In the absence of engagement with the wards' families, perhaps not all the information and experiences were to hand.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I am happy to convey the Chairman's views directly to the Courts Service at an early opportunity following this meeting.

Chairman: Thank you Minister. We will now move to Vote 24, justice and equality. I call Deputy Ó Laoghaire.

Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire: The Minister will be aware I have put down several parliamentary questions on Forensic Science Ireland. My understanding is that it has embarked on a second recruitment campaign in recent years. The previous one met some difficulties because applicants did not have previous experience reflected in their pay and conditions and other similar considerations. Is the Minister satisfied with the level of recruitment to Forensic Science Ireland with this current campaign?

I am not familiar with the proposal for a merger with the Garda technical bureau. Will Forensic Science Ireland be entirely incorporated with the technical bureau?

Several months ago, I asked at the committee whether a decision support service could actually be delivered within 2018. There was some hesitancy as to whether it was possible. Can a decision support service be delivered by 2018? If not, it is disappointing, given that it relates to legislation which is now three years old and is closely related to Ireland ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

There has been considerable discussion about the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission, GSOC. The Minister said he has allocated an additional €300,000 to the commission. GSOC has clearly made the case in correspondence to the Department of Justice and Equality and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, correspondence which is in the public domain, that it needs €900,000 to conduct its business properly, particularly regarding protected disclosures. In general, GSOC is underfunded. Yesterday we discussed the incident in Omeath. I relayed to the Minister that GSOC had clearly said that it did not have the capacity to get to that case at any time soon, and it was on that basis that I called for a public inquiry. GSOC is generally underfunded, and it is struggling with protected disclosures especially. A properly investigated and supported protected disclosure is far cheaper than a tribunal or a commission of investigation. GSOC believes the funding that has been provided is clearly inadequate. How does the Minister respond to that? Does he intend to address this?

The funding for a SAVI 2 report will likely fall under this head. The Minister and the Gov-

ernment were considering that and a scoping document has been commissioned. What is the status of this document? When will it be concluded and when will we learn of a decision based on its report?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: On Forensic Science Ireland, FSI, and its merger with the Garda Technical Bureau, a committee is involved in this and its work is ongoing with a view to the merger having taken place before the opening date of the laboratory in 2020 or 2021. The new facility in County Kildare will be managed by the OPW. It is one of the most important pieces of infrastructure currently under construction. A total of €9 million is being provided for that this year which is earmarked for the main construction on this site. The full cost of the construction and fit-out will only be known once the tendering process is complete, which is expected in the second quarter of 2018. The ongoing costs will be fully monitored but we are anxious to ensure that this new laboratory will be ready in 2020 or early 2021.

On the decision support services, €3 million has been provided in a new subhead, D10, of the justice Vote. That will necessitate new administrative processes and support measures including the setting up of the dedicated decision support services in the mental health commission. That will have to be put in place prior to the substantive provisions of the Act can be commenced. There is a high level steering group of senior officials from the Departments of Justice and Health, the Court Services, and the Mental Health Commission. Its work is ongoing.

Members will be aware of the urgent need to ensure revised resourcing for GSOC. I am very anxious to ensure that GSOC is equipped with the necessary resources to carry out its work at all times. Funding is constantly kept under review. I am very keen to ensure that GSOC works effectively and efficiently. A process is under way and I received a business case some weeks ago. It is under active consideration by my Department and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and I expect an early decision on the matter.

Chairman: Does Deputy Ó Laoghaire have a supplementary question?

Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire: The Minister did not address two of my questions. The first was when will the decision support service be delivered. Will it be possible to deliver that in 2018? Second, the question I asked on Forensic Science Ireland was not about bricks and mortar, it was about staffing. There was an issue in the previous recruitment campaign that insufficient applicants had applied and that not enough additional staff had come in. Is that the case with the current campaign? Does the approach regarding negotiation need to be reconsidered in that context?

I overlooked another question that I wished to put to the Minister. How much was spent on the Office for Internet safety last year?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I will get that for the Deputy.

I did not advert to the SAVI question. That group has completed its work and I expect that I will be able to make a recommendation to Government on that in coming weeks.

I am awaiting specific details on the Office for Internet Safety and will pass them on to the Deputy.

Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire: Okay.

Chairman: We are doing a quick calculation.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: The cost is in the region of €200,000.

Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire: There are two specific questions to be answered, first on Forensic Science Ireland on the success or otherwise of the current recruitment campaign and second, whether the decisions support service will happen in 2018.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: As I said, a sum of €3 million has been allocated for that under D10. I expect that would happen on the commencement of Part 8 of the Act, once the decision was made by the Minister for Health. It is not a decision that I will make. I am not now in a position to provide an exact timeframe for the implementation of this Act. There are several complex strands to its work. However, the view is that the decision support service will not be ready to become operational until next year.

Deputy Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire: What about recruitment to Forensic Science Ireland?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I will be happy to revert to the Deputy with the details of the competition that is under way for the specialist people who are being recruited and the cost of this.

Deputy Clare Daly: I will not repeat the points about GSOC but €300,000 is not enough, that is clear. The Policing Authority receives €600,000, which is double that of GSOC. I would go so far as to say that the whole of the extra €600,000 allocated to the Policing Authority should instead be given to GSOC to allow it to do the job that it wants to. The points have been made about that already.

I have three quick questions. First, on direct provision, the Estimate for 2018 seems to be the same as the spend for 2017. Is that because the Government expects the same numbers of asylum seekers or is it the case that contracts have been negotiated with the private operators who make a lot of money from this service regardless of the numbers of people in the system? What is the story with that?

Will extra funds be made available to revamp the coronial service? Reform has been in the pipeline for 20 years and is badly needed and long overdue.

My last questions are about the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner. The Minister has said €4 million has been made available and that staff numbers are due to increase by 50%. That sounds like a lot and is certainly something about which I would like to hear more. Frankly, I do not consider such measures as being anything near enough in the context of the general data protection regulation, GDPR. I ask the Minister to consider the fact that the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner will now be the lead supervisory authority in cases involving companies such as Google and Facebook. Also, as many as 89% of Facebook users are served by Facebook Ireland. The Office of the Data Protection Commissioner in Ireland will be the main regulator of how Facebook uses and shares the data of its users. How can the office do such work with an extra €4 million? I have not even mentioned the more general responsibilities of the office under the GDPR in monitoring and policing public and private usage. The sum does not strike me as being anything near enough.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: On direct provision, the outturn for the Reception and Integration Agency was over €67 million which reflected the increase in the number of persons applying for protection in the State and also the number of persons who continued to live in State provided accommodation. It is, of course, after a steady decline in the years 2008 to 2014, inclusive. In 2017 the allocation was €66 million and the outturn was €67 million. I am sure

Deputies will accept the fact that there is an ebb and flow in asylum seekers requiring accommodation and that it is very difficult to predict with certainty how much accommodation might be required. At the end of 2016 there were 4,425 people in RIA accommodation. By the end of 2017 that number had risen to over 5,000. The increase in demand has continued in the past few months and we continue to monitor the position. However, the sum provided is indicative of the requirement this year.

Deputy Clare Daly: Is the figure linked with numbers? In the direct provision centres is the contract negotiated, regardless of numbers or is it numbers dependent?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: Obviously, we have to be conscious of numbers. There has in recent times been an increase in numbers for whom we will be required to cater having regard to our national and international obligations.

Deputy Clare Daly: I know. On the payments made to direct provision centres, the numbers seem to be very similar.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: No.

Deputy Clare Daly: Are the payments linked with the numbers in the centres? Is it a fixed amount or is the contract negotiated first?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: It is not a fixed amount. It is dependent on the numbers of persons coming into the system who require to be accommodated in keeping with our national and international obligations.

Deputy Clare Daly: Therefore, private operators are paid based on the numbers in direct provision centres. It is not a contract agreed to for a uniform sum to run a centre. They are paid per person.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: As far as service providers are concerned, a payment is made in accordance with the contract for the provision of the premises. Presumably, costs will rise from time to time, given the numbers of persons involved. It is not necessarily a fixed sum in accordance with a lease or contractual arrangement. There are other items of expenditure that will arise from time to time.

Deputy Clare Daly: Perhaps it is the lateness of the hour, but I want to ensure I understand what has been said. In direct provision centres a contract is entered into for an amount of money based on a rough figure.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: Yes.

Deputy Clare Daly: The amount does not ebb and flow. The operators are not paid per person per day, per week or per month.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: No.

Deputy Clare Daly: The contract is agreed upfront.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: No.

Deputy Clare Daly: Obviously, there will be a little wavering. I am not sure what the Minister means.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: It is a contract with a number of variables. In the first instance, it will be on the basis of a cost per person, the length of the contract and the number of persons to be accommodated within the accommodation structure.

Chairman: I fear Deputy Clare Daly will have to get a copy of the contract.

Deputy Clare Daly: It looks like that. I asked two other questions.

Chairman: Yes.

Deputy Clare Daly: My last two questions were related to whether moneys had been expended on the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner and in reform of the coronial service.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: On the matter of coroners, we continue to see greater efficiencies. The Deputy will be aware of the amalgamation of the Dublin city and county coroner services. There are ongoing discussions with coroners with a view towards ensuring efficiencies will be made, bearing in mind the need to ensure we will have a first class coronial service. The Deputy will be aware of the legislation before the House to ensure we can advance matters further.

On the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner, the Deputy will be aware of the fit-out and transfer of the headquarters to Dublin and the consequent funding requirements. In the context of the GDPR, the Government is very anxious to ensure sufficient funding will be made available. That is why there has been a significant increase in funding for the office which will facilitate the recruitment of extra staff. Obviously, in the light of the Deputy's concerns, these are issues that are subject to ongoing monitoring by my Department in consultation with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner. It is fair to say this is an area in which an increased level of funding is required. I am committed to ensuring the needs and requirements of the office will be fully met. I am working in conjunction with the Office of Public Works on the accommodation requirements.

Chairman: Does Deputy Clare Daly wish to come back in on what has been said?

Deputy Clare Daly: No, I will not. I would, but, given the lateness of the hour, I shall bank my questions for future meetings.

Chairman: Very good.

Deputy Mick Wallace: I wish to add to the points made by other Deputies about the extra €300,000 for GSOC. For a number of years we argued that GSOC had pretty much been designed to fail and was not fit for purpose. We tried to have the legislation changed on how it was structured. Also, it goes without saying the amount of moneys to which it has had access to carry out its work was not close to being sufficient. An extra €300,000 will not scratch the surface in meeting the challenges that face GSOC. However, €67 million is a lot of money, yet it is pretty much agreed that the current structure is seriously disappointing and not fit for purpose. I understand GSOC was designed as a temporary measure when first established. Instead, the organisation has lasted a long time. Are there plans to do something different or will the organisation be allowed to ramble on? We have got to know a few people who have spent a fair bit of time there of late and, my God, it is soul destroying. Are there plans to do things differently?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: The Deputy has asked two questions. On GSOC, resources and funding are kept under continuing review. I repeat it is absolutely essential that the om-

budsman commission operates effectively and has sufficient resources to allow for that effective operation. A few weeks ago a business proposal was submitted seeking 37 additional staff at a cost of €1.7 million. This matter is under active consideration at the moment. Active consideration is also being given to allowing GSOC to retain an additional €1 million in funding from the now closed fixed charge notices, FCN, investigation. That would put GSOC in a position to address some of the issues raised. Consideration will be given to providing GSOC with its own Vote and providing that an officer of GSOC would be the Accounting Officer in the context of proposals to change legislation. In this regard, as I said earlier, the Commission on the Future of Policing in Ireland, which will report to me in September, is important. I believe there is an important role for that body in assessing the current independence or otherwise of GSOC. I look forward to ongoing engagement with the chairman and members of the commission with a view to ensuring that it fulfils its statutory functions in such a way that those who are in receipt of or seeking its services will have confidence.

On the matter of direct provision, it is not my wish that people would spend long periods in accommodation provided by the State. While I acknowledge there are shortcomings, I also acknowledge the firm progress that has been made on the recommendations put forward by the former judge, Mr. Justice McMahon. Most of his recommendations are now being implemented. I am committed to making further improvements in the protection process, including the matter of State-provided accommodation. I must say there are challenges there but we will continue to meet those challenges in a way that benefits everybody involved in the system. That said, I accept the situation is far from ideal.

Deputy Mick Wallace: We all realise the number of people seeking asylum or refugee status here will not diminish in the near future, given the amount of wars that are taking place around the world. We only have to look to places like Yemen to see that a lot of the problems of tomorrow are being created today by the indiscriminate destruction in that country. It is probably worth noting that none of the three countries that were so eager to bomb Syria last week wants to take in Syrian refugees. We will have serious challenges in this area for a long time to come. Maybe instead of these glorified refugee camps we should be considering the State itself doing something directly in terms of building facilities that can provide accommodation for these people while they wait for their applications to be processed. We should consider this rather than relying on a mercenary private sector which is providing despicable conditions for these people. Has there be any thought given to that option? Would the State consider it? It is not as though we are getting a bargain at €67 million. Has thought been given to the State doing something directly to provide more acceptable living conditions?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I do not accept what Deputy Wallace says in terms of the extent of his criticism. I visit direct provision centres and it seems to me that the greatest challenge is the length of time that residents spend in State-provided accommodation. That is an issue that needs to be addressed and is being addressed in the context of the International Protection Act. In the meantime, it needs to be pointed out that the accommodation system certainly provides for the basic needs of people while they are awaiting a determination or a decision on their application. I will continue to ensure that the process of improvement in protection continues. I refer specifically to the work Mr. Justice McMahon has done. The recommendations he made are being systematically and progressively worked through. I acknowledge there are alternatives to State-provided accommodation but I would be most anxious to ensure, at the earliest opportunity, that the length of time that people are in direct provision centres is reduced. We must minimise any undue delays for people who are awaiting a determination on their status.

Chairman: I have a question on this Vote, in conclusion. Perhaps it is unfair and the Minister may not have the information immediately to hand. Does the Minister know the average length of stay of individuals or families in direct provision centres? Does he know the longest period of time spent, either currently or historically, in direct provision? Nobody in this room would not concur that the most objectionable aspect of all this is that in some cases, people are in direct provision, with their lives suspended, for years. There would be a general acceptance of direct provision as long as it was always understood that it was short term. It baffles me that it takes so long to process individual applications. It is better to have a result that is reflective of the facts and information to hand rather than this suspension of peoples' lives, which is soul destroying for them, particularly where there are children involved. It is absolutely dreadful. I have to say this is the area that causes greatest concern in my opinion.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: There are a little over 400 people in direct provision for a period of five years or more. That figure is down. The longest-serving person that I have met is a woman who indicated that she was in direct provision for nine years. That is merely anecdotal, however. I am assured that if that is the case, she is one of a very small number of persons. We need to ensure that applications are dealt with expeditiously and efficiently. The numbers in direct provision accommodation for a period of five years or more at the end of December last year are significantly lower than those in a similar position at the end of December 2016. The numbers are down from just under 600 to 430. However, it is important that we ensure the applications are dealt with. There are considerable changes under the 2015 Act that will lead towards that. Within our democracy it is open to any applicant, who may not have succeeded in their initial application, to appeal. That is their entitlement under our law and one that I very much respect. However, having regard to the various stages of an appeal, it gives rise to people being in the system for what might be regarded as a very considerable period. It is partly due to initiatives and appeals that are going through our legal process.

Chairman: I have a final question on this. I heard the Minister very loud and clear expressing a similar sentiment to that I hold - that we need to have a much more efficient and expeditious processing of applications. I take on board what he said on the appeals process. Can he assure the committee that every effort is being made to ensure we have an expeditious efficient processing service? We would like to know that that is being proactively pursued. What are the remaining impediments to achieving that?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I keep in close contact with the former judge, Mr. Justice McMahon. I acknowledge the work he continues to do in this area. He has recognised that length of stay was the key challenge that needed to be addressed. I assure the committee that the focus of everybody involved is to meet the needs of those in the process in order to mitigate and minimise any undue discomfort that may be placed upon them by virtue of their being in direct provision for such a lengthy period.

However, we are seeing a positive impact as a consequence of the 2015 legislation on the duration of stay. I am satisfied that that will continue into the future. In the meantime, even for those who are in direct provision for the short to medium term, there are areas where ongoing improvements can be carried out. I again acknowledge everyone in the system working towards that, in particular the independent recommendations of the McMahon working group and the need to ensure that all these recommendations are fully implemented. At this stage we are on the plus side of the 90%.

Chairman: I thank the Minister for that and I thank the members for their address of Vote 24 in the various elements that have been raised.

I now invite questions from members on Vote 25, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

Deputy Clare Daly: I am quite concerned about this one. The Minister obviously knows that we have finally ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, under which we are required to set up an advisory group on people with disabilities to work with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission to monitor that. Monitoring implementation will require resourcing and funding, which do not seem to be ring-fenced anywhere. There is no way that the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission can do it on its own. We need to set up this committee and it needs to be given teeth. If there is extra funding for that, I cannot see it. Where is it reflected?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: It is in the justice section, in the justice Vote.

Deputy Clare Daly: Is there extra money to set up the advisory committee?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: It will be set up this year in terms of monitoring the issues involved - the establishment of the advisory committee.

Deputy Clare Daly: Does that mean it is not under the budget of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, but under a different budgetary heading?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: It is under the justice budget. It is actually under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission's budget.

Deputy Clare Daly: That means there is no extra money for it. It has taken us so long to ratify the convention and now we have ratified it we are not setting aside any money for the key body we are required to establish in order to monitor compliance with the convention. That is-----

Deputy Charles Flanagan: They have said they are going to do it. I am not sure of the extent to which there is a significant cost factor. It is my understanding that this committee is being established.

Deputy Clare Daly: My point is that this is a new function that the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission is being given. It needs to be done effectively. There is no way it has enough people sitting around doing nothing at the moment who have the time that this would require. To monitor implementation of the convention is a body of work that will take at least one extra person working there if not more. It needs more money to do that job if it is to do it in the manner that people expect. Otherwise our signing up to the convention is meaningless.

Chairman: In the absence of any further response to that, I think the Deputy is-----

Deputy Charles Flanagan: At the end of last year 45 staff were in place. The Deputy will be aware that recruitment is ongoing with a view to having all 64 staff in place as soon as possible. It is a reasonable assumption to say that sufficient funds are available to allow that recruitment to take place. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities advisory committee is being established.

Deputy Clare Daly: I do not think it is enough. The Minister has said he is giving it a 1% increase in funding to take on this enormous extra task. I would be concerned that it is not enough.

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Chairman: Ms Logan will appear before the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Justice and Equality in the coming month. Perhaps it can be addressed at that time. I hope the Minister will note the Deputy's concerns over funding for this committee and its role.

No other Deputies are indicating on Vote 25.

We now come to the final Vote, Vote 41, the Policing Authority. The committee members have all been here for four hours and I acknowledge they are absolutely exhausted but we are at the final hurdle.

Deputy Mick Wallace: I would like four hours on the Policing Authority.

Chairman: Where would the Deputy start?

Deputy Clare Daly: We could save all the money it is getting. We could take it all back and spend it on something else.

Chairman: Would anybody like to make a considered contribution? Would the Minister like to make any comment on the Policing Authority Vote?

Deputy Charles Flanagan: I thank the committee for its engagement. On a number of specific issues, further information is required. I will endeavour to have that information to the Chairman and the members at the earliest opportunity over the coming days.

Chairman: I thank the Minister and his officials for assisting the committee in its consideration of the Revised Estimates. As we have now completed our consideration of the Revised Estimates for Votes 20, 21, 22, 24, 25 and 41 - I note an absentee in that list - the clerk will send a message to the Clerk of the Dáil.

Message to Dáil

Chairman: In accordance with Standing Order 90, the following message will be sent to the Dáil:

The Select Committee on Justice and Equality has completed its consideration of the following Revised Estimates for the year ending 31 December 2018: Vote 20 - Garda Síochána; Vote 21 - Prisons; Vote 22 - Courts Service; Vote 24 - Justice and Equality; Vote 25 - Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission; and Vote 41 - Policing Authority.

Under Standing Order 89(2), the message is deemed to be the report of the committee.

The select committee adjourned at 1 p.m. until 9 a.m. on Wednesday, 2 May 2018.