



Opening Address

for the

Commissioner's

appearance before the

Public Accounts Committee

on

Thursday 2nd February, 2012

Chairman, Members of the Committee,

I thank you for the invitation to appear before the Committee in my capacity as Accounting Officer for the Garda Vote and I look forward to discussing any aspect of the Vote with you and the members of the Committee.

The structure of An Garda Síochána comprises a central Headquarters, National Support Units and geographical operational units organised into 6 Regions, 25 Divisions, 109 Districts and 703 Sub-Districts. Following the Comprehensive Review of Expenditure undertaken in 2011 a total of 39 Garda Stations will be closed in 2012.

The strength of the Garda service on the 31st December 2011 was 13,894 sworn members, inclusive of all ranks. The strength of the Force as 31st December 2010 was 14,377 (all ranks), a reduction of 483 members. It is currently projected that a further 293 sworn members will retire in the first two months of this year. In the fourteen months from January 2011 to February 2012, 776 sworn members will have retired.

Pursuant to section 19(4) of the Garda Síochána Act 2005, the Garda Commissioner became the appropriate authority for civilian staff of An Garda Síochána in October 2006. A dedicated Civilian HR Directorate was simultaneously established to support the Commissioner in discharging this new statutory responsibility and to drive forward the implementation of the civilianisation programme.

The number of full-time equivalent civilian staff employed in An Garda Síochána was 2,074 at 31st December, 2011 and the ratio of civilian to sworn members was 1:7. An Garda Síochána remains committed to attaining a lower ratio however this is influenced by the current Public Sector recruitment moratorium.

The 2012 budget for the Garda Vote amounts to €1.325 billion which is 8% less than the 2011 budget of €1.439 billion. To ensure that the maximum amount of resources are allocated to front line policing I have initiated a number of action plans to address this issue. My general budgetary strategy is aimed at securing increased efficiencies in the deployment of Garda resources.

As an organisation we are not immune from the harsh economic realities which are impacting on the community and the public sector. Like everyone else we must continue to find efficiencies and

still provide a professional service. To this end, I have put in place financial controls at all levels within An Garda Síochána, including monthly reporting and profiling of overtime expenditure, with a view to obtaining efficiencies and value for money in the use of overtime. My emphasis continues to be placed on an intelligence led, time limited, focused policing approach.

Our commitment is to maintain operational effectiveness and resilience but in order to do that work must be prioritised and some difficult choices must be made.

There is a challenge there for us in managing public expectations and explaining that while a policing service may not always be provided in the same way as it was in the past, it is no less effective and our commitment to the community is not diminished.

AFIS

Turning to Chapter 21 in the 2010 Comptroller and Auditor General Report on Fingerprint Systems, the final phase of the AFIS four phase project was accepted by the AFIS Project Board in October 2009. The project has resulted in significant benefits to An Garda Síochána in the prevention, investigation and detection of criminal activities. This application is also now used by other Justice Agencies including Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner and the Irish Prison Service in their day to day activities. The original business case estimated a cost of €18million for the project excluding any contingency. The actual cost of the system was €23.13million which included €1.97 million for system enhancements and additional hardware based upon increased and expanded operational requirements which were not envisaged in the original tender. In addition, and at the request of the Department of Justice and Equality, €1.33 million was spent on developing the EVisa Pilot for implementation in two locations in Nigeria, Lagos and Abuja to address the issue of visa shopping following the United Kingdom's introduction of biometric visas. Therefore the effective net project overrun of €1.83 million which equates to 11% of the tendered price and is within the 10 – 15% contingency normally provided for a project of this scale.

Since the new AFIS system went live 51% percent of all criminal prints are captured using the new livescan technology. Additionally, due to the increased number of livescans available within An Garda Síochána the number of prints captured annually has increased from 16,013 in 2008 to 21,129 in 2011 an overall increase of 5,116 equating to a 32% increase.

As part of the increased project functionality and integration of Garda IT systems, prints captured by livescan can be checked in real time to validate the identity of the person and results are provided on the PULSE or Garda National Immigration IT systems. The additional hit rate on prints found at crime scenes has increased significantly by 90% since the first phase of the project went live in 2007.

I will stop there, Chairman. My team and I are available to take whatever questions you and the Committee might wish to raise.