

# Minutes of Meeting of the Policing and Community Safety Authority

*Date:* 28/29 May 2025

*Venue:* Virtual/The Gresham Hotel, Dublin 1

## Part A – Authority Meeting

### Attendance

*Authority:* Elaine Byrne (Chairperson), Nessa Lynch, Ken O’ Leary, Mick Feehan, Martina Moloney, Joe Costello, Emma Reidy, Freda McKittrick, Tony O’Brien

*Secretary:* Aoife Clabby

*Authority Staff:* Helen Hall (Chief Executive), Margaret Tumelty, Karen Shelly (items 6-11), Alywin Barton

### 1. Authority Members – private session

The Authority did not exercise its option to have a meeting in private.

### 2. Chairperson’s Opening Remarks

The meeting agenda was approved, subject to a minor drafting amendment.

No conflicts of interest were declared by any Member in relation to any of the items for consideration.

The Chairperson reminded Members to submit their declarations of interest to the Authority Secretary, if they had not already done so.

Members were provided with a brief overview of matters discussed with the Commissioner, as part of the meeting to prepare for engagement with the Authority. Arising from the meeting, Members were advised that An Garda Síochána had commissioned an independent review of roads policing activity and operations and that a copy of the report would be provided to the Authority for consideration. Members noted that the Commissioner was scheduled to appear before the Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Home Affairs and Migration on 10 June.

In the context of the public meeting, the use of academic titles for Authority Members who have earned a doctoral degree was discussed. It was agreed that in the interests of consistency and simplicity, no academic titles would be used.

A number of pieces of correspondence were noted including:

- Correspondence from Fiosrú in respect of matters relating to the fatal shooting of Mr George Nkencho. It was noted that the coroner's inquest into the fatal shooting of Mr Nkencho was scheduled to commence in the coming weeks.
- A request that had issued to the Commissioner, seeking a report on the management of munitions by An Garda Síochána and assertions in the public domain in this regard. Members noted that the report requested was expected at an early date.
- A copy of correspondence from the Commissioner to the Ceann Comhairle, following statements made by Dáil deputies regarding the search of female prisoners, following their arrest for public order offences as a result of a protest outside Dáil Éireann on 31 March. Members discussed a number of matters arising from consideration of the correspondence including An Garda Síochána's policy, procedures and practice, as they relate to searches of people in custody and associated constitutional and human rights. The ability of the PCSA to oversee the implementation of recommendations arising from the Garda Síochána Inspectorate report, 'Delivering Custody Services' in the future was also noted.

### 3. Consent Agenda Items

#### 3.1 Minutes of previous meetings: 27 March & 29 April

Members noted the minutes of the Policing Authority of the 27 March.

The Chairperson advised that provision of the minutes, including a confidential minute arising from this meeting, was important from the point of view of continuity and in particular, the transfer of rights and liabilities of the Policing Authority to the Authority. The Chairperson also highlighted the provisions relating to the production of a confidential minute and the process of recording majority decisions, further to the Authority's standing orders. It was noted that the use of these provisions had been extremely rare on the part of the previous Authority.

The minutes of the meeting of 29 April were approved and cleared for publication, subject to receipt of any observations from An Garda Síochána in respect of their factual accuracy.

#### 3.2 PCSA and Garda Síochána Actions Logs

Members were provided with a brief overview of the purpose of the actions logs. The Logs of Actions were noted and proposals to close specified actions were approved.

Members noted actions outstanding from An Garda Síochána in particular, its driver training and firearms policies, requested by the Authority in 2019 and its training strategy, requested in 2017. Members were apprised of the approach to policy development in An Garda Síochána and the significant challenges arising from it. Members also noted the difficulties in prioritising training delivery, in the absence of an overarching strategy.

### 4. Chief Executive's Report

The Chief Executive's report was taken as read and updates were provided to Members on a number of matters in the context of the report, including in relation to:

Release of Policing Authority correspondence by Department of Justice: Members noted the provision, for information, of correspondence between the Policing Authority and the Minister for Justice, that had been released by the Department

in response to a Freedom of Information (FOI) request. The Chief Executive advised that she had engaged with Department officials in relation to the process of notifying the Authority when its documents are to be released under FOI. Member were also advised that some of the correspondence released had been the subject of media coverage.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Inspections: Members were advised that a constructive meeting had taken place with AGS's Data Protection Officer and Executive Director, Legal and Compliance on 15 May, to consider a draft MOU that had been sent to AGS for consideration in February. However, Members noted that an internal process within AGS to engage with operational colleagues on the MOU was yet to commence. The Chief Executive outlined additional communication that had taken place with the Commissioner and the Executive Director Legal, emphasising the importance of agreeing the MOU by the statutory deadline of 2 July. It was agreed that the matter would be raised with the Acting Commissioner at the meeting in public and further, that the MOU would be tabled for consideration at the June Authority meeting.

Arising from this discussion, the Chief Executive also highlighted considerable delays being experienced in receiving responses to information requests from AGS regarding two post implementation reviews, currently being conducted by the PCSA. Members were advised that this matter was being closely monitored.

Chief Executive and Chairperson stakeholder engagements: Members were advised that a series of meetings had taken place with the Chairperson of the Oireachtas Committee on Justice, the Chief Executive of the Office of the Inspector of Prisons (OIP), the Assistant Secretary General at the Department of Transport and the Minister for Justice. The Chief Executive advised that there had been a good information exchange at all of the meetings. In particular, the Chief Executive noted the importance of building a positive working relationship with the OIP, in the context of its future role as the National Preventive Mechanism for places of detention.

Judicial Review Proceedings: Members were provided with a brief update in relation to judicial proceedings, instigated against the Garda Commissioner and the Authority in relation to the dismissal of a garda member. Members noted that the matter had been adjourned to 1 July.

Garda Síochána quarterly review of performance: Members were advised that the quarterly review of performance against the Annual Policing Plan for quarter one had been received from AGS in recent days. Members noted that the report and any issues arising, following assessment by the Executive, would be provided for consideration at the June Authority meeting.

Information notes for Authority Members: The Chief Executive drew attention to three information notes, provided in support of Members' engagement in public with the Commissioner in the afternoon. Members were invited to provide feedback, if desired, in relation to the usefulness of the information notes, in addition to any suggestions for change.

Artificial Intelligence: Members sought clarification on the PCSA's position in relation to the use of generative AI, following the publication of Guidelines for the use of AI in the Public Service by the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation. Members were advised that under the PCSA's current ICT and Security policy, AI tools were not permitted without written authorisation, but that the OGCIO's current testing of Microsoft Copilot Chat was being monitored.

Social Media: The PCSA's presence on the 'X' social media platform was discussed with the Chief Executive. It was noted that continued presence would be considered in the context of any development in the civil and public service.

#### 4.1 Issues for discussion or decision

Draft Terms of Reference (TORs), National Steering Group for Community Safety: An overview of the first meeting of the National Steering Group for Community Safety, which took place on 15 May, was provided to the Members. Members were advised that minutes of the steering group will be routinely provided to the Authority for information, as they are received. Members considered the draft Terms of Reference for the Steering Group. The Chief Executive advised that initial observations had been provided in relation to the TORs at the 15 May meeting, and that further consideration would be given to them at the Steering Group meeting on 25 June.

Draft Regulations for Safety Partnerships and draft Guidance, Local Community Safety Partnerships (LCSPs)

Members were provided with draft Regulations, further to section 114 of the PSCS

Act, for Safety Partnerships and draft Guidance for the Operating of LCSPs. Both documents had been received from the Department of Justice on 27 May.

Members provided a number of initial observations in relation to both draft documents. Given the late receipt of the draft Regulations and the draft Guidance from the Department of Justice and mindful of the tight consultation deadlines, it was agreed that any additional observations would be provided bilaterally to the Secretary and that responses would issue in respect of both, in line with the consultation deadlines.

Members discussed generally the ways in which the Authority's function relating to community safety and its role as a member of the National Steering Group intersects with its other functions under the PSCS Act. The pivotal role that the National Steering Group will play in identifying and addressing obstacles to effective working and ensuring good communications was noted. The provision for the Director of the National Office for Community Safety to meet in public with the Authority was seen as a positive, as was the capacity for the PCSA to work with community safety partners through the National Steering Group and other channels.

The opportunities afforded by the PCSA consultation on the Policing Priorities to engage with the coordinators of the Local Community Safety Partnerships was also noted. However, the lacuna created by the delay in establishing the LCSPs themselves was seen as a risk to their successful establishment, at least in the short term. Members discussed the need for each LCSP to respond to unique circumstances in each area and the opportunity that this could present. The importance of the Authority assessing the extent to which AGS is responding to the new structures at local level was also highlighted.

In concluding discussion, it was agreed that there would be an opportunity to give these matters further consideration, as part of the development of the PCSA's Strategic Plan.

#### Status of the PCSA Business Plan 2025

Members noted progress made on the delivery of the PCSA Business Plan to 30 April 2025. Members were advised that further consideration was being given by the SMT to the capacity to deliver the plan across the remainder of the year. This was in light of the resources devoted in the first third of the year to the

establishment of the PCSA, the necessity to bring forward the development of the Policing Priorities by two months and the onboarding of new staff.

Action number	Action point	By date	By whom
A_02_01	Provide feedback on draft Terms of Reference for the National Community Safety Steering Group	ASAP	Chief Executive
A_02_02	Provide a response on draft Regulations for Safety Partnerships to the Department of Justice, incorporating any feedback received from Authority Members.	30 May	Chief Executive
A_02_03	Provide a response on draft Guidance for Local Community Safety Partnerships to Department of Justice, incorporating any feedback received from Authority Members	13 June	Chief Executive

## 5. Risk Management

### 5.1 Appointment of Audit and Risk committee Chairperson

Members approved a proposal to appoint Authority Member, Mick Feehan, as Chairperson of the Audit and Risk Committee. Members were advised that letters of appointment had issued to incoming Committee members, Geraldine Smith and Declan Hoban. It was agreed that the Senior Manager, Governance, would liaise with the Committee Chair in relation to induction and meeting dates for the remainder of 2025.

Action number.	Action point	By date	By whom
A_02_04	Engage with ARC Chair to agree meeting dates for the remainder of 2025	ASAP	Secretary

## 6. PCSA Strategy Statement: approach to development

Members considered and approved the proposed approach to the development of the PCSA Strategy Statement 2026-2028, including levels of scoping, engagement, consultation and associated timeframes. It was agreed that Members would meet on the afternoon prior to the June Authority meeting for a dedicated strategy planning session.

Action number.	Action point	By date	By whom
A_02_05	Authority to meet on 25 June to commence development of the PCSA Strategic Plan 2026-2028.	ASAP	Secretary

## 7. Policing Priorities

Members were provided with a detailed update on progress to develop the Policing Priorities 2026-2028, including in relation to the online public consultation, media activity in the period and in-person consultations undertaken to that point. It was noted that all four regional events involving a range of stakeholders had taken place. In addition, engagement with garda personnel on a county-by-county basis, was substantively progressed and which would continue into early June. Members were provided with a high-level thematic overview of issues arising in the consultation process to date.

Members had a wide-ranging, detailed and lengthy discussion in relation to the various themes arising from the consultation process so far and related considerations for the Authority, in setting the Priorities for the next period. Members also had regard to the implications for garda leadership at all levels in the organisation, bearing in mind the emerging themes, particularly those articulated by garda personnel. Members discussed the wider political, social, technological, legal and economic space within which AGS will be operating and the potential impact on the breadth, ambition and achievability of any priorities that the Authority might set.

Members had regard to the statutory provisions relating to the establishment of the Policing Priorities, the requirements in relation to the Strategic Plan and Annual Service Plans of AGS, and the various roles and responsibilities of the Authority, the Commissioner and the Garda Board. The Chief Executive advised that she had met with the Executive Director, Strategy and Transformation to ensure appropriate alignment of the various documents required by statute and had issued a letter to the Commissioner advising that the Authority would be providing views in relation to both the Annual Service Plan and the Strategic Plan of AGS. Members noted that this correspondence had been copied to the Chairperson of the Garda Board. The importance of ensuring the Garda Board is aware of the Authority's views was agreed.

Finally, Members discussed the new oversight framework for An Garda Síochána, as set out in the Act. Brief consideration was given to how cohesion and effective operation of the separate, yet interlocking functions of the various statutory parties could be ensured. It was agreed that the matter would be kept under review, in the context of the PSCA's new Strategy Statement 2026-2028.

## 8. Annual Assessment of Policing Performance

Members noted the provision of a draft Assessment of Policing Performance for the period 2024. Members had regard to the fact that the Authority established under the PSCS Act had no statutory function in relation to the period under assessment. However, it was agreed that there was value in providing an assessment of the performance of AGS against its Policing Plan and the Policing Priorities for 2024, in the public interest. In this regard, it was agreed that any final report published should make clear the unusual position that the current Authority finds itself in, vis-à-vis assessment of policing performance in the period.

Members sought, and were provided with, further information in relation to aspects of the draft assessment, including progress made by AGS in the areas of data and technology; the extent of, and approach to, engagement with diverse communities; the evolving nature of approaches to developing targets and associated measures by AGS over the period since 2020; and, the intersection between community policing and community engagement hubs in each garda division, including management responsibilities.

Following discussion, it was agreed that report would be finalised by the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairperson and prepared for publication.

No.	Action point	By Date	By Whom
A_02_06	Finalise and publish the Assessment of Policing Performance 2024, in consultation with the Chairperson.	ASAP	Chairperson

## 9. Preparation for meeting with Garda Commissioner

Members discussed the agenda for the meeting and agreed the matters to be discussed with the Garda Commissioner.

### Documents for noting by the Authority

There were no documents for noting at this meeting of the Authority.

## Part B – Authority Meeting with the Garda Commissioner in public

### Attendance:

Authority & Executive: Elaine Byrne (Chairperson), Nessa Lynch, Ken O’ Leary, Mick Feehan, Martina Moloney, Joe Costello, Emma Reidy, Tony O’Brien, Freda McKittrick, Helen Hall (Chief Executive), Aoife Clabby (Secretary), Margaret Tumelty, Karen Shelly, Alywin Barton.

Garda Síochána: Shawna Coxon (Acting Commissioner), Justin Kelly (Deputy Commissioner), Paula Hilman (Assistant Commissioner), Angela Willis (Assistant Commissioner).

This meeting with the Garda Commissioner and his team was live streamed.

In accordance with the Authority’s Standing Orders, the official record of the meeting is the recording which is available to view at:

<https://www.pcsaireland.ie/meeting/policing-and-safety-authority-meeting-in-public/>

The following matters were then discussed during the meeting:

Item number	Agenda item	Principal matters discussed
	Chairperson’s Opening Remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Welcome extended to all attending the first meeting in public of the PCSA with the Garda Commissioner.</li><li>• Brief overview provided by the Acting Commissioner in relation to transnational crime and active investigations and extraditions.</li><li>• Minute’s silence observed in remembrance of roads policing member, Garda Kevin Flatley and acknowledgement of his commitment to roads policing and An Garda Síochána.</li><li>• Acknowledgement of injury on duty to a roads policing member in Finglas.</li></ul>

Item number	Agenda item	Principal matters discussed
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update provided by the Commissioner on roads fatalities, and what measures are being focused on to tackle this.</li> <li>• Noted that roads policing would be returned to as an agenda item at a future meeting of the Authority.</li> <li>• Brief overview provided on homicide investigations currently being carried out, as well as cold case reviews. Noted that homicide investigations, as an oversight theme, will be returned to by the Authority.</li> </ul>
10.	Policing service for our communities- approaches and impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion on whether community policing has improved since the rollout of the Garda Operating Model.</li> <li>• Outline provided on community engagement hubs in garda divisions, the roll-out of Local Community Safety Partnerships, how the work being done is measured, and successes achieved.</li> <li>• Discussion regarding community engagement resources, including garda vans</li> <li>• Consideration of the impact of a reduction in the number of community gardaí over the past number of years.</li> <li>• Engagement on training provided to garda members to become community gardaí, in addition to training for supervisors in this area of service provision.</li> <li>• Consideration of the efficacy of online training for community policing.</li> <li>• Discussion in relation to possible lack of communication between divisional community</li> </ul>

Item number	Agenda item	Principal matters discussed
		<p>engagement and crime hubs and if there was a risk of siloes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion regarding concerns expressed about the collapse of relationships between community gardaí and local communities in cases where garda members are moved to other areas.</li> <li>• Update provided on the status of the Community Policing Framework, and what learning there has been from the local community safety partnership pilots.</li> <li>• Outline provided on the current high visibility policing initiative in Dublin Metropolitan Region and how it is being resourced.</li> <li>• Engagement on what success looks like in terms of community policing, from An Garda Síochána's perspective.</li> </ul>
11.	Policing service for children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline provided of the Children's Plan, including its structure, scope and intent and expected timelines for finalisation and implementation.</li> <li>• Engagement on work carried out by AGS in order to protect vulnerable young people, whether they be offenders or victims.</li> <li>• Discussion on interactions between gardaí and young people that may be perceived as negative.</li> <li>• Consideration of interagency relationships between the Garda Síochána and other agencies such as Tusla.</li> <li>• Outline given on training being rolled out for specialist interviewing of children and</li> </ul>

Item number	Agenda item	Principal matters discussed
		<p>measures to minimise the risk of re-traumatisation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion on Operation Coisnaím, focussed on missing children in state care or seeking asylum.</li> <li>• Overview provided of the Barnahus model, its further roll-out and the importance of inter-agency collaboration to ensure success.</li> <li>• Engagement on what consideration is given by gardaí to the prevalence of neurodevelopmental issues among teenagers and young people.</li> <li>• Discussion regarding the delay of certain cases relating to children being put forward for prosecutions, the impact of these delays, and any initiatives being put in place to reduce them.</li> </ul>
12	Conduct discipline and individual performance management	<p>At the outset of the item, AGS requested to reinstate data on conduct and discipline that had previously been available in the Commissioner's monthly report to the Authority.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview provided of the challenges and opportunities arising from the introduction of the new suite of performance, conduct and discipline regulations under the PSCS Act and the level of preparedness of An Garda Síochána for their introduction.</li> <li>• Outline provided of changes to investigations undertaken by Fiosrú.</li> <li>• Discussion in relation to the current number of suspensions of garda members and whether any measures can be taken to reduce the length of time members are suspended for.</li> </ul>

Item number	Agenda item	Principal matters discussed
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consideration of the level of training provided to garda members who will be charged with conducting criminal investigations of other garda members.</li> <li>• Engagement on performance management and support, and how An Garda Síochána plans to get the most out of its staff through coaching and performance interventions.</li> <li>• Commendation of garda members who have brought other members to account in terms of conduct and discipline.</li> </ul>

Action Number	Action point	By Date	By Whom
A_02_07	To provide the Authority with a copy of the revised Community Policing Principles	ASAP	AGS
A_02_08	To provide the Authority with a copy of the Children's Plan	July	AGS
A_02_09	To provide the Authority with details of the extent of training provided to frontline gardaí in relation to children and brain development, in the context of engagement and questioning.	ASAP	AGS
A_02_10	To provide the Authority with a briefing document from Executive Director, People and Development on performance management in An Garda Síochána	ASAP	AGS
A_02_11	To provide the Authority with details of mediation and conflict resolution training.	ASAP	AGS