



AGSI

Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors
Cumann Sairsintí agus Cigirí de'n Gharda Síochána

AGSI Submission to the Commission on Public Sector Pay

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Submission to the Commission on Public Sector Pay Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (AGSI)

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Paschal Donohue, has invited views from the AGSI about the establishment of the Public Services Pay Commission (PSPC).

AGSI are happy to provide its view on how we believe the process should operate. However, AGSI have a commitment under the Haddington Road Agreement which committed the Government to review *'the remuneration and conditions of service of members of An Garda Síochána, including an evaluation of annualised hours/shift pay arrangements'*.

This submission is without prejudice to our commitment to the Review of An Garda Síochána. Where the Public Service Pay Commission fits within our current process remains unclear. Our submission should in no way be construed as conceding the right of the Review under Haddington Road in determining the remuneration of members of An Garda Síochána.

Background

A Public Service Pay Commission (PSPC) was committed to as part of the Programme for Government. The Commission will "examine pay levels across the public service, including entry levels of pay". However the fact that the Minister now indicates that this is 'an advisory body' would lead to speculation that recommendations from this Commission - which would lead to a faster restoration of civil service pay (and that preferred by Government) - can be rejected.

The AGSI are happy to engage in the process with a view to making a case for pay restoration for our members. As part of our negotiations on a sectoral agreement under Lansdowne Road we have been promised direct access to negotiate our own pay and conditions within this forum.

This is a critical aspect of our engagement in the process and we have a legitimate expectation that this promise will be honoured and respected.

Pay Comparators

Any proposals the Minister may have on the operation and functioning of the Commission have not been shared with this Association. There is however reports that the Commission

will examine pay levels for specific groups within the public sector and compare their rates of pay with those in the private sector.

This approach may be reasonable for many areas within the public sector. It is however not possible to compare the work of the Garda organisation with a private sector group. An Garda Síochána is a national police force with responsibility for state security, considering this, it is difficult to compare the work of police men and women in Ireland with that of police personnel in other jurisdictions.

With this in mind AGSI are calling for engagement with this Association to determine how work performed within An Garda Síochána will be benchmarked.

Process Operation

The process of examining public sector pay must be established so as to give confidence to those directly involved in the process. Similarly the public and Government must have confidence in the process also. Therefore it is expected there are inalienable principles that must be applied.

AGSI will outline what we believe these principles are and will then go further and set out additional principles which we believe are necessary for the sectoral engagement with the Garda Staff Associations

Principles underpinning the process

The process must not only be seen to be independent, knowledgeable of the subject matter under discussion and transparent but it must be effective in these areas. Therefore the process should:

- Be Chaired by a person with a background in industrial relations and an expert in their field.
- Be appropriately staffed and adequately funded to allow the job to be done effectively and avoid perception of just ‘paying lip service’ or ‘long fingering the process’.
- Independent of Government influence and given a clear unambiguous brief of requirements which does not prevent it from making awards which would result in increased public expenditure on An Garda Síochána.
- Be transparent to ensure there can be no questions on how decisions were reached. In this regard, the basis for the findings must be available to the Garda Associations together with the rationale for the decisions.

Principles underpinning a sectoral engagement with the Gardai

The Review of An Garda Síochána is ongoing. A determination has not yet been reached in relation to how the two processes (The Review and the PSCP) should/will operate or interact

or if a relationship exists between them at all. Considering this AGSI make the following observations without commitment to the process pending the conclusion of the Review.

A commitment to providing the Staff Associations with direct negotiations' rights must be matched with an appropriate structure.

AGSI believe that the process will benefit from discussing the global issue of Garda pay with all staff associations to determine the unique nature of the organisation in the initial stages. However, AGSI also believe that the differences in roles and responsibilities will require direct discussions with individual Associations to identify the scale of responsibilities of the various roles within the organisation.

The process must:

- Be time-framed to:
 - Give the process credibility and avoid untimely delays; and
 - Provide those engaging in it with a deadline for delivery and to manage expectations.

- Have subject area experts available to it to:
 - Validate the conclusions reached;
 - Ensure that all matters of importance expressed by the Associations have been adequately considered and weighted; and
 - Avoid misinterpretation or misconceptions due to lack of knowledge of the policing environment and policing generally.

- Take account of previous benchmarking agreements to:
 - Offset previous imbalances in pay awards; and
 - Prevent differentials between Associations being further widened and where appropriate to redress these differentials.

- Have the ability to fast track pay restoration where such is merited at entry and middle income pay levels; and

- Take account of change and modernisation initiatives implemented within the Garda organisation over the period of the recession and of the increased workload undertaken by Sergeants and Inspectors.

Conclusion

AGSI believe that a recovery in the national economy must be enjoyed all employees and all sectors in society. The Civil Service must not be allowed to lag behind other employees, simply because the Government have control over pay.

It is widely recognised by everyone that the Civil Service played an important role in the economic recovery through severe cuts in wages. The dedication, commitment and hard

work of this group of workers helped to bring the country through the most severe economic crisis experienced by the State.

Members of AGSI are among those Civil Servants that worked tirelessly in adverse circumstances to support the recovery. We are certain that our members are deserving of pay restoration for their effort and loyalty. We anticipate the Review will address this. We, do however reserve the right to engage with the PSCP.