



Once again Budget 2026 has failed to utilise budgetary changes to stimulate growth in the capacity of An Garda Síochána

Budget 2026 was yet another example, if one was needed, of the complete absence of any strategy or plan to address the ongoing recruitment crisis and the unprecedented retention challenges being experienced within An Garda Síochána. The effect of current difficulties are apparent to those outside the organisation who on a daily basis observe an absence of visible policing on the streets of this country. It is perhaps more alarmingly having a very detrimental effect on those within the organisation who increasingly find themselves overburdened with excessive workloads and exposed to additional dangers that arise when insufficient numbers of sworn members are available to respond to incidents as they occur.

The decision to announce the recruitment of 'up to' 1,000 gardaí without a single measure or initiative to make the target a reality showed a misunderstanding of the situation and a contempt towards those struggling to maintain the ever-thinning blue line. In what has become a nauseatingly repetitive and unachievable aspiration of delivering on fanciful recruitment targets, the annual three card trick was rolled out in the hope that empty promises would create the illusion of extra or additional gardaí in the pipeline for communities crying out for protection from lawlessness and disorder.

The decision to announce a target which has not been achieved by successive recruitment drives in recent years without a single adjustment to any of the terms and conditions which are proving to be unattractive in the current job market showed a lack of vision, strategy or

imagination and took away any potential credibility the announcement might have had under normal circumstances. The fact that the announcement was made as a working group of departmental officials and senior Garda staff were finalising a report that would suggest that there is no capacity to train 1,000 gardaí per annum shifted the budget announcement from being fanciful or optimistic to somewhat farcical and utter fantasy.

Yet again a high level report was researched and issued without the knowledge or input of the representative associations of any rank within the organisation and not a single sworn member of the leadership team with operational knowledge or personal experience of recruitment and training of gardaí. Yet again the disconnect between decision-making and those with organisational or operational experience was very apparent, something that many see as contributing to alienation and low morale within the ranks.

Continuing in the vein of repetitive and utterly uninspiring announcements was the allocation of an additional 19 million to the overtime budget. Again this is not a solution to any of the critical personnel or skill deficits across An Garda Síochána but actually an acknowledgement that the policing requirements of the State can only be delivered if the overburdened members can give even more of their time and efforts. The effectiveness of additional overtime budgets will be thwarted by the ever-increasing form filling and email generating processes that are now part of the payment process. The bureaucracy often cited by the GRA has actually now become an obstruction to

the deployment of available members who rather than feeling appreciated for their commitment are increasingly experiencing difficulties and delays in being paid for additional duties performed.

Again the disconnect between a bloated administrative function and duplicative bureaucracy is impacting on the effectiveness of policing. This raises real and genuine concerns about the direction in which the priorities of decision-makers are focussed. Similarly the announcement of 200 additional Garda staff was lacking in detail. Will the focus be on recruiting individuals with a skills base to enhance policing and provide satisfying careers in the organisation assisting criminal investigation or will it just be an expansion of multi-layered duplicative administration that has defined much of the expansion of recent years?

The failure to utilise budgetary changes to stimulate growth in the capacity of An Garda Síochána to rise to the many challenges on the horizon was brought into sharp focus by the criminality, violence and disorder which occurred at Citywest and was an example of how resources can be stretched at any moment in an unpredictable and often volatile world.

The mission to keep citizens safe and protect the security of the State requires more gardaí on duty at all times, advanced equipment and training with a capacity to respond in a timely fashion to evolving situations.

Building an adequately staffed police force ever-ready to provide the service required of it in these challenging times will require a lot more than the tired failed strategies currently on repeat.