

Wednesday, 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2007 17.30hrs

Press release

### **Commencement of Operations in the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission**

The Garda Síochána Ombudsman (GSOC) commenced operations today 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2007.

On its first full day of business GSOC received 62 complaints from members of the public against members of the Gardaí. A further 22 members of the public requested that complaint forms be posted to them.

### **Further Information**

Kieran FitzGerald, Head of Communications and Research, Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission, ph; 087-2851096

Louise Prendergast, Communications and Research, Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission, ph; 01 8716722

### **Notes:**

- The Ombudsman Commission, under the Garda Síochána Act 2005, is required and empowered to:
- Directly and independently investigate complaints against members of the Garda Síochána;

- Investigate any matter, even where no complaint has been made, where it appears that a Garda may have committed an offence or behaved in a way that would justify disciplinary proceedings
- Investigate any practice, policy or procedure of the Garda Síochána with a view to reducing the incidence of related complaints.
- GSOC headquarters will be located at 150 Abbey Street Upper, Dublin 1.
- GSOC will have two other offices in Roscrea, Co. Tipperary and Longford Town.
- Any member of the public who is directly affected by, or who witnesses conduct by a Garda member that is alleged to constitute misbehaviour may make a complaint. A person may make a complaint on behalf on another, with his or her consent.
- In cases involving death or serious harm to an individual as a result of Garda Operations, or while in the custody or care of the Garda Síochána, GSOC will carry out investigations.
- GSOC investigators will have ‘all the powers and responsibilities, duties and privileges’ of a Garda when investigating complaints. These include powers to enter Garda stations, to question, search, arrest, detain, take bodily samples and seize evidence.
- Experienced investigations staff have been recruited from a variety of backgrounds. They include a number of personnel who have backgrounds as investigators in police services in the UK, South Africa, Malta, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere.
- The Director of Investigations is Paul Buschini, a former detective superintendent with the Lancashire Constabulary. His deputy is Ray Leonard who comes from the Competition Authority and with extensive prior experience in other enforcement areas.
- At present the Garda Síochána Complaints Board receives about 1,300 complaints a year. In ratio to numbers of personnel, this is very low when compared with the experience in the UK. GSOC anticipates a rise in this number.
- The Commission believes that a staff of around 100 persons will be required to meet initial needs. 46 investigative staff have been appointed.

- There are 20 Case Officers. These will not be investigators but will perform the initial assessment of complaints to GSOC and manage many cases which do not require the resources of a full investigative team.
  
- Training programmes have been conducted in Dublin by staff from the University of Portsmouth who also provide training for Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland and Independent Police Complaints Commission for England and Wales. GSOC has had the active co-operation of the Kings' Inns Law School and the Garda College at Templemore in devising its training programmes.
  
- Ultimately, any investigation by GSOC into an alleged breach of discipline or criminal behaviour must end in one of three ways.
  1. The Commissioners may find that there is no case to answer.
  2. They may recommend to the Garda Commissioner that disciplinary proceedings take place.
  3. They may recommend to the Director of Prosecutions that charges be laid.