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GRA 13/02

December 2018

Each member: Garda Representative Association

Dear colleague

Enclosed you will find a copy of your GRA diary for 2019 containing invaluable information regarding services and entitlements.

ASSOCIATION REFORM AND AMPERSAND

It has been an extraordinary year in the modern development of the Association which is approaching the end of the 40th anniversary of its foundation. The year commenced with the Special Delegate Conference in January. That conference endorsed the findings of the Ampersand Report into the Strategic and Operational Review of the GRA. Conference directed that, with the exception of the proposed changes to our representative structures, the Association implement the remainder of the report under the current Associations Rules and Constitution. This is a major job that determined much of the Association's business during the year. The following are some key initiatives progressed during the year:

- **Financial Governance:** As part of our technology investment, we will upgrade our internal accounting and control software in the first-half 2019. Following two tendering processes the following appointments were made:
 - **Quintas** (www.quintas.com) as new auditors to the GRA. They will shortly commence our 2018 audit.
 - **Byrne Pension Trustees** (www.byrneactuary.com) as independent trustee of the GRA AVC Plan and the GRA Life Assurance Plan.
- **Technology:** Following a tendering process, **Inventise** (www.inventise.com) has been selected to develop and implement a comprehensive online membership support and communications system designed for mobile and pc.
- **Representative Training:** An external Training Co-ordinator was appointed to lead a training project. A series of 3 x 3 day Pilot Rep Training modules were conducted for CEC members. In addition twelve members have completed a Training and Development Course to enable them to deliver training to members. This will accelerate and extend our training throughout the country in 2019.
- **Staffing:** We have carried out a review of our HQ staffing resources and skills. A draft report has been completed and will be presented to the CEC shortly.
- **Dignity in the Workplace:** A modern and fit for purpose Dignity in the Workplace policy and procedure is being progressed with the assistance of an external professional.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Association continues to develop an integrated communications strategy (ICT) with its members, other stakeholders and the public. The recruitment of an In-house Professional Events and Press Officer has recently been approved by the CEC. Selection will be by open public competition. The job of the successful candidate will be to underpin and coordinate the Association's communication strategy and policies.

INTER-DEPARTMENTAL WORKING GROUP ON INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN AN GARDA SÍOCHÁNA

The Industrial Relations (Amendment) Bill 2018

The above Bill has now gone through the second stage in the Dáil. It has strong cross-party support and, as currently drafted, doesn't detract from our current legislative industrial relations status or capacity. It will provide welcome legislative access to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) and the Labour Court but, regrettably, not on the same basis as other workers. There is no entitlement for members of An Garda Síochána to take industrial action (even after exhausting all procedures) nor does it provide the option of trade union status for the Garda associations.

Only time will tell if the industrial relations institutions of the State (the WRC and Labour Court) will be able to engage with the Garda associations, and their members, in such a way as to circumvent the obvious defects in the Bill. If they cannot, then legislative change will again, no doubt, be required at a future date.

Internal structures and procedures

In order for the Minister to give effect to the Bill's provisions, it is necessary that new internal Garda industrial dispute resolution procedures and structures be put in place. The WRC has circulated draft Individual Grievance Procedures Scheme and draft Collective Procedures. These are currently the subject of detailed examination, with a submission due to be made to the WRC.

39 HOUR WEEK AND 1/41 OVERTIME DIVISOR

The Association regards as unacceptable both the anomaly of Gardaí having to work a 40-hour week and the outdated 1/41 divisor. The Official Side views the 39-hour week demand for Gardaí as a 2.5% pay increase – a view we do not agree with. The GRA referred the issue to the WRC before the 31st of March 2017 (as specified in the 2016 Labour Court recommendation). At the direction of the CEC, it had been hoped to have the matter referred to the Labour Court but, there are access complications in doing this.

In the absence of progress, the WRC was requested, last May, to forward the issue to the Labour Court. However, the WRC has not yet agreed to refer the matter on to the Court. It is intended to press the matter when legislative access is in place.

While some progress may be possible on the 1/41 Overtime Divisor, it is intrinsically linked to the 39-hour week and therefore has been left in abeyance until the broader issue is resolved. We have sought that any resolution will have retrospective application.

ROSTERS AND WORKING TIME

As a co-signatory to the PSSA, the GRA agreed to a review of rosters and working time. Initially, during the PSSA negotiations, the Official Side indicated that the January 2016 draft WTA agreement, agreed in principle by the GRA CEC, but subsequently rejected by the members in a ballot, remained on the table.

It is clear that the Garda Commissioner does not consider the current roster fit for purpose and has indicated that he intends entering into negotiations to address the situation. We are advised that these negotiations will be under the auspices of the PSSA, including the referral of disputes to the Lansdowne Road Agreement (LRA) Oversight Body, if an agreement cannot be reached.

Notwithstanding the above, the GRA is concerned at the management breach of the current 2012 Working Time Agreement (WTA) through the unilateral introduction of a 12-hour Armed Support Unit roster in the Southern Region. At its November 2018 meeting, the CEC unanimously agreed that this roster must be reversed before there is any further engagement in a review of rosters and/or working time.

CIVILIANISATION

A total of 2,086 posts have been identified for possible civilianisation. Through the Conciliation Council, the GRA achieved the setting up of a Working Group to review the implications of civilianisation and negotiate its terms. We have engaged vigorously on that body and have sought a comprehensive agreement to address a range of concerns our members have. Negotiations are still in train and results will be communicated as soon as completed.

SERVICE RECOGNITION AND THE PURCHASE OF SIX MONTHS SERVICE

The Official Side agreed during the pay related negotiations of September 2016 that the cost of purchase of service for pension purposes, in respect of the 6 months on the job training in Garda stations (between 1989 and 2013), would be between €250 to a €1,000. It is now asserting that the cost of purchase should be the rate that applies to all other public servants (considerably higher).

At the direction of the CEC, it had been hoped to have the matter referred to the Labour Court but, yet again, there are access complications in doing this. An alternative is now being sought to try to short-circuit the process. Following continued bilateral engagement between this Association and the Official Side, the WRC has scheduled a facilitation meeting for the 11th of January 2019 to see if the current impasse can be resolved.

UNIFORM

The GRA delegation representing the Association on the (National) Uniform Working Group (UWG) includes operational frontline members. We have recently engaged a clothing, fabric and textile expert with previous experience in police uniform design to conduct a "head to toe, all seasons" evaluation of the current uniform and the garments currently being trialled. This will lead to recommendations being made to the UWG regarding the best fabrics and design options.

ROSTER DUTY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (RDMS)

The RDMS is a time and attendance system which has been introduced under the Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA). It is also provided for under Section 19 of the 2012 Working Time Agreement and is designed and intended to ensure compliance with the European Working Time Directive (EWTG). A pilot of RDMS has recently concluded in the DMR East Division. The Association has a firm view that the RDMS, planned for the first half of 2019, should only be rolled out nationally when all issues identified in the pilot have been fully resolved.

CONCLUSION

A representative association's effectiveness is based on collective strength and unity of purpose. As your General Secretary, I am committed to protecting and advancing that strength and unity of purpose.

I wish all of you and your respective families peace and joy at this festive season.

**Pat Ennis,
General Secretary**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat Ennis". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.