

New forum mooted for Garda rosters, GRA advertises top job

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There are hopes that a body known as the Garda Consultative Council can be used as a forum to break the procedural impasse on the issue of new Garda rosters.

For several months now, discussion on a new roster system has been stalled, with Garda management wanting to move talks onto the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), while the two largest Garda associations (GRA and AGSI) believe talks should continue for now at the previous stage in the process, the internal Garda Conciliation Council.

IRN understands that another body, the Garda Consultative Council, is being mooted as a third possible forum in which the parties can engage on the issue, which is neither the WRC or the internal conciliation body.

According to a Garda spokesperson, the Consultative Council consists of the Garda Commissioner (or his nominated representative) and representatives from each of the four Garda representative associations: GRA, AGSI, AGS and AGCS.

This Council provides a forum for discussion and consultation between senior Garda management and representatives of the four associations.

Items for inclusion on the Council's agenda are to be of relevance to the overall policing requirements and the membership of An Garda Síochána such as welfare, training and development and resourcing.

Generally, the meetings take place on the request of the Garda representative associations and would take place every six months, or more regularly if required. This flexibility may be necessary if rosters are to be discussed.

NEW GENERAL SECRETARY

In a separate development, the largest Garda representative association, the GRA, advertised last week for a new general secretary.

A competition for the association's most senior full-time official was held earlier this year and while one candidate – Damien McCarthy – was put forward to the association's Central Executive Council (CEC), he did not reach the required two-thirds majority to be put forward for ratification by the association's annual conference last April.

The two-thirds majority requirement in the GRA rules for nominating a new general secretary – and renewing the contract after three annual conferences have passed – is seen by some as being onerous and an attempt to relax the requirement was put forward at last April's conference.

While that motion failed to pass and the two-thirds requirement remains, one amendment was passed that allows a panel of candidates to go forward to the CEC. This would avoid having to re-advertise and hold a new competition every time a candidate fails to reach the two-thirds threshold.

Although that rule change was too late to prevent this latest re-advertising of the post, a panel of candidates can now emerge from this latest competition. If the first choice does not reach the threshold, the second choice then goes forward and so on, until a candidate is approved or the panel is exhausted.