

3rd meeting of the Firearms Expert Committee
14th October 2022
51 St Stephens Green
Minute

Attendees

Chair Emma Meagher Neville
Paul Walsh
Fabian Connolly
John Guinane
Emma Doyle

Secretary Aoife Byrne

1. Introduction.

The agenda was adopted

The minutes of the second meeting were agreed.

The report of the second meeting for the Department's website was agreed.

2. Preparation of report one – purposes for which firearms may be sought.

The Committee discussed document 2.6 and agreed draft recommendations on the purposes for which firearms should be licenced in the State.

These draft recommendations will be shared with the NPSW and some licencing officers for their views.

3. Assessment of correspondence received.

The Committee considered the assessment of the correspondence received prepared by the secretary. The Committee agreed that the items raised within the remit of the Committee to assess and consider are addressed under ongoing discussions or will be discussed at a future meeting.

4. Discussion of Document 1.5 – Firearms available for licencing.

The Committee considered the firearms identified in Document 1.5 as being possible unsuitable for licencing. These are as follows.

- i. Centre-fire semi-automatic rifles

All members of the Committee agreed that centre-fire semi-automatic rifles licenced before 18 September 2015, should remain licensable to their respective owners.

The Members could not find consensus regarding the suitability of centre-fire semi-automatic rifles licenced after the 18 September 2015. Two members did not agreed that these firearms should be recommended to be available for licencing.

It was agreed that this position will be reflected in the Committee's report with the views of each member presented.

ii. Centre-fire Handguns

All members of the Committee agreed that centre-fire handguns licenced before 19 November 2008 should remain licensable to their respective owners.

The Members could not find consensus regarding the suitability of centre-fire handguns licenced after the 19 November 2008. should be included in the list of firearms recommended to be available for licencing. Two members did not agreed that these firearms should be recommended as being available for licencing.

It was agreed that this position will be reflected in the Committee's report with the views of each member presented.

iii. Shotguns Barrel length of less than 61 centimetres

An Garda Síochána submitted that there did not appear to be justification for a person to require a shotgun with a barrel length of less than 61cm. Mr Connelly submitted that some disciplines of target shotgun can require the use of a shotgun with a barrel of this length.

Three members of the Committee held the view that shotguns with a barrel length of less than 61cm on the basis that they are required for target shotgun only. AGS to confirm position.

iv. Rifles of a Barrel length of less than 50 centimetres

An Garda Síochána submitted that there did not appear to be justification for a person to require a rifle with a barrel length of less than 50cm. Mr Connelly submitted It was identified that many commercially available .22lr rifles are shorter than 50cm. i.e. the standard length of a Ruger 10-22 barrel length 470mm.

On this basis three members of the Committee held the view that rifles of a barrel length of less than 50 cm, should remain available for licencing. AGS to confirm position.

i. Crossbows

The Committee agreed these items should be recommended as being licensed for target shooting only.

5. Recommendations formed.

The Committee recommended that consideration should be given to replacing the current classification of non-restricted and restricted firearms with categories aligned with the Firearm Directive.

The Committee recommended that consideration should be given to introducing electronic registers for use by Registered Firearms Dealers.

The Committee recommended that consideration should be given to bringing areas of the licencing system online were possible.

The Committee recommended that consideration should be given to revising the current practice of issuing individual specific certificate for each firearm. The Committee suggested that this revise might allow for the substitution of firearms on the licence a like-for-like basis, without the need to make a new application to An Garda Síochána.

The Committee believes there would be merit in introducing a single firearms certificate which details each firearm the holder is permitted to possess. Such a firearms certificate could be updated when an individual acquires a new firearm, on a one-on one-off basis. The renewal date for such a certificate could be set to fall on a specific date such as the individual's birthday.

The Committee recommended that consideration should be given to reviewing the period for which a firearms certificate is issued.

The Committee recommended consideration should be given to aligning the duration of firearm certificates and hunting permits, so that when hunting permits are submitted in support of an application for a firearm they remain inforce for the same period.

The Committee recommended that consideration should be given to assessing the efficacy of the current licencing process, to establish if there are delays or issues with lost paperwork. The Committee suggests that if delays are identified measures are introduced to mitigate against them, for instance the issuing of receipts when applications are made.

The committee recommends that consideration be given to providing specified firearms training for all staff involved in overseeing the firearms legislation.

6. AOB

The draft agenda for next meeting was discussed it was agreed to discuss the 5 shot limit applied to the licencing of non-restricted rim-fire handgun. It was agreed that the secretary will prepare a short paper on this matter for consideration by the members.