

Ninth Meeting of the Firearms Expert Committee
3 March, 2023
Venue: 51 St Stephens Green
Minutes

Attendees

Chair: Emma Meagher Neville
Paul Walsh
Fabian Connolly
Inspector Paul Greene
John Guinane
Secretary: Richard Gow

Apologies

Supt Emma Doyle

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The agenda was adopted.
- 1.2 The minutes of the eighth meeting were agreed.
- 1.3 The report of the eighth meeting for the website was agreed.

2. Discussion of Report One

The Committee agreed final changes to Report One, including the inclusion of the table at Annex One.

The Committee agreed a further recommendation that firearms licensing be centralised into a single authority in An Garda Síochána, with the input of local districts/divisions into the licensing process. The Committee agreed a recommendation that, in the event that this is not implemented, extensive training be provided to issuing persons in the legislation, policy and functionality of firearms prior to making licensing decisions.

The Committee agreed a recommendation that a non-judicial appeals mechanism for firearms licensing decisions be introduced in line with Department of Justice recommendations and to be modelled on the Private Security Authority Appeals Board. The Committee agreed that refusals of licensing applicants should be preceded by a letter of intent to refuse, as is the case in Northern Ireland, in order to give applicants an opportunity to provide any further relevant information.

The Committee discussed the submission of a Member on the reloading of ammunition. The Committee agreed that reloading is legal in the State but that the importation of powder is subject to regulation under the Explosives Act 1875. The Committee agreed to note in Report One that the Member wished to see the policy on reloading re-examined with a view to permitting it in residential abodes.

The Committee asked the secretary to confirm the Garda National Technical Bureau position on the restricted/non-restricted status of Ruger 10/22s with shells/skins that may give the rifle the

appearance of an assault rifle. The secretary will include this in the final report to be circulated to Members.

3. Discussion of Report Two

The Committee discussed and agreed text and recommendations on the licensing of add-on devices and on the training of licence-holders and registered firearms dealers.

During the discussion of the licensing of add-on devices, the Committee noted that the licensing status of these devices had become unclear in the time leading up to its meeting. The Committee agreed to note in Report Two that this matter was subject to a request for legal advice by the Department of Justice at its time of writing. One Member recalled that he had sold one of these devices based on the prevailing understanding that it was lawful. One Member also recalled that he had used one of the devices in the past but not in the State.

The Committee discussed the final written comments provided by its Members in advance of the ninth meeting and agreed the final text of Report Two. The Committee agreed that the secretary would make the corresponding changes to the report and circulate it to the Members after the meeting.

4. Conclusion of Committee business and next steps

The Chair noted that the ninth meeting of the Committee and agreement of the final text of Reports One and Two concluded its mandate. The Committee agreed that the reports would be finalised by the secretary in line with its instructions and circulated to the Members after the meeting. The secretary agreed to liaise with the Chair on outstanding sundry matters in advance of submission of the reports to the Minister by the end of March 2023.

The Committee noted the intention of Minister Browne to engage in public consultation with stakeholders after the publication of the Committee's reports.

The Chair acknowledged the commitment of the Committee Members and the positive working atmosphere that prevailed throughout its deliberations. The Members acknowledged the leadership of the Chair during the process.

The meeting ended.