



Callinan 'would not be true to his word' if he said sorry to the whistleblowers

Tom Brady

Security Editor

MARTIN Callinan resigned as Garda Commissioner because he felt that he would not be "true to his word" if he apologised to the penalty points whistleblowers.

Colleagues say that even if he did offer to withdraw his description of their actions as "disgusting", it would not satisfy those calling for his resignation. He believed he could not back away from his strongly held view that John Wilson and Maurice McCabe had breached the Data Protection Act by carrying out a trawl of confidential and personal information on the internal Pulse computer system.

"The issue became a political football and he did not want to play with it," one confidante said.

Callinan was not put under any direct political pressure to step down but felt that the ongoing controversies were impacting too heavily on his family.

Some ministers learned of his resignation before going to their scheduled Cabinet meeting yesterday morning, where they were then stunned by revelations of the garda taping scandal.

He was due to retire as commissioner in August 2015 after being offered a two-year extension by the Government in November 2012.

As he tidied up his office at Garda headquarters in the Phoenix Park yesterday, steps were being taken at the Department of Justice to grant the necessary powers to sign disciplinary orders and other legally required documents to his deputy, Noirin O'Sullivan, who now becomes interim commissioner.

As a result of his resignation, two of the top three jobs in the force are now vacant while there are also serious gaps in the ranks of assistant commissioners and chief superintendents.

An open competition will be held before the appointment of the next commissioner.

Callinan's resignation was met with a mixed reaction in political circles as opposition parties welcomed it as the right decision.

Justice Minister Alan Shatter paid tribute to the ex-garda for his contribution to the force.

He said that as commissioner and throughout his distinguished service in the force, Mr Callinan had made an enormous contribution to fighting crime.

The minister said he believed this contribution would be seen as a legacy of which he could be very proud and for which the community he served were in his debt.

"I extend to him my sincere thanks for his dedication and service to the State, throughout his long and distinguished career," Mr Shatter added.

The Association of Garda Chief Superintendents expressed its appreciation to Mr Callinan and said that in a long and distinguished career, he had served the people of Ireland with commitment and dedication at all times. The Association of Garda Superintendents said that Mr Callinan had served the people with distinction for almost 41 years.

It added that its members wanted to put their respect for him on record. The mid-ranking Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors said the imminent review of the force was timely and should be prioritised by government and garda management as urgent.

General secretary John Redmond said now was the time to expand the review of the garda organisation to include oversight and accountability and look at service provision generally.