



Context of briefing note

Members have been directed to the Commission's Annual Report for 2010. It should be noted that this report deals primarily with 2010, though it also covers the pre and post-election period in early 2011.

The briefing material attached updates that information, providing financial information to end December 2011, and sets out the main developments since then in terms of expenditure and activities.

Attached please find

PART 1: Houses of the Oireachtas Commission

PART 2: Financials and Output information/Croke Park

PART 3: Members' Allowances

PART 4: Challenges

Appendix 1: Update on 2010 accounts, to include 2011 provisional outturn

Appendix 2: Explanatory Note on the Scope of Each of the Subheads

Appendix 3: Breakdown of the Functions of the Commission

Appendix 4: Matters outside the Remit of the Commission

BRIEFING NOTE

PART 1: HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION BACKGROUND

1. Role and Function of Commission

The Commission is the governing board which oversees the provision of services to the Houses and their members by the Houses of the Oireachtas Service (the parliamentary administration) in accordance with the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2009.

The role of the Commission under the Acts is "to provide for the running of the Houses of the Oireachtas, to act as governing body of the Service, to consider and determine policy in relation to the Service and to oversee the implementation of that policy by the Secretary General".

It is comprised of 11 members and is chaired by the Ceann Comhairle. First established in 2004, it is a statutory corporate body and is independent in the performance of its functions. It is accountable to the Houses of the Oireachtas in the performance of its functions and has responsibility for ensuring value for money. The Commission has no role in relation to parliamentary business or procedure.

2. Establishment of the Commission

The establishment of the Commission is in line with arrangements in a number of other parliaments internationally, including the United Kingdom. The concept had been in gestation for many years and became a high priority following a recommendation made in the Committee of Public Accounts DIRT Sub-Committee Inquiry Report which concluded as follows:

"Parliamentary Accountability: The modernisation and re-organisation of the Houses of the Oireachtas has not kept pace with developments in society. Further reform with an emphasis on improved accountability will ensure that events such as the Sub-Committee has inquired into will be less likely to recur."

Subsequently the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Act 2003 was passed and fully met the recommendations of the DIRT Inquiry vis;

- the establishment of an independent permanent Oireachtas Commission, chaired by the Ceann Comhairle to oversee and control the funding, staffing and organisation of the Houses of the Oireachtas, and
- that the funding for the Oireachtas Commission be independent of the Department of Finance by a multi-annual budget drawn directly from the Central Fund on a triennial basis.

3. Commission Acts and amendments

The 2003 Commission Act provided the inaugural Commission with its funding for the period 2004 to 2006, as well as providing for the establishment of the Commission.

In general terms, the legislation represents best practice in governance, drawing on the civil service model as between the Secretary General and the Minister (s. 16 – based on Public Service Management Act) and the Board/CEO governance model (section 3A and 4 – based on the Courts Service). The Commission is a unique body so best practice has been drawn from a number of sources.

The Commission Act must be amended every three years to provide a budget line. Previous Commissions have taken this as an opportunity to improve governing legislation. There have been two reviews to date (2006 and 2009) and the next opportunity to review the Act will be this year as an amendment is required to provide funding for the next 3 year period 2013-2015.

The 2006 amending Act was about filling gaps in legislation around Commission operations (establishment of Commission Committees, decision-making procedures, Commission seal).

The 2009 amending Act was a more major review, focussing on best practice governance (rebranding of the Service, statutory focus on members, role of the Commission as "governing body" which determines policy, Commission accountability

to the Houses, code of conduct for Commission members, supplementary estimates, Audit Committee, statement of Service values).

Overall, the legislation is up to date in terms of best practice governance as a result of review opportunities for example establishing a statutory Audit Committee in 2009. There are a number of areas which are "outside the remit of the Commission" and the attached two tabular statements give a breakdown of the functions and matters outside the remit of the Commission respectively. Matters outside the remit of the Commission are in relation to capital works, purpose of Commission spend (schedule to the Act), receipts, senior civil service appointments, pay and terms and conditions of members' staff and the Civil Service, members' pay, spending on legal proceedings. The Commission has sought retention of receipts on the past two occasions (2006 & 2009) but this has not been acceded to by D/Finance. The Commission has recently written again to Minister for Finance on this issue.

Any review of "outside remit" areas or other perceived gaps in the governing legislation is a policy matter for the Commission which will be looked at again early in the year in the context of the 2012 review.

PART 2: Financials and Output information/Croke Park

1. Overall spending of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission

As already noted, the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission is funded directly by the Exchequer (Central Fund) within a 3-year statutory provision. A new 3-year sum is set every three years under section 5 of the Acts, with the Commission having authority over the spend and over its own staffing numbers within this limit. The Commission is currently in its third 3-year funding period and has underspent by €13 million in the first 3-year period ('04-'06) and by €33 million in the second ('07-'09).

2004-2006 Budget	€295 million
Expenditure	<u>€282 million</u>
Underspend	€ 13 million (4.4%)

2007-2009 Budget	€393 million
Expenditure	<u>€360 million</u>
Underspend	€ 33 million (8.4%)

The overall budget for the 3-year period 2010-2012 is €360 million. €107.2m of this was spent in 2010, the first year of the 3-year cycle. The spend for 2011 (including election costs) was €119.9m and the estimate for 2012 is €115.6m. Therefore, the projected overall saving on the current 3-year allocation to end 2012 will be €17.3m **or 4.8%**

2. 2010 Expenditure

As per the audited accounts for 2010, the year under examination by the Committee, the total spend in that year was €107.2m against an original estimate of €117.8m, a saving/underspend of €10.6m or 9%. The actual spend in the previous year had been €123.2m.

Within this €10.6m saving, the civil service staff costs went down by €0.9m and Members' salary costs went down by €1.9m. Savings were made by a further €3.38m in subhead 1(e) (Office equipment, IT, etc) by measures such as negotiating more project work within the core contract costs with our IT services provider, reducing maintenance and equipment costs through server virtualisation (i.e. in essence, reducing the number of actual servers by consolidating applications and sharing server capacity), through stationery procurement efficiencies arising from the work of our internal Efficiency Group and through reduced parliamentary printing costs.

Further savings were made of nearly €3m from our 'incidentals' subhead due to efficiency measures in the Library and Research area and savings in the Communications budget. Less than budgeted was also spent on consultancy and an overall contingency provision of €1.2m, to cover anticipated legal settlement and advice costs (mainly associated with the Article 35 (Judge Curtin) process), was not used in the year, though this cost has been carried forward to 2012.

A significant once-off overspend (€0.8m) occurred in the area of Members' travel expenses during 2010 in the transition to the new system. As noted below, however, Members' expenses (travel and other allowances) in 2012 will be down €1.4m or 10.1% since peak in 2008.

3. 2011-2012 Expenditure

As noted in the 2010 annual report, the original estimate for 2011, as laid before the Dáil and published, was €113m. This did not include costs of the Dáil and Seanad general elections as the dissolution of the Dáil at that point was not anticipated to occur in 2011. A supplementary estimate was required to meet these costs.

However, as it transpired, the actual costs of running the Houses in 2011, excluding the elections, were just over €98m, or 13% below the estimate and 20% below our peak spend levels in 2009. While the underlying spend falls naturally by about €3 to €4m in an election year (e.g. due to reduced travel, overtime and expenses), the fall below €100m in core costs in 2011, for the first time since 2005, illustrates the extent to which spending has been reduced in response to the economic situation. The provisional outturn in 2011 is €119.9m which includes €21.7m for costs associated with the general elections. The chart below shows the year-on-year comparison of expenditure since 2005.

4. Breakdown of Spend

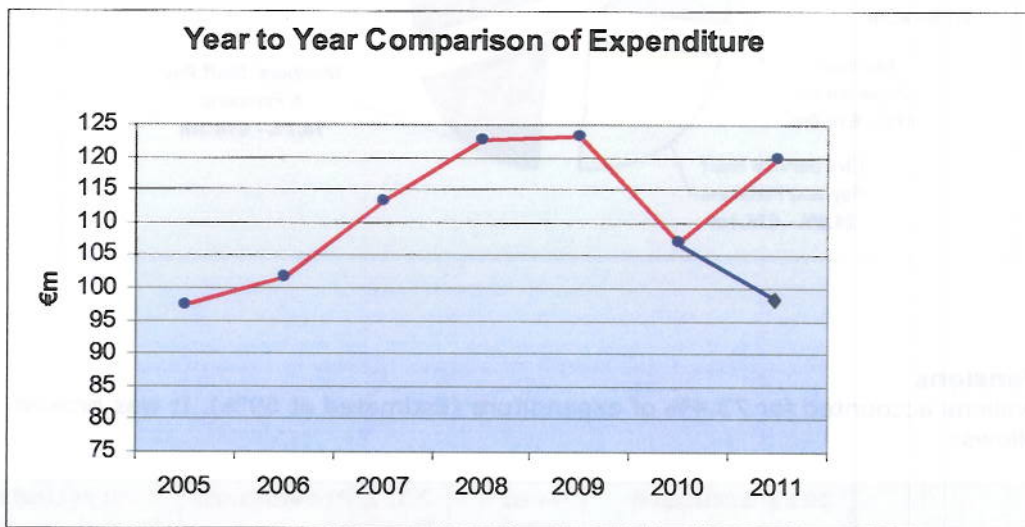
It will be clear from the expenditure profile (see page 6) that the vast majority of the overall spend is in payroll and fixed statutory commitments (such as Members' expenses). In 2011 these categories represented 84% of the spend (€82.8m). Core contracts for running the Houses and the Parliamentary Service, such as broadcasting, cleaning, IT and essential maintenance, represented a further €8.2m or 8% of the €98m spend. The graphic below illustrates the breakdown of the spend and the fact that so little of it (4%) was discretionary in 2011 and even within that is contained some elements of what might be regarded as basic requirements (for example IT projects, Training and Commissioned Research).

5. Comparative Spending Patterns

The estimate for 2012 (excluding the carryover of election costs of about €5m) is for €110m, a decrease of 10.4% on the spend in 2009 at peak. During the period since the establishment of the Commission in 2004 through to the 2012 estimate, Commission expenditure grew by less than overall Government current spend. In 2012, the overall administrative budgets, which amount to just under €41m (including nearly €24m staff costs) will have fallen €9.5m (19%), or nearly one fifth from peak.

Comparing peak expenditure in 2008/2009 with the estimate for 2012, Members' salaries have reduced by €2.5m (11%) and Members' expenses have reduced by €1.4m (10.1%).

These three items alone represent a sustainable decrease of €13.4m, or 10.9%, in the Commission's budgets since 2009.



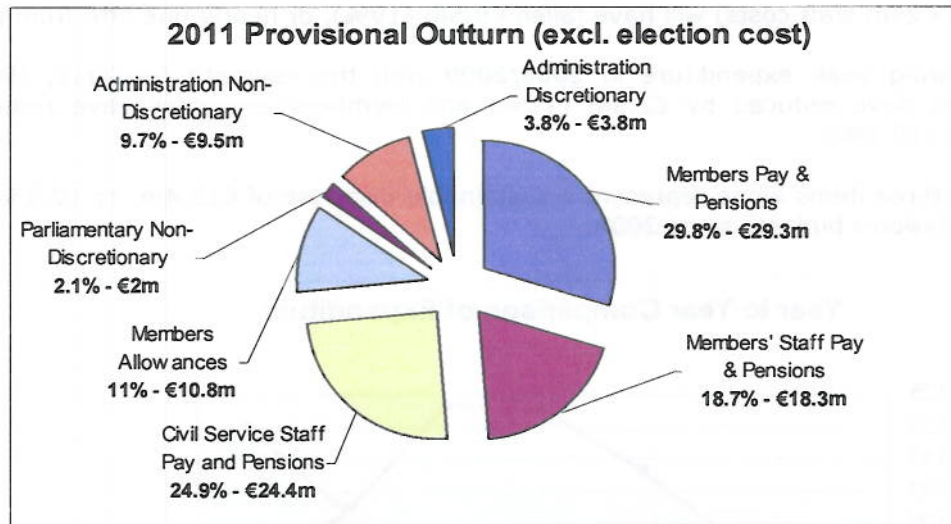
The blue line represents the total underlying spend for 2011 excluding election costs. The reduction in expenditure in 2009/2010 is as a result of efficiencies achieved in the admin budget.

6. Staffing Levels

- Civil Service staff = 386 currently in place¹ ("Houses of the Oireachtas Service") plus 53 State industrial employees
- Members' staff = 365 currently in place

¹ Plans underway to fill 8 FTE usher posts comprising fulltime and part-time posts and these posts are included in this figure

2011 Provisional Outturn - €98.1 million (excl. Election Costs)
Pay and Pensions = 73.4%; Non-Pay = 26.6%



Pay and Pensions

Pay and Pensions accounted for 73.4% of expenditure (Estimated at 69%). It was broken down as follows:

Pay:	2011 Estimate	% of total	2011 Provisional Outturn	Over/(Under) Spend against budget
Members:	€32m	28%	€29.3m	(€2.8m)
(includes pensions)				
Civil Service Staff:	€26m	23%	€24.4m	(€1.6m)
(includes Catering Staff)				
Staff Overtime	€1.3m or 5% of pay		€1m or 4.5% of pay	
Catering Staff Overtime	€0.3m or 17% of pay		€0.32m or 18.4% of pay	
Sec Assts:	€21m	18%	€18.3m	(€3.2m)
(includes pensions)				
Overtime:	€3m or 15% of pay		€1.8m or 10% of pay	

Non-Pay

The remaining 26.6% can be divided into Discretionary and Non-Discretionary Expenditure:

	2011 Estimate	As % of total	2011 Provisional Outturn	Over/(Under) Spend against budget
Non-Discretionary <i>Including</i> Members' Allowances and Expenses Essential Interparliamentary activities Former Members society and Committee expenses Essential Administration costs: Office Premises, Broadcasting and facilities costs, basic ICT equipment requirements and maintenance costs.	€27m	25%	€22.4m	(€4.6m)
Discretionary <i>Including</i> Total contingency, press monitoring, incidental printing, commissioned research water filtering, all training, consultancy, newspapers, telephone directories, interpreters, entertainment, design, external legal advice, communications costs All ICT project expenditure, graphic design, and certain equipment and furniture purchases, mobile phone expenditure and travel.	€7m	6%	€3.8m	(€3.2m)

7. Outputs

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service, as part of the MIF (Management Information Framework) Programme put in place by the Department of Finance 10 years ago, maintains a comprehensive database of all of the key outputs which are used for internal reporting purposes. These are reviewed at regular internals by the Management Advisory Committee in conjunction with financial and HR reports and form the basis for the many output tables in the annual report.

Analysis of the numbers up to December 2011 shows that there are underlying increases in many key areas of parliamentary activity which drive costs and demand for the services. This is at a time when, as already noted, the staff numbers and budgets have been falling significantly. For instance, comparing Quarters 3 and 4 of 2011 (i.e. after the elections had settled down and business fully resumed) with the average of the same periods in 2009 and 2010:

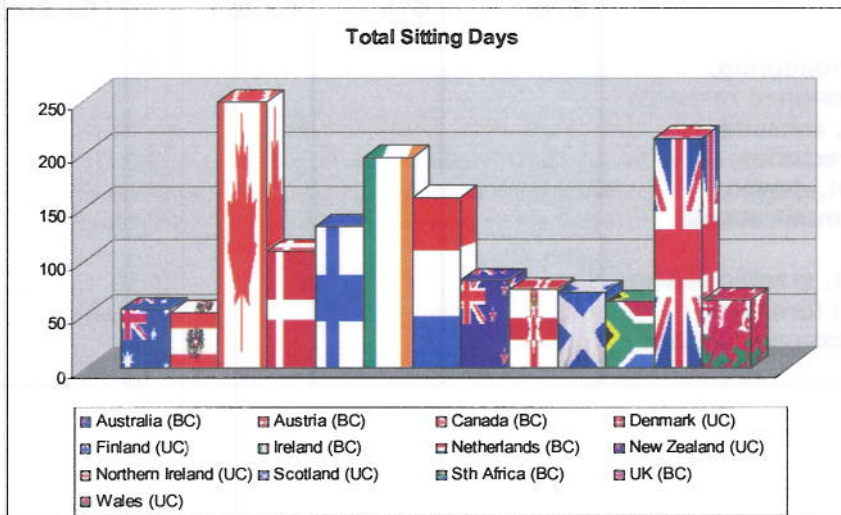
- a. Total Sitting hours had increased by 12%
- b. Total Sitting days had increased by 30%
- c. The number of Bills processed had increased by 110%
- d. Calls to the IT helpdesk had increased by 92%
- e. The number of Committee meetings remained more or less constant and there was a reduction by half in the number of Committee reports.

8. International Comparisons

The Service regularly benchmarks itself against other parliaments to ensure that service provision is in line with international best practice. The extracts below are based on early 2011 data.

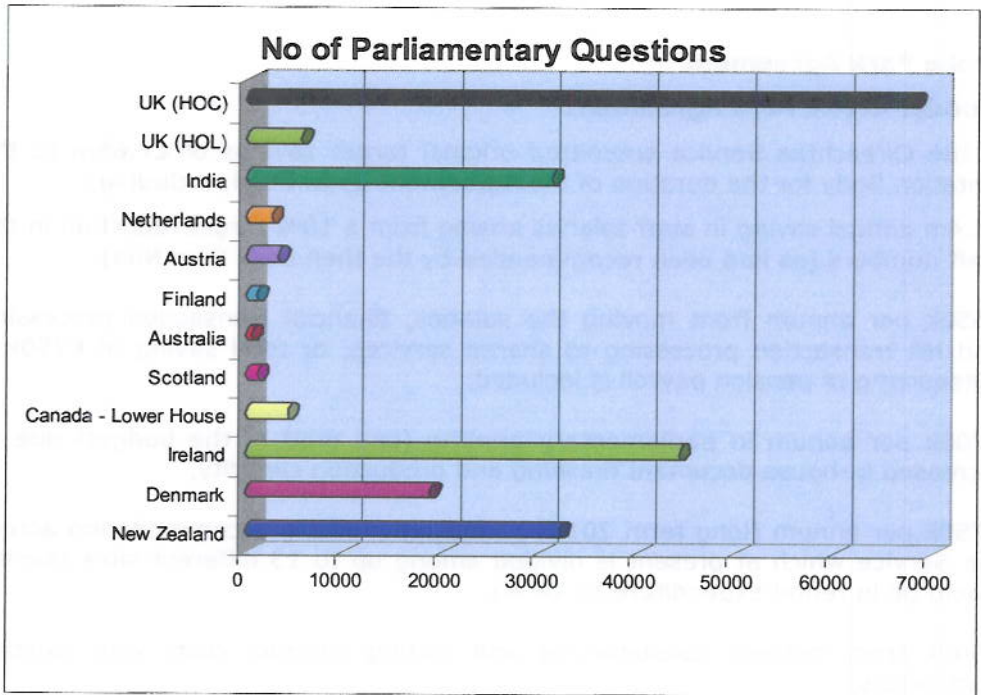
Sitting Days and Hours

The Houses of the Oireachtas performs well when benchmarked against other national parliaments surveyed in terms of total sitting days and sitting hours, recording third place with a total of 197 **sitting days** and second place with a total of 1,456 **sitting hours** for both Houses. The UK recorded the highest total of 214 sitting days and 1,537 hours per year for both Houses.



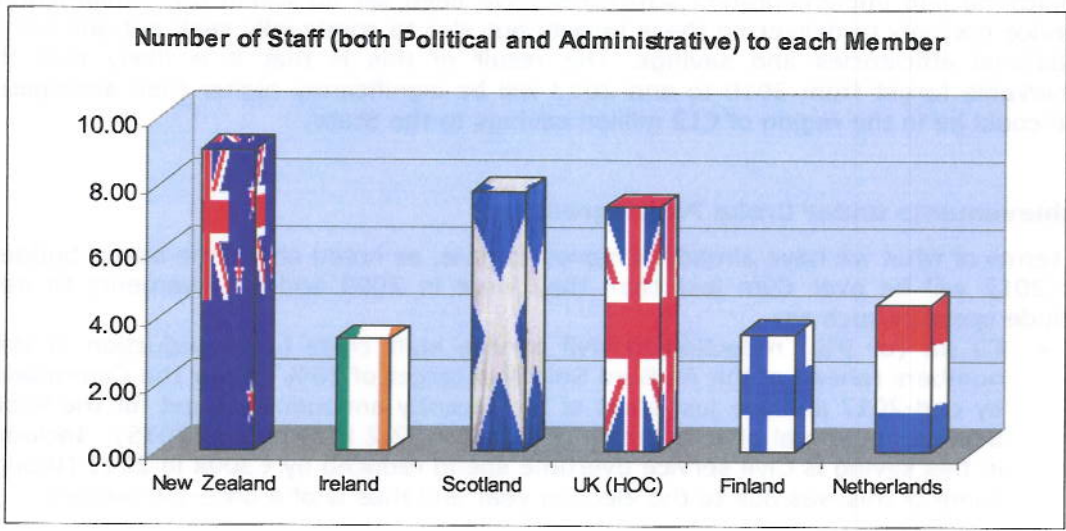
Parliamentary Questions

With a total of 44,943 parliamentary questions (PQs) tabled, Dáil Éireann registered second highest out of twelve parliaments surveyed, second only to UK House of Commons which recorded 68,189. The Irish figure is almost two and a half times the average number of questions tabled.



Ratio of Total Staff to Members – administrative and political staff

Of the six parliaments surveyed, the Houses of the Oireachtas is in sixth place in terms of overall staff numbers (both staff of the Service and political staff) with a ratio of 3.33 staff overall for every member. New Zealand is in first place with a ratio of 9.02 staff to every Member.



9. Croke Park Agreement

Targets under Croke Park Agreement

In 2010, the Oireachtas Service submitted original target savings of €7.65m to the Implementation Body for the duration of the Agreement up to 2014, including;

- €2.4m annual saving in staff salaries arising from a 10% target reduction in the staff numbers (as had been recommended by the then Bord Snip Nua),
- €650k per annum from moving the salaries, financial transaction processing and HR transaction processing to shared services, or total saving of €750k if outsourcing of pension payroll is included,
- €700k per annum in parliamentary printing (one third of the budget) due to increased in-house document finishing and production capacity,
- €750k per annum (long term 2013+) from rationalising accommodation across the Service which at present is divided among up to 13 different sites (saving would be in rental expenditure by OPW),
- €500k from reduced consultancies and cutting contract costs with existing contractors,
- €275k per annum through rationalising opening hours and engaging some staff on sitting day only contracts or 40 week working year,
- €350k per annum long term savings (2013+) by amalgamating major contracts,
- €300k per annum in stationery and related procurement by re tendering and more efficient purchasing.

Monitoring and implementation structures have been set up within the Parliamentary Service not only to deliver on these targets but also to continually seek out and target additional efficiencies and savings. The result of this is that it is likely that the achievable target from 2010 to end 2013 will be significantly higher than anticipated and could be in the region of €12 million savings to the State.

Achievements under Croke Park Agreement

In terms of what we have already achieved to date, as noted above the admin budgets for 2012 will be over €9m less than they were in 2009 and achievements to date include specifics such as:

- €2.3m (or 9%) reduction in civil service staff costs (11% reduction in staff numbers (ahead of the An Bord Snip Nua target of 10% set for the Commission by end-2012 and are just short of the recently announced target for the Public Service in general of a reduction of 12% (or 52.2 FTE) by end 2015). Included in this saving is Civil service overtime spend reduced by €300k in 2011 (though some of this was due to the election year and thus is of a once-off nature)
- €750k per annum reduction in overtime for staff employed under the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance

- €1.6m contract/procurement savings to date (including stationery and ICT consumables (€180k); ICT services (€200k per annum with €700k once off savings in 2010); parliamentary printing (€300k per annum); sound contract (€180k per annum) and Integra SLA (€5k)
- €200k annual savings in Committees through abolition of a student placement programme and the move to paperless committees
- €100k per annum (plus €250k once-off) shared services saving through a business continuity IT remote site with Revenue Commissioners.
- €50k reduced accounting consultancy costs (€50k)
- Rationalisation of Programme Delivery in Communications (Education Programme is now in-sourced)
- Over €100k annual rental savings achieved in December 2011 due to the vacating of one of the buildings (savings accrue to OPW).

Some of the major deliverables such as shared services and further rationalization of accommodation are dependent, to a large extent, on external developments under the public service development programme.

As part of the implementation process and ongoing efficiency review work, further realisable savings of €2.6m have also been identified covering areas such as cleaning, telecommunications related and internal mail costs, IT costs, travel costs and stationery related costs. These are scheduled for implementation in the period up to 2014.

Finally, the governance arrangements for the Croke Park savings implementation have been revised with effect from the new year with the establishment of a Croke Park Delivery Unit headed by a Principal Officer.

PART 3: Members' Allowances

The system for Members' Allowances

During the main year under review by the Committee, 2010, the Minister for Finance, as the regulatory authority, brought in major change in the system for Members' expenses by creating a new parliamentary standard allowance. This comprises a travel and accommodation allowance based on distance bands between a Member's normal place of residence (formally declared) and Leinster House, and a public representation allowance which can be either an unvouched minimum amount (e.g. €15k per annum for Deputies) or a vouched maximum amount (e.g. €25.7k for Deputies).

The new system is administered by the Oireachtas Service and not only simplifies allowances for administrative purposes but also standardised payments and introduces key new verifications for the first time involving electronic attendance recording in Leinster House in respect of the Travel and Accommodation Allowance and an annual independent audit in respect of the public representation allowance. The audit is conducted by an independent external audit firm and based on a 10% random sample, selected by the auditor, of Members who choose the vouched maximum public representation allowance. The first audit under the scheme has recently been completed and the report arising from this was adopted by the Commission's Audit

Committee in December 2011. The system also requires Members to make formal annual declarations that they have incurred the expenses paid to them.

These verifications are a key element of the reputational robustness of the expenses system. Members may be aware of developments in recent years in the UK in relation to expenses where both the setting and processing of expenses was taken out of the parliament altogether and a new organisation, IPSA (Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority), was established for this purpose.

The new system here is due for review, following its initial period of operation, by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform who is now the regulatory authority for expenses. A key challenge in this review will be maintaining and improving the level of public confidence in the Members' expenses system and its determination and verification elements. As already noted, Members' expenses spend has reduced by €1.4m, or over 10%, since peak in 2008.

PART 4: Challenges

In the current economic climate, the challenges facing the Commission and the Oireachtas Service are obvious and can be encapsulated by "managing to do more or better with less". Progress on this has been noted above, with the falling spend, increasing house business and the maintenance of key services.

The Croke Park Agreement Framework is the mainstay in focusing the activity to ensure 'as far as possible' that the organisation is accountable, flexible and performance orientated in order to deliver under the Agreement, while at the same time ensuring that the level of services provided are maintained and improved to support the Houses, Committees and Members in performing their parliamentary functions and as public representatives under the Constitution.

Under this umbrella specific challenges would be:-

- Getting the right balance - between achieving cost efficiencies and ensuring Parliament is properly equipped to hold Government to account and fulfill its watchdog role by meeting the evolving demands of the increased sittings and Committees under the current reform programme of this Dáil at a time of reduced resources. For example, a more long-term strategic aim to achieve this would be to seek ways to successfully engage with the political management, namely the Whips of the Houses and also Committees, to ensure that the roles of Parliament or its Members are not impaired and the momentum of the Reform agenda is maintained.
- Managing service delivery in a parliamentary environment - service to Members is a key objective in the Commission's strategic plan and reflects an explicit statutory obligation since 2009. In this context, the Service needs to target its capability to areas of most need by, for example, improving systematic feedback processes from Members and their staff as to the services provided and from the external stakeholders such as Departments of State.
- Embedding the modernisation agenda in a predominantly operational environment - the Houses of the Oireachtas Service has undergone widescale modernisation and governance improvements in the past decade (and in particular since 2004 when the Houses Commission was created) and is now positioned with high quality governance, risk management, financial

management, ICT and HR management infrastructure. Ensuring momentum is maintained in modernisation is a key component in achieving the flexibility required in developing the strategic management capacity to shape and deal with the change in a fluid political environment.

- Maintenance and development of parliamentary skills and knowledge - known to us as 'Procedural Excellence'. There is a major piece of work under way, in identifying gaps in the parliamentary specialist skills and the risks associated with the departure on retirement in the next few years of a number of senior staff with key organisational knowledge. This will involve driving the implementation of knowledge transfer and management and learning systems, as well as the development of procedural knowledge development systems – relating to both the Chambers and Committees - which match the best of those available in other parliaments and are in line with international best practice.
- Leveraging the investment in the public communications and information systems and the educational programs. Promoting the importance of the parliamentary institutions and the democratic process and working to foster respect for them is a strategic theme for the Commission. This encompasses a number of initiatives across the organisation, such as edemocracy strategies [using ICT to connect with the people], accommodation/visitor policies, and communications/information strategies.
- Good Governance Ensuring that the use of public money, in all of its aspects and systems, continues to be capable of standing up to intense public and media scrutiny and that, at the same time, we have robust systems for managing inaccurate and misleading commentary.
- Reform of the legal framework of senior management structure by further improving the integration of the senior management structure by the repeal of the outmoded senior management officer of the House class under the Staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Act 1959 giving greater flexibility in assignments at senior level.

Appendix 1: Update on 2011 accounts

Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Account 2010

Service	2009 Outturn €000	2010 Estimate provision €000	2010 Outturn €000	2011 Provisional Outturn €000
1 Administration				
(a) Salaries, wages and allowances in respect of members of staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas	26,076	24,463	23,545	22,651
(b) Travel and subsistence	563	617	387	261
(c) Incidental expenses	5,686	5,575	2,590	2,375
(d) Postal and telecommunications services	1,180	1,228	1,029	987
(e) Office machinery and other office supplies	14,987	11,757	8,380	8,909
(f) Office premises expenses	1,835	1,985	1,643	1,731
(g) Value for money and policy review	2	10	3	-
2 Other services				
(a) Payment in respect of catering and bar staff	1,911	1,758	1,787	1,733
(b) Expenses of delegates to other parliamentary assemblies	249	217	140	69
(c) Televising of proceedings of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann and other services	3,394	1,557	1,313	1,670
(d) Grant in aid in respect of inter-parliamentary activities	99	200	133	134
(e) Grant in aid to British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body	151	200	140	99
(f) Allowances to or in respect of former members of the Houses of the Oireachtas	-	98	49	4,666
(g) Grant to Irish Parliamentary (former Members) Society	-	40	-	25
(h) Grant in aid in respect of "Ciste Pinsean Thithe an Oireachtais"	10,340	10,309	10,000	17,816
(i) Pension scheme for secretarial assistants	674	539	415	528
(j) Expenses relating to Oireachtas Committees	343	715	279	29
3 Salaries of Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas (including office holders and Oireachtas committee chairpersons) and of the European Parliament				
(a) Dáil Éireann	17,944	17,684	16,095	15,456
(b) Seanad Éireann	4,444	4,471	4,152	3,929
(c) European Parliament (including superannuation payments)	1,394	901	733	741
4 Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for non-office holding Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas				
(a) Dáil Éireann	17,104	17,739	17,848	21,715
(b) Seanad Éireann	2,420	2,595	2,645	3,268
5 Travel expenses of Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas				
(a) Dáil Éireann	3,441	3,461	4,178	3,396
(b) Seanad Éireann	1,607	1,579	1,662	1,312
(c) Committee travel	126	259	122	30
6 Other allowances and expenses of Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas				
(a) Dáil Éireann	6,280	6,515	6,693	5,375
(b) Seanad Éireann	956	1,369	1,236	975
Total Expenditure	123,206	117,841	107,197	119,880

(Includes €21.7m
Election Costs)

Appendix 2: EXPLANATORY NOTE ON THE SCOPE OF EACH OF THE SUBHEADS

Introduction

The Commission's Account comprises a financial allocation to each of a number of subheads which reflect, in broad terms, the main activities of the organisation. The subhead structure is laid down in Schedule 1 of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Act 2003 and this forms the statutory basis for both the estimates and the annual accounts of the Commission. The "Administration" subheads, 1(a) to 1(g), correspond with those used by all public sector bodies, largely Government Departments, which operate the same accounting system as the Commission, while additional activities that are specific to this organisation are provided for separately by the subsequent subhead groupings. It should be noted that because of the constraints of the subhead structure, subhead 1(c) includes a range of items from the costs of the Library and Research Service, to Communications costs and costs of all training.

Behind each subhead is a detailed coding system that breaks budgets and expenditure down into their constituent parts. Much of the coding is technical and, accordingly, it is more useful for the purpose of this document to give a good flavour of the categories of expenditure under each subhead.

Subhead details

Administration

1(a) *Salaries, wages and allowances in respect of members of staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas*

This subhead provides for the pay and allowances of all members of the staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service, excluding catering and bar staff (see subhead 2(a)). Members' salaries (subheads 3(a) and (b)) and those of their staff (subheads 4(a) and (b)) are not covered under this heading.

1(b) *Travel and subsistence*

This subhead provides for –

- costs (flights, accommodation, subsistence etc.) associated with official travel by staff of the Service. These costs generally arise in respect of staff accompanying delegations of Members abroad (e.g. with committees or to other parliamentary assemblies such as the Council of Europe);
- taxis for staff (e.g. associated with late sittings) and contractual meal allowances paid to certain categories of staff;
- travel by officeholders.

1(c) *Incidental expenses (many new items of expenditure, not in existence in 2004, are put into this category)*

Expenditure categories comprehended within this subhead include –

- services managed by the Superintendent of the Houses (e.g. cleaning, health and safety, security, drinking water, uniforms);
- public relations costs including the Communications Strategy;
- training costs;
- non-pay costs of the Library and Research Service;
- consultancy and legal advice, excluding committees (see subhead 2(j));
- legal settlements (e.g. in respect of an action for damages taken against the Commission);

- design costs (e.g. annual report, strategy statement);
- running costs of fitness room;
- official entertainment;
- audit fees;
- contingency for unforeseen escalation of costs.

1(d) *Postal and telecommunications services*

The expenditure categories comprehended within this subhead are:

- postal costs other than postal allowances of Members (see subheads 6(a) and (b));
- telecommunications costs other than Members' constituency telephone allowances (see subheads 6(a) and (b)).

1(e) *Office machinery and other office supplies*

This subhead provides for –

- purchase and maintenance of IT equipment (e.g. PCs, servers, printers);
- purchase and maintenance of software;
- ICT support;
- ICT and eDemocracy service development projects;
- purchase and maintenance of non-IT office equipment (e.g. photocopiers, fax machines);
- stationery, paper and IT consumables;
- sound recording for chambers and committee rooms;
- parliamentary and other printing (e.g. order papers, debates, committee reports, outsourced printing);
- printing equipment, maintenance and consumables.

1(f) *Office premises expenses*

Provision is made here for all premises expenses of the Service including –

- maintenance services provided by the OPW;
- utility charges (electricity and gas);
- furniture;
- television signals.

1(g) *Value for money and policy review*

This subhead provides for expenditure, primarily on consultancy, on value for money reviews being conducted by the Service, though much of the VFM and Review work is carried out by qualified internal staff without using consultants.

Other services

2(a) *Payment in respect of catering and bar staff*

This subhead provides for the payroll costs of the staff of the Bar and Restaurant.

2(b) *Expenses of delegates to other parliamentary assemblies*

This subhead provides for the travel and subsistence costs of Members of the Houses when attending other parliamentary assemblies, e.g. –

- Council of Europe,
- Western European Union,
- Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe,
- Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly.

2(c) *Televising of proceedings of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann and other services*

This subhead provides primarily for the costs associated with broadcasting the proceedings of both Houses and their committees. The maintenance of broadcast archiving equipment is also provided for here.

2(d) *Grant in aid in respect of inter-parliamentary activities*

This subhead meets the expenses of the Irish Parliamentary Association (IPA). Costs incurred in connection with travel by Oireachtas delegations under the aegis of the IPA and with visits to Ireland by foreign parliamentary delegations are provided for. The cost of affiliation to certain inter-parliamentary bodies is also covered here.

2(e) *Grant in aid to British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly*

This subhead provides for the expenses of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly, both in hosting meetings in the State and attending meetings in other jurisdictions.

2(f) *Allowances to or in respect of former members of the Houses of the Oireachtas*

Provision is made here for termination payments to Members who retire or are not returned at general elections.

2(g) *Grant to Irish Parliamentary (former Members) Society*

This is a contribution to the day-to-day expenses of the Society.

2(h) *Grant in aid in respect of Ciste Pinsean Thithe an Oireachtais*

This subhead provides for pension lump sums and ongoing pension payments to former Members and their spouses/dependants.

2(i) *Pension scheme for secretarial assistants*

This subhead provides for pension payments to former staff employed under the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance. Provision is also made for lump sum payments that may arise from time to time. Provision for redundancy is not made here: see subheads 4(a) and (b) in this respect.

2(j) *Expenses relating to Oireachtas Committees*

Expenses, other than travel (subhead 5(c)), of committees of the Houses are met from this subhead. These include –

- consultancy,
- legal advice,
- advertising,
- entertainment by committee chairpersons,

Salaries of Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas (including office holders and Oireachtas committee chairpersons) and of the European Parliament

3(a) *Dáil Éireann*

The salaries of Members of the Dáil are provided for under this subhead. Provision is also made for the additional remuneration of officeholders and for positions specified by ministerial regulations (e.g. members of the Commission, committee chairpersons, party whips).

3(b) Seanad Éireann

The salaries of Members of the Seanad are provided for under this subhead. Provision is also made for the additional remuneration of officeholders and for positions specified by ministerial regulations (e.g. leaders, party whips).

3(c) European Parliament (including superannuation payments)

This subhead provides for the salaries of Members of the European Parliament who have opted to continue to be paid by the Commission. It also provides for payment of pensions to former MEPs.

Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for non-office holding Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas

4(a) Dáil Éireann

This subhead makes provision for the pay and allowances of Deputies' and parties' secretarial, parliamentary and administrative assistants. The cost of redundancy payments for such assistants is also provided for here.

4(b) Seanad Éireann

This subhead makes provision for the pay and allowances of Senators' and parties' secretarial, parliamentary and administrative assistants. The cost of redundancy payments for such assistants is also provided for here.

Travel expenses of Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas

5(a) Dáil Éireann

This subhead provides for the expenses payable to Deputies in respect of travel to and from Leinster House and accommodation where applicable.

5(b) Seanad Éireann

This subhead provides for the expenses payable to Senators in respect of travel to and from Leinster House and accommodation where applicable.

5(c) Committee travel

The expenses of Members travelling on behalf of committees of the Houses are met from this subhead.

Other allowances and expenses of Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas

6(a) Dáil Éireann

Allowances payable to Members of the Dáil are paid from this subhead. These include –

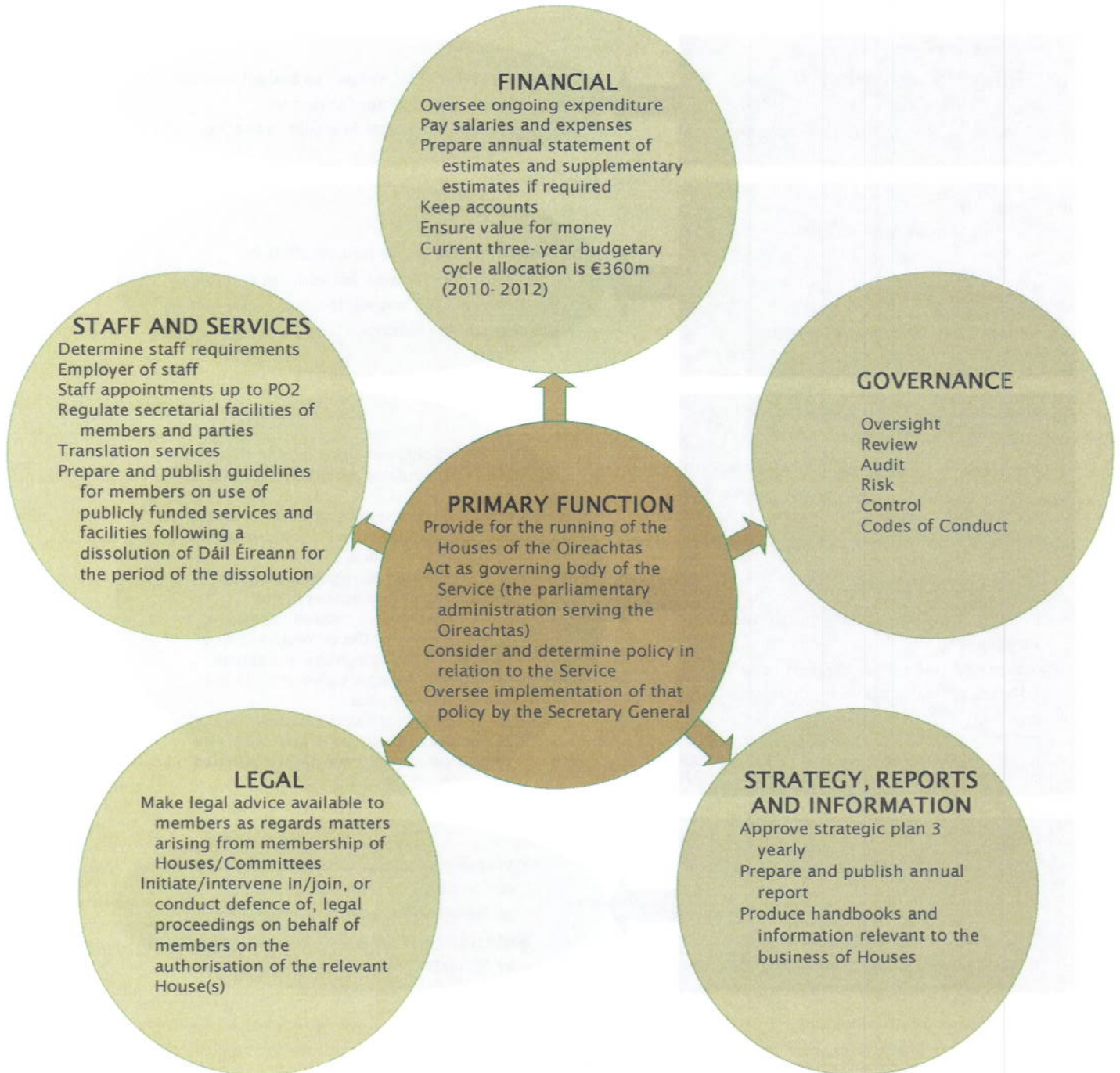
- postal allowance (prepaid envelopes),
- Public representation allowance.
- direct purchase scheme for mobile telephones,
- constituency office grant,
- special secretarial allowances,

6(b) Seanad Éireann

Allowances payable to Members of the Seanad are paid from this subhead. These include most of the allowances listed under 6(a) above.

Appendix 3: Breakdown of the Functions of the Commission

FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMISSION UNDER THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION ACTS 2003 TO 2009



Appendix 4: Matters outside the remit of the Commission

MATTERS OUTSIDE THE REMIT OF THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION

ACCOMMODATION (buildings and works)

Capital works are not in remit.
No funding for rental of accommodation.

A matter for OPW, subject to budget and/or approval of Minister for Finance.
The Commission acts in a client capacity.

FINANCIAL

No expenditure above ceiling set in Act and no supplementary estimates.
Ongoing expenditure should fit framework set out in first schedule.
Commission cannot retain its receipts.

€360 million 3 year limit in 2009 Act
Exceptional provision for additional monies – Chairman of Commission may make case to Minister for Finance.

STAFF, FACILITIES AND REMUNERATION

Commission cannot create posts at or above PO1 – requires the sanction of the Minister for Finance.
Cannot determine pay or conditions of civil service staff or members' staff [e.g. secretarial or parliamentary assistants].
Cannot determine members' pay, allowances or expenses.
The Secretary General has responsibility for all matters relating to assignments, performance, etc. of all staff.

Pay, conditions, pensions of members' staff are regulated by the Minister for Finance.
Creation of civil service posts at or above PO 1 are subject to prior sanction of Minister for Finance.
Power of Minister to regulate members' allowances and expenses is not transferred to Commission. Statutory responsibility for the provision of free Leinster House telephone and postal facilities to members also vests in the Minister for Finance.
Staff of the Commission are civil servants of the State. Creation of specialist civil service posts requires Finance sanction

LEGAL

Cannot initiate, intervene in, or join legal proceedings without authorisation of relevant House or Houses.
Cannot conduct defence of proceedings without authorisation of relevant House or

Proceedings must arise solely from the performance by members of their parliamentary functions as members
Subject to House(s) approval and conditions set by House(s)