

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, 04 NOVEMBER 2020

The Committee met in **Public** Session at 4:31 p.m. in the Committee Room 3, a quorum being present.

The following Members were present:

Deputies: Brian Stanley (C); Colm Burke; Jennifer Carroll MacNeill; Matt Carthy; Cormac Devlin; Alan Dillon; Paul McAuliffe; Marc MacSharry; Imelda Munster; Catherine Murphy; Verona Murphy.

Permanent

Witness: Comptroller and Auditor General, Mr. Seamus McCarthy.

Apologies: Neasa Hourigan

The Committee went into **private** session at 4:32 p.m.

The Committee resumed in **public** session at 5:23 p.m.

1. Minutes of Meeting 21.10.2020 and 22.10.2020

Agreed.

2. Correspondence

3. Correspondence received		
A - Briefing documents and opening statements		Decision
R0168 PAC33	Correspondence received from Robert Watt, Secretary General, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, dated 20/10/2020	Note and publish.
R0172 PAC33	Correspondence received from Robert Watt, Secretary General, DPER, dated 21/10/2020	Note and publish.
R0169 PAC33	Correspondence received from Seán Ó Foghlú, Secretary General, Dept of Education, dated 20/10/2020	Note and publish.
R0170 PAC33	Correspondence received from Seán Ó Foghlú, Secretary General, Department of Education and Skills, dated 20/10/2020	Note and publish.
B - Correspondence from Accounting Officers and/or Ministers and follow up to PAC meetings		Decision
R0151 PAC33	Correspondence received from Seán Ó Feargháil, TD Ceann Comhairle, dated 12 October 2020	Noted. This was considered by the Committee at its meeting on 14.10.2020. See 171 for actions arising.
R0152 PAC33	Correspondence received from Derek Moran, Secretary General, Department of Finance, dated 12/10/2020	Note and publish.
R0153 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ray Mitchell, Assistant National Director, HSE, dated 14/10/2020	Note and publish.
R0162 PAC33	Correspondence received from Seán Ó Foghlú, Secretary General, Dept of Education, dated 15 October 2020	Note and publish.

3. Correspondence received		
R0163 PAC33	Correspondence received from Angela Denning, CEO, The Courts Service, dated 15 October 2020	Note and publish. It was agreed Deputy Catherine Murphy would revert with a proposed action.
R0164 PAC33	Correspondence received from Seán Ó Foghlú, Secretary General, Dept of Education, dated 15 October 2020	Note and publish. Request an information note from DPER on the use of media monitoring services across Government Departments including the reason for the use of the services and overall expenditure.
R0165 PAC33	Correspondence received from Oonagh McPhillips, Secretary General, Department of Justice, dated 15 October 2020	Note and publish. See R0163 PAC33
R0166 PAC33	Correspondence received from Robert Watt, Secretary General, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, dated 16 October 2020	Note and publish. It was agreed to forward the correspondence to the Committee on the Irish Language, Gaeltacht and the Irish-speaking Community and to the Committee on Disability Matters for any actions deemed appropriate.
R0167 PAC33	Correspondence received from Roland Gowran, Commission Secretariat Manager, Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission, dated 16 October 2020	Note and publish.
R0171 PAC33	Correspondence received from Seán Ó Feargháil, TD Ceann Comhairle, Houses of the Oireachtas, dated 21/10/2020	Note and Publish. Invite the NPHDB and D/Health to appear before the Committee. Request the Minutes of the Meeting at which the Committee's letter of 19/10/2020 (S0044 PAC33) was discussed. Write to the Committee on Standing Orders and Dáil Reform (and copy the Committee on Procedure) requesting it to outline the process to amend Standing Orders.

3. Correspondence received		
R0175 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ray Mitchell, Assistant National Director, HSE, dated 23/10/2020	Note and Publish.
R0176 PAC33	Correspondence received from Philip Nolan, President, National University of Ireland Maynooth, dated 23/10/2020	Note and publish.
R0177 PAC33	Correspondence received from Anne Graham, National Transport Authority, Chief Executive, dated 27/10/2020	Note and publish. Request further information in relation to recent purchases of Intermediate Rails Cars (ICRs), including but not limited to the 41 Intermediate Rails Cars (ICRs) mentioned in NTA's correspondence of 27 October 2020. Response to include information on procurement arrangements, the timeline for delivery, and whether the ICRs have been ordered and paid for.
R0178 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ray Mitchell, Assistant National Director, HSE, dated 27/10/2020	Note and publish. Request further clarification re recording and maintaining data on levels of dependency of residents in nursing homes. Request further details re capital plan, particularly in relation to community nursing units and PPPs including the ratio of public/private nursing homes and the rationale for choosing PPPs. Also clarify whether references to upgrading refer to public nursing homes that will be upgraded on the recommendation of HIQA, whether they will be funded by PPPs, and whether they will be run as public or private nursing homes.

3. Correspondence received		
R0179 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mary Lawlor, Senior Communications and Public Affairs Manager, NAMA, dated 28/10/2020	Note and Publish. Hold Over.
R0180 PAC33	Correspondence received from Colm O'Reardon, Acting Secretary General, Department of Health, dated 28/10/2020	Note and publish. Request further information regarding private nursing homes allegedly charging nursing home patients for items that are ordinarily covered under the medical card or the drugs payment scheme. Request that the HSE advise how it will ensure that this alleged 'double charging' stops, and what plans it has to prevent it happening.
C - Correspondence from and related to private individuals and any other correspondence		Decision
R0157 PAC33	Correspondence received dated 12/10/2020	Noted. Hold Over.
R0158 PAC33	Correspondence received dated 13/10/2020	Noted. Further related correspondence to follow.
R0161 PAC33	Correspondence received dated 13/10/2020	Noted. The Committee decided on 14/10/2020 to advise the correspondent that the Committee's consideration of the matter is closed.
R0181 PAC33	Correspondence received dated 28/10/2020	Request OPW to provide the information sought.

3. Financial Statements & Accounts Received

Ref	Body/main purpose	Accounting period/ turnover	Date certified	Date laid	Audit opinion/notes
1	State Examinations Commission	2019 €73 million	31 Aug 2020	02 Oct 2020	Clear audit opinion

4. Work Programme

The Committee was advised that the Secretariat is working to schedule the engagements agreed by the Committee for its coming meetings.

The Committee adjourned at 6:35 p.m. until 5 November 2020.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Brian Stanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial "B".

Brian Stanley, T.D.
Chairman
18 November 2020