

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, 02 DECEMBER 2020

The Committee met in **Public** Session at 4:32 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 5:01 p.m.

The arrangements for launching and publishing the report were agreed.

Correspondence dealt with in Private session

Ref No.	Details	Decision
R0074 PAC33	Correspondence received dated 15/07/2020	It was agreed to offer the correspondent the opportunity to put a written statement, in a form approved by the Chairman, on the public record of the Committee and take no further action or enter into further correspondence in the matter.
R0196 PAC33	Correspondence received dated 06/11/2020	It was agreed to hold this over for further consideration on 16 December 2020.
R0183 PAC33	Correspondence received dated 28/10/2020	Noted.
R0157 PAC33	Correspondence received dated 12/10/2020	It was agreed to reiterate that the Committee's consideration of the matter is closed.
R0209 PAC33	Correspondence received dated 20/11/2020	It was agreed the correspondence is not a matter for the Committee or within its remit.
R0212 PAC33	Correspondence received dated 23/11/2020	It was agreed it is not appropriate for the Committee to consider this matter.
R0217 PAC33	Correspondence received dated 26/11/2020	It was agreed to await the reply from the HSE in relation to the matters raised in a previous item of correspondence.

The Committee also took note of a report sent to the Clerk in relation to an item of misplaced correspondence.

The Committee resumed in **public** session at 5:33 p.m.

1. Minutes of Meetings 18.11.2020, 19.11.2020, 25.11.2020 and 26.11.2020

Agreed.

2. Correspondence

3. Correspondence received		
A - Briefing documents and opening statements		Decision
R0206 PAC33	Correspondence received from Graham Doyle, Secretary General, Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage, dated 19/11/2020	At the meeting on 25 November 2020 it was agreed to note and publish this item.
R0214 PAC33	Correspondence received from Graham Doyle, Secretary General, Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage, dated 24/11/2020	At the meeting on 25 November 2020 it was agreed to note and publish this item.
R0216 PAC33	Correspondence received from Graham Doyle, Secretary General, Department of Housing, Local Government & Heritage, dated 25/11/2020	At the meeting on 26 November 2020 it was agreed to note and publish this item.
B - Correspondence from Accounting Officers and/or Ministers and follow up to PAC meetings		Decision
R0202 PAC33	Correspondence received from Seán Ó Foghlú, Secretary General, Department of Education & Skills, dated 13/11/2020	<p>Note and publish.</p> <p>It was agreed to request further details in relation to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.the costs of prefabrication or temporary school buildings including a complete breakdown with costs by county, and the numbers of students in this type of accommodation; 2.the relationship between home tutors and the Department; 3. casual employees; and 4. the Garda investigation referenced on page seven of the correspondence. <p>It was agreed to request details from the State Claims Agency in relation to settling legal claims.</p> <p>It was agreed to include a recommendation in a report of the Committee regarding the provision of better information in Appropriation Accounts regarding legal costs and settling legal claims.</p>

3. Correspondence received		
R0204 PAC33	Correspondence received from Robert Watt, Secretary General, Department of Public Expenditure & Reform, dated 16/11/2020	<p>Note and publish.</p> <p>It was agreed to request:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. an information note in relation to the 'One Person One Salary' principle to include how often it has featured since it was introduced and the cost of the policy; 2. further details in relation to 'Guidelines for Appointments of CEOs of Non-Commercial State Bodies' including details of exceptions regarding the appointment of board members, the number of exceptions that have been sanctioned by the Minister since 2016, and the term length. 3. a note on the cost of Public Private Partnerships, to include costs of projects that are not completed but where there are related costs due to non-completion including any costs for additional accommodation.
R0207 PAC33	Correspondence received from Michael Keane, Vice-President Administration and Finance, Mary Immaculate College, dated 19/11/2020	Note and publish.
R0208 PAC33	Correspondence received from Angela Black, CEO, Citizens Information Board, dated 19/11/2020	Note and publish.
R0213 PAC33	Correspondence received from Derek Moran, Secretary General, Department of Finance, dated 24/11/2020	<p>Note and publish.</p> <p>Request further details in relation to the liquidation of IBRC, and the expected timeframe including if there are risk assessments on delays and any further costs.</p>

3. Correspondence received		
R0215 PAC33	Correspondence received from Rachel Downes, CEO, Caranua, dated 24/11/2020	<p>Note and Publish.</p> <p>This item was considered at the meeting of the Committee on 25 November. It was agreed to postpone the engagement with Caranua to 17 December 2020.</p> <p>It was agreed to request a detailed briefing in relation to the provision of supports and future services to applicants and the timetable for related legislation.</p>
R0220 PAC33	Correspondence received from Dr. Brendan McCormack, President, IT Sligo, dated 26/11/2020	Note and publish.
C - Correspondence from and related to private individuals and any other correspondence		Decision
R0211 PAC33	Correspondence received, dated 21/11/2020	<p>Noted.</p> <p>It was agreed to forward this correspondence to the SBCI & the Department of Finance for a response to the matters raised.</p> <p>It was further agreed to include the item on the 2021 Work Programme.</p> <p>It was agreed the Committee would consider arranging a meeting with the correspondent in advance of meeting with SBCI.</p>
R0218 PAC33	Correspondence received, dated 24/11/2020	Noted. The correspondent was previously advised that the Committee cannot meaningfully address the concerns raised.
R0219 PAC33	Correspondence received, dated 24/11/2020	Noted. The correspondent was previously advised that the Committee cannot meaningfully address the concerns raised.

3. Financial Statements & Accounts Received

Ref	Body/main purpose	Accounting period/ turnover	Date certified	Date laid	Audit opinion/notes
1	Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority	2019 €18.3 million	20 May 2020	11 Nov 2020	Clear audit opinion Attention is drawn to the results of an EU Commission audit that identified significant shortcomings in the weighing and reporting of pelagic fish landings and the lack of controls/ enforcement over catches of bluefin tuna.
2	Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board (Caranua) <i>[Note: late submission. 2019 accounts due to be laid also]</i>	2018 €16.1 million	6 Dec 2019	13 Nov 2020	Clear audit opinion Attention is drawn to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inadequate control over grant repayments • Review of the effectiveness of internal controls
3	Road Safety Authority	2019 €100 million	16 Jul 2020	17 Nov 2020	Clear audit opinion
4	Medical Bureau of Road Safety	2019 €5.8 million	23 Sep 2020	17 Nov 2020	Clear audit opinion
5	Greyhound Racing Operations Ireland Limited <i>(Operator of 8 tracks)</i>	2019 €1.4 million	18 Sep 2020	17 Nov 2020	Clear audit opinion
6	Shelbourne Greyhound Stadium Limited	2019 €943,000	18 Sep 2020	17 Nov 2020	Clear audit opinion
7	Abargrove Limited <i>(Operator of track catering)</i>	2019 €5.3 million	18 Sep 2020	17 Nov 2020	Clear audit opinion
8	Irish Retired Greyhound Trust	2019 €343,000	16 Oct 2020	17 Nov 2020	Clear audit opinion
9	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland	2019 €178 million	26 Jun 2020	17 Nov 2020	Clear audit opinion
10	National Concert Hall	2019 €9.5 million	4 Jun 2020	20 Nov 2020	Clear audit opinion Attention drawn to deferred retirement benefit funding
11	Local Government Fund Account	2019 €659 million	19 Nov 2020	23 Nov 2020	Clear audit opinion

Ref	Body/main purpose	Accounting period/ turnover	Date certified	Date laid	Audit opinion/notes
12	Residential Institutions Redress Board Special Account	2019 Nil turnover	30 Oct 2020	23 Nov 2020	Clear audit opinion
13	Credit Institutions Resolution Fund <i>(Net assets: €47 million)</i>	2019 €8.3 million	19 Nov 2020	24 Nov 2020	Clear audit opinion

In relation to the Sea-Fisheries Protection Authority ('Ref 1' above), it was agreed to request an update in relation to the EU Commission audit that identified significant shortcomings in the weighing and reporting of pelagic fish landings and the lack of controls/enforcement over catches of bluefin tuna, and specifically if there were any financial penalties related to this matter.

4. Work Programme

The Committee agreed a number of engagements for the new year and added a number of bodies to its work programme.

The Committee adjourned at 6:30 p.m. until 09 December 2020.

Brian Stanley, T.D.
Chairman
16 December 2020