



Ms. Sarah Cremin
 Committee Secretariat
 Committee of Public Accounts
 Leinster House
 Dublin 2
 D02 XR20

19 November 2021

Re: Your ref SO588 PAC33

Dear Ms. Cremin,

I refer to your letter dated 9 November 2021, and to correspondence earlier this year, regarding the timely submission of Accounts to the Houses of the Oireachtas as required under Circular 7 of 2015 to Accounting Officers.

As you will appreciate the past year was an exceptionally difficult one for all Government Departments and Agencies due to the impact of the COVID-19 crisis, which necessitated a pivot to remote working across the Department. The situation was further complicated for this Department by the restructuring of the Department following the formation of the new Government during the summer and the associated formal Transfer of Functions process.

These factors combined to create a significant backlog of work on the sections concerned, many of which were also heavily involved in the development of the Department's sectoral response to COVID-19. The resultant pressures on the staff involved in these areas regrettably contributed to a delay in the processing of Annual Reports and Accounts, including the notification to the PAC of the reasons for the delay in publication and provision of a copies of the relevant documents to the Committee.

Notwithstanding the particular circumstance of the year gone by I accept that the Department should have notified the Committee where various delays arose.

I am confident that with the completion of the transition to the new configuration of the Department and remote working arrangements now embedded throughout the organisation, the requirements of the Circular 7/2015 will be fulfilled going forward. I have also taken the following steps to ensure that accounts are presented to the Houses of the Oireachtas within the required time limits going forward:

- Circular 7/2015 has been circulated within the Department again



- State Bodies under the Aegis of the Department have been reminded of the Circular and its requirements.
- The Department's Management Board will be provided with regular updates in relation to the Department's performance in relation to these regulations.

I trust that these steps will lead to the necessary improvements and clarifies the position to the satisfaction of the Committee

Yours sincerely,

Katherine Licken

Katherine Licken
Secretary General