

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING OF THURSDAY, 4 NOVEMBER 2021

The Committee met in **Public** Session at 9.32 a.m. (online remotely), a quorum being present.

The following Members were present:

Deputies: Brian Stanley (Cathaoirleach); Colm Burke, Matt Carthy, Cormac Devlin, Alan Dillon, Neasa Hourigan, Paul McAuliffe, Imelda Munster, Catherine Murphy (Leas-Chathaoirleach), James O'Connor, Seán Sherlock.

Apologies: Deputy Jennifer Carroll MacNeill

Permanent

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

The Committee went into **Private** session at 9.33 a.m. and resumed in **Public** session at 9.43 a.m.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 21 October 2021 were agreed.

2. Financial Statements and Accounts Received

Ref	Body/main purpose	Accounting period/ turnover	Date certified	Date laid	Audit opinion/notes	
1	Health and Safety Authority (click here to view accounts)	2020 €26 million	30 Sep 2021	13 Oct 2021	Clear audit opinion	
2	Pobal (click here to view accounts)	2020 million	€764 2021	19 Sep 2021	15 Oct 2021	Clear audit opinion
3	Commission for Regulation of Utilities (click here to view accounts)	2020 €18.7 million	21 May 2021	18 Oct 2021	Clear audit opinion	
4	Ombudsman for the Defence Forces (click here to view accounts)	2020 €367,000	30 Sep 2021	20 Oct 2021	Clear audit opinion	

The Accounts and Statements were noted.

As previously agreed, the Committee will request explanations for any significant non-compliant procurement or delays in laying accounts before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

3. Correspondence

Correspondence received		Decision
B - Correspondence from Accounting Officers and/or Ministers and follow up to PAC meetings		
R0827 PAC33	Correspondence received the Clerk to the Joint Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage, dated 15/10/2021	Note.
R0828 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ray Mitchell, Assistant National Director, HSE, dated 18/10/2021	Note and publish. It was agreed to add the issue of compliance with procurement guidelines in respect of all section 38 hospitals as an area of interest to the Committee for its next engagement with the HSE.
R0829 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ray Mitchell, Assistant National Director, HSE, dated 18/10/2021	Note and publish.
R0830 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mary Lawlor, Senior Communications and Public Affairs Manager, NAMA, dated 18/10/2021	Note and publish.
R0839 PAC33	Correspondence received from Désirée Finnegan, Chief Executive, Screen Ireland, dated 21/10/2021	Note and publish.
R0840 PAC33	Correspondence received from Oonagh McPhillips, Secretary General, Department of Justice, dated 21/10/2021	Note and publish.
R0841 PAC33	Correspondence received from John McKeon, Secretary General, Department of Social Protection, dated 22/10/2021	Note and publish. It was agreed to request the Department to provide an indicative timeline for completion of its investigation of the employment status of people engaged as contractors by RTÉ as well as details of any appeals mechanism.
R0842 PAC33	Correspondence received from Kerstin Mey, President, University of Limerick, dated 21/10/2021	Note and publish. It was agreed to request the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science to provide details of capital funding being withheld from the University of Limerick.
R0843 PAC33	Correspondence received from Seán Ó Foghlú, Secretary General, Department of Education, dated 22/10/2021	Note and publish.
R0844 PAC33	Correspondence received from Dr. Alan Wall, Chief Executive, Higher Education Authority, dated 22/10/2021	Note and publish.

Correspondence received		
R0845 PAC33	Correspondence received from Vivienne Flood, Head of Public Affairs, RTÉ, dated 21/10/2021	Note and publish. It was agreed to request RTÉ to provide: - all correspondence from the Office of the Revenue Commissioners in relation to Revenue's organisational tax audit of RTÉ. - clarification regarding the discrepancy between the settlement figure of €1,223,252 provided by RTÉ and the figure of €953,000 provided by the Department of Social Protection. - a general response regarding the personnel at RTÉ involved in the Revenue settlement including how many individuals were involved categorised by income bands.
R0846 PAC33	Correspondence received from Maurice Buckley, Chairperson, OPW, dated 26/10/2021	Note and publish. It was agreed to add the OPW to the Committee's Work Programme for the New Year. It was also agreed to request further details regarding: - proposed leases of Garda properties and confirmation if the terms of the leases are sufficiently attractive to encourage investment in their refurbishment. - an information note providing details of OPW's work in relation to securing a new HQ for the Office of the Data Protection Commission including the options considered and any associated analyses.
R0847 PAC33	Correspondence received from European Court of Auditors, dated 26/10/2021	Note and publish.
R0851 PAC33	Correspondence received from Dee Forbes, Director General, RTÉ, dated 22/10/2021	Note and publish.
C - Correspondence from and related to private individuals and any other correspondence		Decision
R0837 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 28/09/2021	Note.
R0858 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 01/11/2021	Note.

4. Work Programme

It was agreed to proceed with the following engagements:

1. The Department of Transport (11 November)
2. The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment (18 November)
3. The Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (25 November)
4. The Office of the Revenue Commissioners (2 December)
5. The Department of Social Protection (9 December)
6. The Department of Health (16 December)
7. Exchequer funding of RTÉ (20 January)

It was also agreed to revisit the Work Programme for the new year in late November.

5. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

6. Private Session

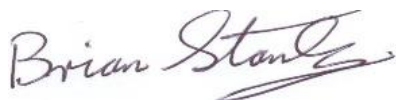
The Committee went into **Private** session at 10.28 am.

C - Correspondence from and related to private individuals and any other correspondence		Decision
R0836 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 19 October 2021	It was agreed to advise the correspondent of the Committee's decision.
R0836 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 18 October 2021	It was agreed to advise the correspondent of the Committee's decision.
R0849 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 27 October 2021	It was agreed to advise the correspondent of the Committee's decision.
R0850 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 27 October 2021	It was agreed to advise the correspondent of the Committee's decision.
R0857 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 29 October 2021	It was agreed to advise the correspondent of the Committee's decision.

Consideration of draft Committee Report

The Committee agreed its Report in relation to the Examination of the 2019 Appropriation Account for Vote 37 – Employment Affairs and Social Protection and related matters. It was agreed to note an objection by Deputy Burke to an amendment that was agreed to Recommendation 2.

The Committee adjourned at 12.20 p.m. until Thursday 11 November 2021.



Brian Stanley, T.D.
Cathaoirleach
11 November 2021