

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING OF THURSDAY, 20 JANUARY 2022

The Committee met in **Public** Session at 09.30 a.m. (online remotely), a quorum being present.

The following Members were present:

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

Apologies: Deputy Verona Murphy

Permanent

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

1. Witnesses Examined

Radio Teilifís Éireann

- Ms. Dee Forbes, Director General
- Ms. Fiona O'Shea, Group Financial Controller
- Mr. Richard Collins, Chief Financial Officer

Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media

- Ms. Patricia Murphy, Assistant Secretary, Finance Division
- Ms. Triona Quill, Assistant Secretary, Broadcasting and Media Division
- Mr. Stephen Ryan, Principal Officer, Broadcasting Policy

Matters for discussion

- Programme E Broadcasting in the respect of Appropriation Account 2020 – Vote 32: Tourism, Culture, Art, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media;
- RTÉ's 2020 Annual Report and Group Financial Statement;
- RTÉ's financial sustainability and capacity to perform its role as the national public service broadcaster;
- TV license fees;
- The investigation being undertaken by the Department of Social Protection in respect of contract staff;
- Sale of land assets;
- The Willis Tower Watson organisation-wide role review, including the remuneration of Irish-speaking workers;
- The gender pay gap at RTÉ.

The Committee suspended at 10.59.

The Committee resumed in **Public** Session at 11.10.

It was agreed that the Clerk would request any follow-up information and carry out any agreed actions arising from the meeting. It was also agreed to note and publish the opening statement and briefing documents provided to the Committee for the meeting.

The Committee suspended at 12.28.

The Committee resumed in **Public** Session at 13.32

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 16 December 2021 were agreed.

3. Financial Statements and Accounts

There were no accounts and statements considered at this meeting. Consideration of accounts and statements will resume at meeting on 27 January 2022.

4. Correspondence

Correspondence received		
A – Briefing Documents and Opening Statements		Decision
R1013 PAC33	Briefing Documents received from Dee Forbes, Director General, RTÉ, dated 17/01/2022	Note and publish.
R1015 PAC33	Opening Statement from Dee Forbes, Director General, RTÉ, dated 19/01/2022	Note and publish.
B - Correspondence from Accounting Officers and/or Ministers and follow up to PAC meetings		Decision
R0967 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ken Spratt, Secretary General, Department of Transport, dated 09/12/2021	HELD OVER from meeting on 16/12/2021 Note and publish. Advise National Transport Authority (NTA) & Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) that matters in this correspondence pertaining to them will be raised at the Committee's forthcoming meetings with NTA & TII. Request further information regarding value for money aspects of the scheme for electrification of cars, in particular the geographic spread and State subsidies being available to those living in areas with access to good public transport services.

Correspondence received		
R0968 PAC33	Correspondence received from Eamonn Quinn, Head of Major Capital Projects Unit, Department of Health, dated 10/12/2021	Note and publish. Write to the Department to express the Committee's unhappiness with the response and to request that the Department clarify its position in relation to expenditure on the National Children's Hospital, given that it has overall responsibility for health related capital expenditure.
R0970 PAC33	Correspondence received from Aileen Healy, Director of Administration, Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission, dated 14/12/2021	Note and publish. Write to the Department of Justice (and copy GSOC) to: - express the Committee's concerns at the impact on GSOC's operations; - request details of measures being taken or the plan of action to resolve the dispute; and - the Department's position regarding GSOC's statement that some senior Garda officers have withdrawn from work they consider outside their core duties. Forward the correspondence to the Committee on Justice.
R0971 PAC33	Correspondence received from David Moloney, Secretary General, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, dated 07/12/2021	Note and publish.
R0975 PAC33	Correspondence received from Orlaigh Quinn, Secretary General, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, dated 15/12/2021	Note and publish. Refer the query to the Office of the Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Social Protection.
R0976 PAC33	Correspondence received from Seán Ó Foghlú, Secretary General, Department of Education, dated 15/12/2021	Note and publish.
R0977 PAC33	Correspondence received from Seán Ó Foghlú, Secretary General, Department of Education, dated 15/12/2021	Note and publish.
R0978 PAC33	Correspondence received from Graham Doyle, Secretary General, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, dated 16/12/2021	Note and publish. Consider all An Taise responses at the meeting of 27 January 2022. Request further information in relation to the Department's response, particularly in relation to questions three and four in the response.
R0980 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ken Spratt, Secretary General, Department of Transport, dated 16/12/2021	Note and publish.
R0981 PAC33	Correspondence received from Joe Hackett, Secretary General, Department of Foreign Affairs, dated 17/12/2021	Note and publish.
R0982 PAC33	Correspondence received from Orlaigh Quinn, Secretary General, Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, dated 17/12/2021	Note and publish.

Correspondence received		
R0983 PAC33	Correspondence received from Paul Kelly, Chief Executive, Fáilte Ireland, dated 17/12/2021	Note and publish.
R0984 PAC33	Correspondence received from Oonagh McPhillips, Secretary General, Department of Justice, dated 17/12/2021	Note and publish. Request a further update before the end of February and provide the Committee with the report if it's available.
R0985 PAC33	Correspondence received from Robert Watt, Secretary General, Department of Health, dated 20/12/2021	Note and publish.
R0987 PAC33	Correspondence received from Jim McCarthy, CPIU, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, dated 20/12/2021	Note and publish.
R0988 PAC33	Correspondence received from Martin Shanahan, Chief Executive Officer, IDA Ireland, dated 20/12/2021	Note and publish.
R0989 PAC33	Correspondence received from Marie Mulvaney, Executive Assistant, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, dated 21/12/2021	Note and publish.
R0991 PAC33	Correspondence received from John Dollard, Chief Superintendent, An Garda Síochána, dated 22/12/2021	Note and publish. Request further information as to what steps are being taken to meet 'operational needs' within procurement rules and guidelines.
R0992 PAC33	Correspondence received from John Treacy, Chief Executive, Sport Ireland, dated 21/12/2021	Note and publish.
R0995 PAC33	Correspondence received from Seán Ó Foghlú, Secretary General, Department of Education, dated 24/12/2021	Note and publish.
R0996 PAC33	Correspondence received from Peter Meany, Assistant Principal, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, dated 30/12/2021	Note and publish.
R0997 PAC33	Correspondence received from Karl Seeber, Oireachtas Liaison, National Transport Authority, dated 21/12/2021	Note and publish.
R1000 PAC33	Correspondence received from David Moloney, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, Secretary General, dated 06/01/2022	Note and publish. Include as an agenda item for the next engagement with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.
R1002 PAC33	Correspondence received from Tanya Kenny, Principal Officer, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, dated 10/01/2022	Note and publish.

Correspondence received		
R1004 PAC33	Correspondence received from Fergal Lynch, Secretary General, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, dated 10/01/2022	Note and publish.
R1005 PAC33	Correspondence received from Clíodhna Guy, Interim CEO, Irish HorseRacing Regulatory Board, dated 11/01/2022	Note and publish. Express the Committee's dissatisfaction with the delays in previous commitments regarding the project. Request an update regarding progress and a timeline for completion as soon as possible.
R1008 PAC33	Correspondence received from Maurice Buckley, Office of Public Works, Secretary General, dated 12/01/2022	Note and publish.
C - Correspondence from and related to private individuals and any other correspondence		Decision
R0986 PAC33	Correspondence from an individual, dated 20/12/2021	Note.
R0990 PAC33	Correspondence from an individual, dated 22/12/2021	Note.
R0993 PAC33	Correspondence from an individual, dated 20/12/2021	Request the correspondents' consent to forward the correspondence to the Department of Education and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment to request responses to the matters raised.
R0994 PAC33	Correspondence from an individual, dated 23/12/2021	Advise the Deputy that the Committee understands that the Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform and Taoiseach is currently considering this and related matters.
R0998 PAC33	Correspondence from an individual, dated 14/12/2021	Consider the response from the Department in relation to related previous correspondence before deciding how to proceed.
R1001 PAC33	Correspondence from an individual, dated 03/01/2022	Request the HSE to respond to the matters raised and to media reports that the property is currently zoned for housing.
R1003 PAC33	Correspondence from an individual, dated 11/01/2022	Note.
R1006 PAC33	Correspondence from an individual, dated 17/12/2021	HOLD OVER - pending review by the C&AG.
R1007 PAC33	Correspondence from an individual, dated 10/01/2021	Note.

5. Work Programme

It was agreed to schedule meetings with the Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government, the Residential Tenancies Board, and Home Building Finance Ireland.

It was agreed to advise the NTA that the Committee may also raise matters relevant to the NTA in recent correspondence from the Department of Transport (R0967 PAC33 refers).

It was also agreed to request briefing material in relation to:

1. Proposed upgrade of Ballybrophy-Nenagh-Limerick rail line.

2. Further information on the buses purchased in 2020 at a cost of €65 million (R0967 PAC33 refers).

It was proposed to add the Industrial Development Agency (IDA) to the Work Programme

6. Any Other Business

It was agreed to request the Department of Finance whether any analysis has been undertaken of companies paying dividends that are in receipt of supports and the scale of this issue.

It was agreed to request the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine to provide the rationale behind the decision regarding the significant increase in salary for the CEO of Horse Racing Ireland.

The Committee went into **Private** Session at 14.35.

For consideration in Private Session		Decision
R0999 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 05/01/2022	Note. Advise the correspondent of the Committee's decision.

The Committee adjourned at 14.53 until Thursday 27 January 2022.



Brian Stanley, T.D.
Cathaoirleach
27 January 2022