

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING OF THURSDAY, 2 June 2022

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

The following Members were present:

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

Apologies: Deputy Matt Carthy

Permanent

Witness: Mr. Seamus McCarthy, Comptroller and Auditor General

1. Witnesses Examined

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

- Mr. Kevin McCarthy, Secretary General
- Ms Carol Baxter, Assistant Secretary
- Ms Anne-Marie Brooks, Assistant Secretary
- Ms Lara Hynes, Assistant Secretary
- Ms Laura McGarrigle, Assistant Secretary
- Mr. Dermot Ryan, Assistant Secretary

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

- Ms Jessica Lawless, Principal Officer
- Mr. Fionn Jenkinson, Assistant Principal

Matters for discussion

- **Appropriation Account 2020**
 - Vote 40 – Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

The Committee suspended at 11.00.

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, and to write to Deputy Séan Sherlock to thank him for his contribution to the work of the Committee.

The Committee suspended at 12.36.

The Committee resumed in **Private** Session at 13.33.

2. Private Session

Sensitive correspondence		Decision
R1252 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 17/05/2022	It was agreed to advise the correspondent of the Committee's decision.
R1258 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 23/05/2022	It was agreed to consider the correspondence at a later date.
R1270 PAC33	Correspondence received from Anonymous, dated 26/05/2022	It was agreed to circulate a redacted version of the correspondence.
R1276 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 29/05/2022	See R1258 PAC33.

It was agreed to amend an appendix to the Committee's 2021 annual report, and to update the relevant minutes accordingly.

The Committee went into **Public** session at 13.59.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 26 May 2022 were agreed.

4. Financial Statements and Accounts

There were five sets of financial statements and accounts laid before the Dáil between 23 and 27 May 2022.

Ref	Body/main purpose	Accounting period/turnover	Date certified	Date laid	Audit opinion/notes
1	Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (click here to view accounts)	2020 €178 million	30 Mar 2022	23 May 2022	Clear audit opinion Attention is drawn to non-compliance with procurement rules. (click here for further information)
2	Health Information and Quality Authority (click here to view accounts)	2021 €31 million	6 May 2022	23 May 2022	Clear audit opinion
3	The Heritage Fund (click here to view accounts)	2021 €1,100	12 Apr 2022	24 May 2022	Clear audit opinion

Balance in Fund at 31
Dec 2021: €212,000

4	National University of Ireland – Maynooth (click here to view accounts)	2020/2021 €198 million	25 Mar 2022	25 May 2022	Clear audit opinion Attention is drawn to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recognition of a deferred pension funding asset (standard for universities) • a significant element of a severance deal for which the required Departmental sanction was not sought. (click here for further information)
5	Defence Forces Canteen Board (click here to view accounts)	2021 €277,000	28 Apr 2022	27 May 2022	Clear audit opinion

The Committee agreed to write to the Secretary General of the Department of Health in relation to comments about Committee Members attributed to a senior official that were reported in the media.

5. Correspondence

Correspondence received		
A – Briefing Documents and Opening Statements		Decision
R1274 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Kevin McCarthy, Secretary General, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, dated 27/05/2022	Note and publish.
R1275 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Kevin McCarthy, Secretary General, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, dated 27/05/2022	Note and publish.
R1283 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Kevin McCarthy, Secretary General, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, dated 01/06/2022	Note and publish.
B – Correspondence from Accounting Officers and/or Ministers and follow up to PAC meetings		Decision
R1253 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Maurice Buckley, Chairperson, OPW, dated 20/05/2022	Note and publish.

Correspondence received		
R1257 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Mark Griffin, Secretary General, Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, dated 23/05/2022	Note and publish. It was agreed to request the Department to clarify the following: - if all the two-year contracts referenced in the correspondence will be extended; - if the Department has a clear plan in terms of the number and type of additional posts required to support delivery of the National Broadband Plan and if so, if it can be shared with the Committee; and - whether the Department has sanction, or has sought sanction, to fill any such posts.
R1266 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Denis Duggan, CEO, Horse Sport Ireland, dated 25/05/2022	Note and publish. It was agreed to request Horse Sport Ireland to clarify the following in relation to the proposed relocation of a Horse Sport Ireland facility to Greenogue in Dublin: - whether there has been engagement with its affiliates in relation to the proposed Centre of Excellence, if the development would meet their needs, and if they could all be accommodated at the site; - the length of the lease for the site and the associated costs; - the exact size of the site and whether there is space for expansion; and - exactly how much of the land is 'sterilised'. It was also agreed to request sight of the business case for the acquisition of the site, and to copy the Committee's letter to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.
R1267 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Bernie McNally, Secretary General, Department of Education, dated 25/05/2022	Note and publish.
R1269 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Robert Watt, Secretary General, Department of Health, dated 26/05/2022	Note and publish. In relation to the Department's response to question five, it was agreed to request the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board to clarify whether it has made any such claims.
R1273 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Kevin McCarthy, Secretary General, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, dated 27/05/2022	It was agreed to note and publish the correspondence except for the section that the Department requested not be published.
C - Correspondence from and related to private individuals and any other correspondence		Decision

Correspondence received		
R1261 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 24/05/2022	It was agreed to advise the correspondent that the Committee noted that there is ongoing engagement between the Department of Education and Atheist Ireland, and that it is not the Committee's role to adjudicate on constitutional interpretation.
R1263 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 24/05/2022	It was agreed to provide the correspondent with a copy of the Committee's report on its examination of the 2019 Appropriation Account for Vote 9 – Office of the Revenue Commissioners, which records its position on the matter raised.

6. Work Programme


The Committee agreed to schedule the following engagements:

- The Department of Foreign Affairs on 30 June 2022;
- The Central Bank and the Office of the Revenue Commissioners on 7 July 2022; and
- An Bord Pleanála on 14 July 2022.

7. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The Committee adjourned at 14.39 until Thursday 16 June 2022.



Brian Stanley, T.D.
Cathaoirleach
16 June 2022