

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING OF THURSDAY, 30 June 2022

The Committee met in **Public** Session at 09.31 a.m., a quorum being present.

The following Members were present:

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

Apologies: Deputy Jennifer Carroll MacNeill

Permanent

Witness: Mr. Seamus McCarthy, Comptroller and Auditor General

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 23 June 2022 were agreed.

2. Financial Statements and Accounts

There was one set of financial statements laid before the Dáil between 21 and 24 June 2022.

Ref	Body/main purpose	Accounting period/turnover	Date certified	Date laid	Audit opinion/notes
1	Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (click here to view accounts)	2020/2021 €96 million	31 Mar 2022	24 Jun 2022	Clear audit opinion

It was agreed to note the financial statements.

3. Correspondence

Correspondence received		
A – Briefing Documents and Opening Statements		Decision
R1327 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Joe Hackett, Secretary General, Department of Foreign Affairs, dated 24/06/2022	Note and publish.
R1328 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Joe Hackett, Secretary General, Department of Foreign Affairs, dated 24/06/2022	Note and publish.

Correspondence received		
R1333 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Joe Hackett, Secretary General, Department of Foreign Affairs, dated 29/06/2022	Note and publish.
B – Correspondence from Accounting Officers and/or Ministers and follow up to PAC meetings		Decision
R1314 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Una May, Chief Executive, Sport Ireland, dated 17/06/2022	Note and publish.
R1317 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Brendan Gleeson, Secretary General, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, dated 17/06/2022	Note and publish. It was agreed to schedule a meeting with Horse Racing Ireland in the autumn when its 2020 accounts are expected to be available to the Committee to examine.
R1319 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Peter Walsh, Chief Executive, Transport Infrastructure Ireland, dated 21/06/2022	Note and publish. It was agreed to request Transport Infrastructure Ireland to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clarify whether consideration has been given to using the revenue from toll overpayments for community purposes rather than retaining it for operational purposes; - confirm if the original 2022 proposal included an allocation of funding or a proposal to withdraw the funding for the N2/A5 (Clontibret to the border) route; - provide an information note regarding the feasibility of removing toll barriers on all toll plazas; whether Transport Infrastructure Ireland is aware of the Environmental Protection Agency's position on the matter; and whether any fines have been paid due to NOx emissions (CC Department of Transport); and - confirm the current status of a railway order for the Metro which was due in quarter two 2022. It was agreed to request the Department of Transport to provide an information note regarding the criteria for decision making in relation to the funding allocation for roads and if it is based on an objective resource model.

Correspondence received		
R1321 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. David Gunning, Chief Executive, National Paediatric Hospital Development Board, dated 21/06/2022	<p>Note and publish.</p> <p>It was agreed to request the National Paediatric Hospital Development Board to provide an information note regarding arson attacks to include the number of such episodes since the commencement of the project.</p> <p>It was agreed to request the Department of Health for an information note regarding public procurement of legal services and how it ensures that there are no conflicts of interest or biases inherent in the process.</p>
R1323 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Fergal Costello, Government Accounting Unit, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, dated 22/06/2022	Note and publish.
C - Correspondence from and related to private individuals and any other correspondence		Decision
R1311 PAC33	Correspondence circulated by the Secretariat from the Parliamentary Budget Office	<p>Note.</p> <p>It was agreed to request an information note from the Department of Transport to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the rationale for the grants process which appears to favour larger vehicles and those who have access to public transport; and - details of plans to transition publicly owned vehicles to Electric Vehicles.
R1312 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 11/06/2022	Note.

Correspondence received		
R1315 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 17/06/2022	<p>Note and request the consent of the correspondent to publish.</p> <p>Request the Department of Finance to provide an information note to clarify the investment that will be required to fulfil European Union/Eurostat reporting requirements.</p> <p>Request the consent of the correspondent to provide a copy of the correspondence to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (except the Indecon report) and request:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - details regarding how comparable information can be obtained; - whether the Department is aware of the extent to which other Departments use Benefacts' data; and - statistics on how often reports are commissioned without going to tender. (CC Minister Michael McGrath.) <p>Request the Department of Rural and Community Development to confirm the related procurement project is subject to competitive tendering and to provide details of the scope of the development project.</p>
R1318 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 20/06/2022	Note.
R1320 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 21/06/2022	Note. See R1319 PAC33
R1332 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 28/06/2022	Note.
R1334 PAC33	Correspondence received from Deputy Neasa Hourigan, dated 28/06/2022	<p>It was agreed to request the Health Service Executive to respond to the questions in the Deputy's submission.</p> <p>It was also agreed to schedule a meeting with the Health Service Executive focusing on expenditure on mental health services in Community Healthcare Organisations 4 and 8.</p>

4. Work Programme

The Committee agreed to proceed with the following engagements:

- The Department of Education on 7 July 2022
- An Bord Pleanála on 14 July 2022 and to request the Secretary General of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to attend the meeting.

It also agreed to request further information to be provided in advance of the meeting with An Bord Pleanála as follows:

1. A table detailing the status of the implementation of recommendations made in the report entitled Organisation Review of An Bord Pleanála by the Independent Review Group, dated February 2016;
2. Detailed statistics regarding judicial reviews of An Bord Pleanála's decisions, including the overall number, how many are decided, how many were successful, and the status of live cases; and
3. An information note providing details of arrangements for the appointment of a chairperson and other members of the Board.

It was also agreed to add an engagement in relation to expenditure on emergency services to the work programme.

5. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The Committee went into **Private** session at 10. 55

Draft Committee Report

The Committee agreed to re-schedule the launch of the Committee's report on its Examination of the 2019 Appropriation Account for Vote 29 – Environment, Climate and Communications: Programme B – Broadcasting, and the 2020 Appropriation Account for Vote 33 – Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media to Tuesday 5 July 2022.

It was agreed to arrange a legal briefing for the meeting on 7 July 2022.

The Committee **suspended** at 11. 12.

The Committee resumed in **Public** Session at 13.34.

6. Witnesses Examined

Department of Foreign Affairs

- Mr. John Conlon, Chief Operating Officer
- Ms Jane Connolly, Finance Director
- Ms Siobhán Byrne, Director of Passport Services
- Mr. Ruairá de Búrca, Director General of the Development, Cooperation and Africa Division (Irish Aid)

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

- Mr. Ken Cleary, Principal Officer
- Matters for discussion**

Appropriation Accounts 2020

- Vote 27 – International Co-operation
- Vote 28 – Foreign Affairs

The Committee suspended at 15.08.

The Committee resumed in **Public** Session at 15.18.

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 statements and briefing documents provided to the Committee for the meeting.

The Committee adjourned at 16.29 until Thursday 7 July 2022.



Brian Stanley, T.D.
Cathaoirleach
7 July 2022