

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING OF THURSDAY, 7 July 2022

The Committee met in **Public** Session at 09.34 a.m., a quorum being present.

The following Members were present:

Deputies: Brian Stanley (Cathaoirleach), Colm Burke, Matt Carthy, Cormac Devlin, Alan Dillon, Catherine Murphy (Leas-Chathaoirleach), Verona Murphy, James O'Connor.

Apologies: Deputies Jennifer Carroll MacNeill and Imelda Munster

Permanent

Witness: Mr. Seamus McCarthy, Comptroller and Auditor General

1. Witnesses Examined

Department of Education

- Mr. Gavin O'Leary, Assistant Secretary
- Mr. Hubert Loftus, Assistant Secretary
- Ms Deirdre McDonnell, Assistant Secretary
- Ms Aoife Conduit, Assistant Secretary
- Ms Martina Mannion, Assistant Secretary
- Mr. Tomás Ó Ruairc, Assistant Secretary
- Ms Deirdre Shanley, Assistant Secretary
- Mr. Harold Hislop, Chief Inspector
- Mr. Tom Whelan, Principal Officer

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

- Ms Georgina Hughes Elders, Principal Officer

Matters for discussion

Appropriation Account 2020

- Vote 26 - Education

Report on the Accounts of the Public Services 2018

- Chapter 7 – Purchase of sites for school provision

Report on the Accounts of the Public Services 2019

- Chapter 8 – Management of the school's estate

The Committee suspended at 11.07.

The Committee resumed in **Public** Session at 11.16.

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.

It was also agreed to make the transcript of the proceedings of the meetings on 30 June and 7 July available to the respective Accounting Officers, who could not be present for the meetings, to afford them an opportunity to comment on or clarify any matters discussed during the course of the meetings.

The Committee suspended at 12.31.

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

The Committee agreed to include the report on its examination of C&AG Special Report 110 – Nursing Homes Support Scheme (Fair Deal) in the lottery for consideration in the House pursuant to Dáil Standing Order 102(2).

The Committee went into **Public** session at 13.58.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 30 June 2022 were agreed.

3. Financial Statements and Accounts

Two sets of financial statements and accounts were laid before the Dáil between 27 June and 1 July 2022.

Ref	Body/main purpose	Accounting period/turnover	Date certified	Date laid	Audit opinion/notes
1	Irish Auditing and Accounting Supervisory Authority (click here to view accounts)	2021 €4.4 million	2 Jun 2022	28 Jun 2022	Clear audit opinion
2	Commission for Communications Regulation (click here to view accounts)	2020/2021 €62 million	31 Jan 2022	29 Jun 2022	Clear audit opinion

It was agreed to note the listings of the accounts and statements.

4. Correspondence

Correspondence received		
A – Briefing Documents and Opening Statements		Decision
R1339 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Bernie McNally, Secretary General, Department of Education, dated 01/07/2022	Note and publish.
R1340 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Bernie McNally, Secretary General, Department of Education, dated 01/07/2022	Note and publish.
R1344 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Bernie McNally, Secretary General, Department of Education, dated 06/07/2022	Note and publish.
B – Correspondence from Accounting Officers and/or Ministers and follow up to PAC meetings		Decision
R1324 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Mark Griffin, Secretary General, Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, dated 23/06/2022	Note and publish. It was agreed to request further information as follows: - in relation to the Updated Interim Remedial Plan, clarify whether any penalties will be applied by way of subsidy reduction in respect of the three-and-a-half-month delay , and whether any other penalties are set to or have been applied; - provide an update on current milestones and numbers of premises connected; - provide an information note to include details of construction inflation in respect of the National Broadband Plan.
R1325 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Ken Spratt, Secretary General, Department of Transport, dated 24/06/2022	Note and publish. It was agreed to request a copy of the McKinsey Consultants’ report regarding Climate Action Plan targets from the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications.
R1326 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Robert Watt, Secretary General, Department of Health, dated 24/06/2022	Note and publish.

Correspondence received		
R1330 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Hugh Creegan, National Transport Authority, Deputy Chief Executive, dated 28/06/2022	Note and publish. It was agreed to request the National Transport Authority to clarify if the process of implementing the Greater Dublin Transport Strategy 2022 - 2042 includes mechanisms for review/modification during the lifetime of the Strategy.
R1335 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Rhonda Evans, Communications Manager, National Paediatric Hospital Development Board, dated 29/06/2022	Note and publish. It was agreed to hold over this item for consideration at the next meeting.
R1337 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Geraldine Luddy, Corporate Governance Division, Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, dated 29/06/2022	Note and publish.
C - Correspondence from and related to private individuals and any other correspondence		Decision
R1329 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 27/06/2022	It was agreed to advise the correspondent that the remit of the Committee does not extend to local authorities and suggest that the correspondent might wish to contact the Local Government Audit Service or the National Oversight and Audit Commission.
R1336 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 29/06/2022	Note.
R1338 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 23/06/2022	It was agreed to advise the correspondent that the matter is not within the remit of the Committee. It was also agreed to request the correspondent's consent to forward the correspondence to the Committees on Health and Justice for any action they may deem appropriate.
R1343 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 05/07/2022	It was agreed to proceed as proposed by the Cathaoirleach.

5. Work Programme

The Committee agreed forthcoming meetings as follows:

- An Bord Pleanála on 14 July 2022;
- the first scheduled meeting in the autumn will be reserved for business of the Committee;
- the second scheduled meeting will be with Horse Racing Ireland;
- schedule an engagement with the Health Service Executive in relation to expenditure on mental health related services in Community Health Organisations four and eight; and

- schedule a further engagement with the Health Service Executive to examine its 2021 financial statements, and highlight expenditure on emergency services (particularly ambulance services) as an area of particular interest to the Committee.

6. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The Committee **adjourned** at 14.36 until Thursday 14 July 2022.



Brian Stanley, T.D.
Cathaoirleach
7 July 2022