

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING OF THURSDAY, 9 February 2023

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, Neasa Hourigan, Paul McAuliffe, Imelda Munster, Catherine Murphy, Verona Murphy, James O'Connor.

Permanent

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

1. Witnesses Examined:

Department of Health

- Mr. Robert Watt, Secretary General
- Mr. Derek Tierney, Assistant Secretary
- Ms Siobhán McArdle, Assistant Secretary
- Ms Louise McGirr, Assistant Secretary
- Ms Laura Casey, Principal Officer

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

- Mr. Eoin Dormer
- Mr. Daniel O'Callaghan

Health Service Executive

- Mr. Fran Thompson, Chief Information Officer

Matters for discussion:

- **Appropriation Accounts 2021**
 - Vote 38 – Health
- **Report on the Accounts of the Public Services 2021:**
 - Chapter 12 – Financial impact of cyber security attack

The Committee suspended at 11:02.

The Committee resumed in **Public** Session at 11:14.

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 suspended at 12:58.

The Committee resumed in **Public** Session at 13:40.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 26 January and 2 February 2023 were agreed.

3. Financial Statements and Accounts

There were seven sets of financial statements and accounts laid before the Dáil between 23 January and 3 February 2023.

Ref	Body/fund	Accounting period/turnover	Date certified	Date presented	Audit opinion/notes
1	The Housing Agency (click here to view accounts)	2021 €56 million	25 Nov 2022	25 Jan 2023	Clear audit opinion Attention is drawn to chapter 7 of the <i>Report on the Accounts of the Public Services 2021</i> , which examines the use of the Housing Agency's Revolving Acquisition Fund. (click here to view the chapter)
2	Property Services Regulatory Authority (click here to view accounts)	2021 €5.2 million	6 Dec 2022	26 Jan 2023	Clear audit opinion
3	Property Services Compensation Fund (click here to view accounts)	2021 €572,000	6 Dec 2022	26 Jan 2023	Clear audit opinion
4	Heritage Council (click here to view accounts)	2021 €12 million	27 Jun 2022	31 Jan 2023	Clear audit opinion
5	Judicial Council (click here to view accounts)	2021 €485,000	21 Dec 2022	2 Feb 2023	Clear audit opinion
6	Legal Services Regulatory Authority (click here to view accounts)	2021 €6.8 million	20 Dec 2022	2 Feb 2023	Clear audit opinion
7	Water Safety Ireland (click here to view accounts)	2021 €1.7 million	20 Dec 2022	2 Feb 2023	Clear audit opinion

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

The Committee has a standing agreement to request explanations for any significant non-compliant procurement or delays in laying accounts before the Houses of the Oireachtas.

4. Correspondence

Correspondence received		
A – Briefing Documents and Opening Statements		Decision
R1724 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Robert Watt, Secretary General, Department of Health, dated 07/02/2023	Note and publish.
R1729 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Robert Watt, Secretary General, Department of Health, dated 08/02/2023	Note and publish.
B – Correspondence from Accounting Officers and/or Ministers and follow up to PAC meetings		Decision
R1689 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Ray Mitchell, Assistant National Director, HSE, dated 19/01/2023	Note and publish.
R1693 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Bernie McNally, Secretary General, Department of Education, dated 13/01/2023	Note and publish.
R1694 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Darragh O'Loughlin, Chief Executive Officer, Irish Horseracing Regulatory Board, dated 20/01/2023	Note and publish. It was agreed to request the Irish Horseracing Regulatory Board for further information in relation to: - the circumstances of the former CEO's retirement in light of the reference in the correspondence to 'termination of employment'; - clarification as to the sensitivity of the situation; and - whether the confidentiality of the terms is legally binding and if so, what is the legal basis for this.
R1695 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Orla Twomey, Chief Executive, Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland, dated 20/01/2023	Note and publish. It was agreed to make a complaint to the Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland regarding National Lottery advertising on the following grounds: (i) the reference in the advertisements that 90% of funds are returned to the community is misleading because that amount includes prize money and commissions paid to retailers; and (ii) that information provided in the advertisements is misleading in light of information provided to the Committee that a substantial proportion of unclaimed prize money is invested in marketing.

Correspondence received		
R1703 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Kevin McCarthy, Secretary General, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, dated 25/01/2023	Note and publish.
R1704 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Marie Mulvihill, Climate Division, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, dated 26/01/2023	Note and publish.
R1707 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Gail Malone, Principal Officer, An Garda Síochána, dated 25/01/2023	Note and publish.
R1708 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Susanne Lyons, Chief Executive Officer, Approved Housing Bodies Regulatory Authority, dated 27/01/2023	Note and publish.
R1709 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. David Gunning, Chief Officer, National Paediatric Hospital Development Board, dated 27/01/2023	Note and publish.
R1713 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Carol Boate, Regulator of the National Lottery, Regulator of the National Lottery, dated 30/01/2023	Note and publish.
R1714 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. David Moloney, Secretary General, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, dated 26/01/2023	Note and publish.
R1715 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. David Moloney, Secretary General, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, dated 30/01/2023	Note and publish.
R1716 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Stephanie Redmond, Private Secretary to the Secretary General, Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, dated 30/01/2023	<p>Note and publish.</p> <p>It was agreed to convey the Committee's concerns at the low number of premises connected and request further information including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - clarification of the number of homes and businesses connected to date; - the expected number of connected premises in the business case; - if the Department is satisfied with the connection rate; and - what is the connection rate expected by the end of 2023 and the target for 2024.

Correspondence received		
R1717 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Ray Mitchell, Assistant National Director, HSE, dated 30/01/2023	Note and publish.
R1720 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. David Moloney, Secretary General, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, dated 30/01/2023	<p>Note and publish.</p> <p>It was agreed to include Volumetric Modular Homes Pilot on the agenda for next week's meeting with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth and to advise the Department that the Committee also intends to discuss accommodation contracts and related processes.</p> <p>It was also agreed to request the Chairman of the Office of Public Works to nominate a representative to attend next week's meeting.</p>
R1722 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Joe Hackett, Secretary General, Department of Foreign Affairs, dated 01/02/2023	Note and publish.
C - Correspondence from and related to private individuals and any other correspondence		Decision
R1687 PAC33	Correspondence received from Deputy Paul McAuliffe, dated 18/01/2023	<p>Note.</p> <p>It was agreed to request the Departments of Education, and Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, and the Office of Public Works for an information note in relation to Whitehall College of Further Education which has not been occupied for several years, including information on why legal matters have not yet been resolved.</p>
R1690 PAC33	Correspondence received from Deputy Alan Dillon, dated 19/01/2023	<p>Note.</p> <p>It was agreed to request the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications for an information note regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the powers available to the Secretary General in relation to governance issues at Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI); - what normally happens in situations where an effective board is not in place to sign off on financial statements and operational matters (i.e. capital projects) that require its approval; and - what actions will the Department take in relation to IFI and what engagements have taken place so far between the Department and IFI.
R1692 PAC33	Correspondence received from Deputy Alan Dillon, dated 19/01/2023	See R1690 PAC33
R1688 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 18/01/2023	Note.

Correspondence received		
R1698 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 23/01/2023	Note.
R1699 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Laura Pathe, Clerk to the Joint Committee, Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media, dated 23/01/2023	Note. Hold over for consideration at the next meeting.
R1706 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 25/01/2023	Note.
R1710 PAC33	Correspondence received from Anonymous, dated 28/01/2023	Note. It was agreed to request the Department of Social Protection and the Citizens' Information Board (CIB) to provide an information note regarding the €8 million of surplus funds returned to the Exchequer from CIB funded service companies and the governance of such companies.
R1711 PAC33	Correspondence received from Anonymous, dated 28/01/2023	See R1710 PAC33.
R1712 PAC33	Correspondence received from Deputy Verona Murphy, dated 30/01/2023	Note.
R1718 PAC33	Correspondence received from Deputy Catherine Murphy, dated 30/01/2023	Note.
R1721 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Stephanie Bollard, Policy Advisor, Joint Committee on Transport and Communications, dated 01/02/2023	Note.
R1723 PAC33	Correspondence received from Deputy Carol Nolan, dated 30/01/2023	Hold over for consideration at the next meeting.

5. Work Programme

The Committee agreed its draft work programme.

It was agreed to add the following to the Committee's work programme:

- (i) Inland Fisheries Ireland;
- (ii) HSE/Department of Health (update regarding legacy issues in respect of nursing home payments and disability payments); and
- (iii) Department of Justice - request representatives from the section that deals with the immigrant investor programme.

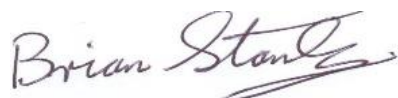
6. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The Committee went into **private** session at 14:25.

Sensitive - for consideration in Private session		Decision
R1691 PAC33	Correspondence received from Deputy Alan Dillon, dated 19/01/2023	Held over for consideration at the next meeting.
R1702 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 2/01/2023	It was agreed to advise the correspondent of the Committee's decision.

The Committee **adjourned** at 14:41 until Thursday 16 February 2023.



Brian Stanley, T.D.
Cathaoirleach
16 February 2023