

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING OF THURSDAY, 02 March 2023

The Committee met in **Public** Session at 09:38 a.m., a quorum being present.

The following Members were present:

Deputies: Brian Stanley (Cathaoirleach), Colm Burke, Cormac Devlin,
Neasa Hourigan, Alan Kelly, Paul McAuliffe, Catherine Murphy, James O'Connor.

Apologies: Verona Murphy

Permanent

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

1. Witnesses Examined:

State Claims Agency

- Mr. Ciaran Breen, Director
- Mr. Cathal O'Keeffe, Head of Clinical Risk
- Ms Catherine Tarrant, Executive Head of Claims

Department of Health

- Mr. Greg Dempsey, Deputy Secretary General

Health Service Executive

- Ms Mairead Dolan, Interim Chief Financial Officer
- Ms Orla Healy, National Clinical Director, Quality and Patient Safety

Matters for discussion:

- **Financial Statements 2021**
 - State Claims Agency
- **Report on the Accounts of the Public Services 2021**
 - Chapter 20 – Management of the Clinical Indemnity Scheme

The Committee suspended at 11:10.

The Committee resumed in **Public** Session at 11:20.

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 12:30.

The Committee resumed in **Public** Session at 13:32.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 23 February 2023 were agreed.

3. Financial Statements and Accounts

There were six sets of financial statements and accounts laid before the Dáil between 20 and 24 February 2023.

Ref	Body/fund	Accounting period/turnover	Date certified	Date presented	Audit opinion/notes
1	Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board (click here to view accounts)	2021 €168 million	20 Dec 2022	20 Feb 2023	Clear audit opinion Attention is drawn to <ul style="list-style-type: none">Non-effective expenditure totalling €848,000 on a leased unit between 2015 and 2022 (click here for further information)Non-compliance with procurement rules. (click here for further information)
2	Health Research Board (click here to view accounts)	2021 €43 million	12 Dec 2022	21 Feb 2023	Qualified audit opinion Accounts give a true and fair view, except that they account for the costs of retirement benefit entitlements of staff only as they become payable (standard for many health bodies).
3	Health Repayment Scheme Special Account (click here to view accounts)	2021 Nil	16 Dec 2022	22 Feb 2023	Clear audit opinion
4	Health Repayment Scheme (Donations) Fund Account (click here to view accounts)	2021 Nil	16 Dec 2022	22 Feb 2023	Clear audit opinion

Ref	Body/fund	Accounting period/turnover	Date certified	Date presented	Audit opinion/notes
5	Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (click here to view accounts)	2021 €2.8 million	21 Dec 2022	22 Feb 2023	<p>Qualified audit opinion</p> <p>Accounts give a true and fair view, except that they account for the costs of retirement benefit entitlements of staff only as they become payable (standard for many health bodies).</p> <p>Attention is drawn to disclosures in the statement on internal control about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the continuation of a potential conflict of roles contracted out to an external service provider, and a failure to regularise the procurement of the service for one of the roles (click here for further information) the failure of the Council to carry out a review of the effectiveness of the system of internal financial control in the manner required by the <i>Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies</i>. (click here for further information)
6	Health Service Executive Consolidated Patients' Private Property Accounts (click here to view accounts)	2021 €45 million	16 Dec 2022	22 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
R1762 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Ciarán Breen, Director, State Claims Agency, dated 24/02/2023	Note and publish.

Correspondence received		
R1765 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Ciarán Breen, Director, State Claims Agency, dated 24/02/2023	Note and publish.
R1769 PAC33	Opening statement received from Mr. Ciarán Breen, Director, State Claims Agency, dated 01/03/2023	Note and publish.
B – Correspondence from Accounting Officers and/or Ministers and follow up to PAC meetings		Decision
R1726 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Mary Hurley, Secretary General, Department of Rural and Community Development, dated 07/02/2023	Note and publish. It was agreed to hold over the item for consideration at the next meeting.
R1733 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Robert Watt, Secretary General, Department of Health, dated 09/02/2023	Note and publish. It was agreed to request a timeline for when the External Assurance Process review on the business case documentation for the relocation of the National Maternity Hospital will be completed and available for the Committee to review.
R1748 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Ray Mitchell, Assistant National Director, HSE, dated 16/02/2023	Note and publish.
R1751 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Mark Griffin, Secretary General, Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, dated 20/02/2023	Note and publish.
R1752 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Eeva Leinonen, President, Maynooth University, dated 20/02/2023	Note and publish. It was agreed to request further details regarding expenditure of €7.5m for student facilities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o land for student facilities; o commuting facilities; o enabling infrastructure; o sports infrastructure; and o car parking. It was also agreed to request further details regarding expenditure of €1.6m to be written off.
R1755 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. David Moloney, Secretary General, Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, dated 21/02/2023	Note and publish. It was agreed to hold over the item for consideration at the next meeting.
C - Correspondence from and related to private individuals and any other correspondence		Decision

Correspondence received		
R1757 PACC	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 22/02/2023	Note.

5. Work Programme

The Committee agreed its draft work programme.

It was agreed to add the following to the work programme:

- the Irish Horseracing Regulatory Board.
- the C&AG special report on the emergency procurement of ventilators by the Health Service Executive.

It was agreed to include the following item as an area of specific interest for the next meeting with the Health Service Executive/Department of Health:

- value for money in relation the cost of drugs and medications in the healthcare sector; and
- long delays for approving medication compared to other countries including for drugs manufactured in Ireland.

6. Any Other Business


It was agreed to request clarification from the Department of Finance and the State Claims Agency regarding information provided by Department officials at the meeting on 23 February 2023 that it had consulted with the State Claims Agency regarding a settlement reached in a court case between the administrators of Quinn Insurance and PwC.

The Committee went into **private** session at 14:05.

The Committee agreed a draft letter in relation to correspondence item R1736 PAC33 which was considered at the meeting on 23 February 2023.

Sensitive - for consideration in Private session		Decision
R1744 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Elaine Muldoon, Clerk to the Committee, Committee on Parliamentary Privileges and Oversight, dated 14/02/2023	Note. It was agreed to write to the President of the University of Limerick to direct her to provide the Committee with the report in relation to the University's purchase of a site in Limerick City Centre.
R1753 PAC33	Correspondence from an individual dated 20/02/2023	It was agreed to advise the correspondent of the Committee's decision.
R1760 PAC33	Correspondence from an individual dated 21/02/2023	See 1753 PAC33.

The Committee **adjourned** at 14:27 until Thursday 9 March 2023.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Brian Stanley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Brian Stanley, T.D.
Cathaoirleach
9 March 2023