

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES OF MEETING OF THURSDAY, 30 March 2023**

The Committee met in **Public** Session at 09:37 a.m., a quorum being present.

The following Members were present:

**Deputies:** Brian Stanley (Cathaoirleach), Colm Burke, Matt Carthy, Cormac Devlin, Alan Dillon, 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 Rural and Community Development**

- Ms Mary Hurley, Secretary General
- Mr. Fintan O'Brien, Assistant Secretary, Rural Development
- Mr. JP Mulherin, Assistant Secretary, Corporate Support
- Mr. Kenneth Jordan, Finance Officer
- Mr. Paul Geraghty, Principal Officer, Community Development and the Islands

**Department of Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform**

- Mr. Dermot Nolan, Principal Officer
- Ms Criona Brassil, Assistant Principal

**Pobal**

- Ms Anna Shakespeare
- Mr. Martin Quigley

**Matters for discussion:**

- **Appropriation Accounts 2021**
  - Vote 42 – Rural and Community Development
- **Report on the Accounts of the Public Services 2021:**
  - Chapter 6 – Central Government funding of Local Authorities

The Committee suspended at 11:04.

The Committee resumed in **Public** Session at 11:15.

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 12:34.

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

## 2. Minutes

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

## 3. Financial Statements and Accounts

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

Ref	Body/fund	Accounting period/turnover	Date certified	Date presented	Audit opinion/notes
1	<b>Cork Education and Training Board</b> ( <a href="#">click here to view accounts</a> )	2021 €233 million	23 Dec 2022	21 Mar 2023	Clear audit opinion  Attention is drawn to disclosure of material level of non-compliance with procurement rules. ( <a href="#">click here for further information</a> )
2	<b>Western Development Commission</b> ( <a href="#">click here to view accounts</a> )	2021 €4.1 million	22 Dec 2022	21 Mar 2023	Clear audit opinion
3	<b>Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland</b> ( <a href="#">click here to view accounts</a> )	2021 €232 million	30 Jun 2022	22 Mar 2023	Clear audit opinion  Annual financial statements presented to the Oireachtas library to correct record in respect of a previous incorrect version presented on 19 Dec 2022.
4	<b>An Bord Pleanála</b> ( <a href="#">click here to view accounts</a> )	2021 €31 million	22 Dec 2022	23 Mar 2023	Clear audit opinion  Attention is drawn to the following matters that are outlined by the Board in the statement on internal control. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A number of matters of serious concern that arose in 2022 about the Board's operations required reviews/reports. The statement outlines the status of the reviews of these matters at the signing date (22 December 2022). (<a href="#">click here for further information</a>)</li><li>Penalty payments incurred by the Board in 2021(€10,000) and 2022 (€1.34 million) related to delays in decision making on strategic housing development applications. (<a href="#">click here for further information</a>)</li></ul>

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
R1820 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Mary Hurley, Secretary General, Department of Rural and Community Development, dated 23/03/2023	Note and publish.
R1826 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Mary Hurley, Secretary General, Department of Rural and Community Development, dated 28/03/2023	Note and publish.
B – Correspondence from Accounting Officers and/or Ministers and follow up to PAC meetings		Decision
R1777 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. John McKeon, Secretary General, Department of Social Protection, dated 07/03/2023	Note and publish.
R1784 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Jim Breslin, Secretary General, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research Innovation and Science, dated 08/03/2023	Note and Publish  It was agreed to request the City of Dublin Education and Training Board for an information note to include: - who is in charge of the building or in whose charge the building is under at the moment; - the condition of the building; - the plans for the building; and - the proposed approach for dealing with the legal matters.
R1790 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Niall Cody, Chairman, Office of the Revenue Commissioners, dated 09/03/2023	Note and publish.
R1802 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Bernie McNally, Secretary General, Department of Education, dated 16/03/2023	Note and publish.  See R1784 PAC33
R1803 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Helena Hughes, Programme Manager, Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland, dated 16/03/2023	Note and publish.

Correspondence received		
R1806 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Oonagh McPhillips, Secretary General, Department of Justice, dated 20/03/2023	<p>Note and publish.</p> <p>It was agreed to write to the Department of the Taoiseach to express the Committee's dissatisfaction with the response from the Department of Justice that it is not currently undertaking any research on international best practice in respect of Tribunals of Inquiry.</p> <p>It was also agreed to request the Department of the Taoiseach's views on the response from the Department of Justice.</p>
R1807 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Maurice Buckley, Chairperson, Office of Public Works, dated 20/03/2023	<p>Note and publish.</p> <p>See R1784 PAC33</p>
R1808 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Francis O'Donnell, Chief Executive Officer, Inland Fisheries Ireland, dated 20/03/2023	Note.
R1811 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Robert Watt, Secretary General, Department of Health, dated 21/03/2023	Note and publish.
R1812 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Mark Griffin, Secretary General, Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications, dated 21/03/2023	<p>Note and publish.</p> <p>It was agreed to request the following details regarding the number of public buildings (libraries, schools, hubs, etc.) that are connected to the National Broadband Plan network:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the numbers passed and the numbers connected;</li> <li>- confirmation whether public buildings are included in the targets and timelines; and</li> <li>- clarification regarding targets including whether they are based on geographic considerations.</li> </ul>
R1813 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Oonagh Buckley, Interim Chairperson, An Bord Pleanála, dated 21/03/2023	Note and publish.
R1814 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Sarah Heath, Senior Clerk, House of Commons, dated 21/03/2023	Note.
R1815 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Graham Doyle, Secretary General, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, dated 22/03/2023	Note and publish.
R1817 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Bob Jordan, Chief Executive, The Housing Agency, dated 23/03/2023	Note and publish.

Correspondence received		
R1818 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Mary Hurley, Secretary General, Department of Rural and Community Development, dated 23/03/2023	Note and publish.
R1819 PAC33	Correspondence received from Mr. Niall Cody, Chairman, Office of the Revenue Commissioners, dated 23/03/2023	Note and publish.  It was agreed to hold over this item for consideration with related correspondence from the Department of Finance at the next meeting.
<b>C - Correspondence from and related to private individuals and any other correspondence</b>		<b>Decision</b>
R1810 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 20/03/2023	Note.

## 5. Work Programme

The Committee agreed its draft work programme.

It was agreed to schedule a meeting with the Department of Justice on 25 May 2023.

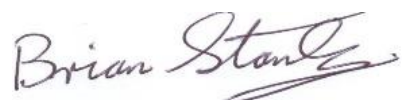
## 6. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The Committee went into **private** session at 14:08.

Sensitive - for consideration in Private session		Decision
R1809 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ms Kerstin Mey, President, University of Limerick, dated 20/03/2023	Note.  The arrangements for the forthcoming meeting with the University of Limerick were agreed.
R1691 PAC33	Correspondence received from Deputy Alan Dillon, dated 19/01/2023	Note.  It was agreed to schedule a meeting with Inland Fisheries Ireland as soon as possible after the 2021 financial statements are laid before the Houses.

The Committee **adjourned** at 14:28 until Thursday 20 April 2023.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Brian Stanley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end of the name.

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Brian Stanley, T.D.  
Cathaoirleach  
20 April 2023