

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES OF MEETING OF THURSDAY, 01 FEBRUARY 2024**

The Committee met in **Public** Session at 09:34 a.m., a quorum being present.

The following Members were present:

**Deputies:** Brian Stanley (Cathaoirleach), John Brady, Colm Burke, Cormac Devlin, Alan Dillon, Paul McAuliffe, Imelda Munster, Catherine Murphy, Verona Murphy, Marc Ó Cathasaigh and James O'Connor.

**Permanent**

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

**1. Witnesses Examined:**

**Department of Health**

- Mr Robert Watt, Secretary General
- Ms Louise McGirr, Assistant Secretary
- Mr Derek Tierney, Assistant Secretary
- Mr Kevin Colman, Principal Officer
- Mr Patrick McGlynn, Principal Officer
- Ms Sarah Treleaven, Principal Officer

**Department of Public Expenditure and Reform**

- Evan Coady, Principal Officer

**Health Service Executive**

- Bernard Gloster, Chief Executive Officer
- Stephen Mulvany, Chief Financial Officer
- Dr Colm Henry, Chief Clinical Officer
- Mr David Walsh, National Director Community Operations
- Brian O'Connell, Acting National Director Estates

**Matters for discussion:**

- **Appropriation Accounts 2022**
  - Vote 38 – Health
- **Report on the Accounts of the Public Services 2022:**
  - Chapter 18 – Health Service Executive Funding and Financial Reporting
- **Specific Areas of Interest:**
  - Specific Areas of interest: Establishment of the new regional health areas; Budget controls, governance & outcomes; Agency costs; SLAs with section 38 and section 39 organisations; Estates Management and Capital Works.

The Committee suspended at 10:59.

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

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 12:44

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

## 2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 25 January 2024 were agreed.

## 3. Financial Statements and Accounts

There were 4 sets of financial statements and accounts laid before the Dáil between 22 January 2024 and 26 January 2024.

Ref	Body/fund	Accounting period/turnover	Date certified	Date presented	Audit opinion/notes
1	<b>Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland</b> ( <a href="#">click here to view accounts</a> )	2022 €11.8 million	20 Dec 2023	23 Jan 2024	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).
2	<b>National Standards Authority of Ireland</b> ( <a href="#">click here to view accounts</a> )	2022 €37.5 million	21 Dec 2023	24 Jan 2024	Clear audit opinion
3	<b>Western Development Commission</b> ( <a href="#">click here to view accounts</a> )	2022 €5.5 million	2 Nov 2023	25 Jan 2024	Clear audit opinion
4	<b>Sport Ireland Facilities Designated Activity Company</b> ( <a href="#">click here to view accounts</a> )	2022 €12.9 million	7 Dec 2023	25 Jan 2024	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
R2254 PAC33	Briefing material received from Robert Watt, Secretary General, Department of Health, dated 05/12/2023	Note and publish.
R2352 PAC33	Opening Statement received from Robert Watt, Secretary General, Department of Health, dated 31/01/2024	Note and publish.
B – Correspondence from Accounting Officers and/or Ministers and follow up to PAC meetings		Decision
R2315 PAC33	Correspondence received from Robert Watt, Secretary General, Department of Health, dated 16/01/2024	Note and publish.
R2321 PAC33	Correspondence received from John McKeon, Secretary General, Department of Social Protection, dated 22/01/2024	Note and publish.

## Correspondence received

R2322 PAC33

Correspondence received from David Moloney, Secretary General, Department of Public Expenditure, dated 17/01/2024

Note and publish.

It was also agreed to seek the following information:

How far advanced is the mid-term review of the NDP 2021-2030? What is the expected completion date?

In relation to Walter Scott House on Military Road:

Is additional off-site car parking being used and paid for?

In relation to the additional units being accommodated in this building, how are the additional people being accommodated?

In relation to the National Transport Authority (NTA's) detailed note and scenario analysis regarding mitigation of delays and cost overruns on the national train control centre project, which was due to be provided to the Department of Transport, the Committee requests to have sight of this detailed note and analysis.

In relation to the ongoing work at Garda headquarters in the Phoenix Park:

The Committee requests all costs to date that relate to the use of Clyde House and the Navan Road Intreo centre on a temporary basis by the Gardai and an update on the Garda Headquarters project.

Is the project likely to be completed on time and within budget?

In relation to the National Cyber Security Centre, the Committee requests the following:

The business case for the use of Grant Thornton for the provision of procurement consultancy.

Was this decision made before or after the cyber-attack on the HSE?

In relation to capital works for flood relief:

How many flood relief schemes are at stage 1?

How many stages are involved?

How many schemes are at each stage?

The Committee requests a breakdown of the costs involved.

What measures are the Department taking to accelerate work on these construction projects?

The Committee requests a briefing from DPENDPDR regarding timelines for various projects which are in progress and how long it is taking for the Department to get consent through, particularly regarding the Crossmolina, Middleton and Mountmellick schemes.

The Committee also requests the Department's response to the suggestion that the environmental assessment role be taken out of DPENDPDR and given to another Body.

Has consideration been given to expanding in-house expertise in relation to environmental assessment?

Correspondence received		
R2323 PAC33	Correspondence received from Graham Doyle, Secretary General, Department of Housing, dated 18/01/2024	<p>Note and publish.</p> <p>It was agreed to forward this correspondence item to the Moore St Preservation Trust for their response</p>
R2328 PAC33	Correspondence received from Bernie McNally, Secretary General, Department of Education, dated 14/12/2023	Note and publish.
R2334 PAC33	Correspondence received from Bernard Gloster, Chief Executive Officer, HSE, dated 22/01/2024	Note and publish.
R2340 PAC33	Correspondence received from Siún Ní Raghallaigh, Chair of the RTÉ board, RTÉ, dated 25/01/2024	Note and publish.
R2342 PAC33	Correspondence received from Siún Ní Raghallaigh, Chair of the RTÉ board, RTÉ, dated 25/01/2024	<p>Note and Publish</p> <p>It was agreed to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- seek a copy of the Grant Thornton report which provides the names of the people involved.</li> <li>- seek the business case for Toy Show the Musical in advance of any further meeting with RTÉ.</li> <li>- request the list of attendees at the Combo board meeting in relation to Toy Show the Musical.</li> </ul> <p>It was agreed to invite the following witnesses to a meeting should the Committee's terms of reference be expanded: Eimear Cusack, Jim Jennings, Breda O'Keeffe, Dee Forbes, Rory Coveney, the members of the Audit and Risk Committee who attended the Combo meeting, Moya Doherty, Kevin Bakhurst, and any members of the Board who were serving at the time and are still on the board.</p>
<b>C - Correspondence from and related to private individuals and any other correspondence</b>		<b>Decision</b>
R2326 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 18/01/2024.	Note



Correspondence received		
R2327 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 18/01/2024.	Note. Seek the correspondent's consent to forward this item to the National Shared Services office (NSSO) and DPENDPDR.
R2330 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 22/01/2024.	Note.
R2331 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 22/01/2024.	Write to the Department of Transport to request a briefing in relation to the removal of Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl (PFAs) associated with Aqueous Film Forming Foam (AFFF) and any potential liabilities accruing as a result of any human exposure to these chemicals. Inform the correspondent accordingly.
R2332 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 22/01/2024.	Write to the NTA to request a briefing in relation to the requirements for public consultation, Cost Benefit Analysis and Strategic Environmental Assessments for projects undertaken by Local Authorities under the NTA's Active Travel Programme. Inform the correspondent accordingly.
R2335 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 23/01/2024.	Seek the consent of the correspondent to forward this item to the Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine for a response to the matters raised. Inform the correspondent accordingly.
R2337 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 23/01/2024.	Note.
R2339 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 25/01/2024.	Note.

## 5. Work Programme

It was agreed to invite the FAI's finance officer to the meeting of 22 February 2024.

It was agreed to add a meeting with the University of Limerick to the work programme.

## 6. Any Other Business

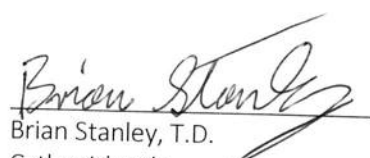
There was no other business.

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

Sensitive - for consideration in Private session		Decision
R2324 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 18/01/2024.	It was agreed to note the correspondence and it was agreed to write to the Workplace Relations Commission to seek a briefing on that body's response to the Supreme Court's decision in relation to the Karshan case.
R2325 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 18/01/2024.	It was agreed to inform the correspondent of the Committee's decision and suggest that they write to the Minister for Justice in relation to the matter.
R2329 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 22/01/2024.	It was agreed to inform the correspondent of the Committee's decision.
R2336 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 23/01/2024.	It was agreed to inform the correspondent of the Committee's decision.

The Committee was briefed in relation to the draft report on engagements with RTÉ.

The Committee **adjourned** at 15:08 until Thursday 8 February 2024.

  
Brian Stanley, T.D.  
Cathaoirleach  
8 February 2024