

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING OF THURSDAY, 07 MARCH 2024

The Committee met in **Public** Session at 09:33 a.m., a quorum being present.

The following Members were present:

Deputies: Brian Stanley (Cathaoirleach), Colm Burke, Cormac Devlin, Alan Dillon, Paul McAuliffe, Catherine Murphy, Verona Murphy, and Marc Ó Cathasaigh.

Apologies: Deputy James O Connor.

Permanent

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

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 27 and 29 February 2024 were agreed.

2. Financial Statements and Accounts

There were 5 sets of financial statements and accounts laid before the Dáil between 26 February 2024 and 1 March 2024

Ref	Body/fund	Accounting period/turnover	Date certified	Date presented	Audit opinion/notes
1	Beaumont Hospital Board (click here to view accounts)	2022 €600 million	31 Dec 2023	27 Feb 2024	Clear audit opinion Attention is drawn to the following matters. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Section 9.1 of the statement on internal control discloses that the Beaumont Hospital Information System (BHIS) will be inoperable beyond 31 December 2025; and due to delays experienced to date, the timeline to implement its replacement poses a significant risk to effective operation of the Hospital (click here for further information)Significant non-compliant procurement (click here for further information)Payroll overpayments of €288,513 in the period, due to breaches of payroll controls, and cumulative outstanding overpayments at year-end of €640,071 (click here for further information).
2	Ireland - United States Commission for Educational Exchange (click here to view accounts)	2022/2023 €1.9 million	21 Feb 2024	28 Feb 2024	Clear audit opinion

Ref	Body/fund	Accounting period/turnover	Date certified	Date presented	Audit opinion/notes
3	Legal Services Regulatory Authority (click here to view accounts)	2022 €5.3 million	13 Dec 2023	29 Feb 2024	Clear audit opinion
4	Institute of Technology Carlow (click here to view accounts) <i>Cessation accounts (8 months)</i>	1 Sep 2021 – 30 Apr 2022 €51.1 million	18 Dec 2023	29 Feb 2024	Clear audit opinion
5	Waterford Institute of Technology (click here to view accounts) <i>Cessation accounts (20 months)</i>	1 Sep 2020 – 30 Apr 2022 €232 million	8 Dec 2023	29 Feb 2024	Clear audit opinion Attention is drawn to an impairment loss of €623,000 in respect of student campus recreational facilities, mainly due to changing consumer demand (click here for further information).

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.

In relation to the Financial Statements of Beaumont Hospital, it was agreed to write to the Board of the Hospital to request the following information:

- how many staff have received overpayments;
- a breakdown of the staff grades concerned, the amount paid to each grade and over which time period;
- how much of these monies has been retrieved and over what time period;
- what plan is in place to recoup the outstanding amounts.

The Committee also referred to the fact that the Beaumont Hospital Information System (BHIS) will be inoperable beyond 31 December 2025, and due to delays experienced to date, the timeline to implement its replacement poses a significant risk to effective operation of the Hospital. It was agreed to write to the hospital to express the Committee's concern about this and to request an outline of the measures it is taking in order to address this, the project timeline and how it expects to work to that timeline.

It was also agreed to request the following information in relation to non-compliant procurement:

- a breakdown of what kinds of services and goods were procured, a breakdown of the value of the goods procured and a breakdown of the suppliers.
- a note explaining why non-compliant procurement has been consistently high at the hospital.

3. Correspondence

Correspondence received		
A – Briefing Documents and Opening Statements		Decision
R2433 PAC33	Correspondence received from Francis O'Donnell, Chief Executive Officer, Inland Fisheries Ireland, dated. 01/03/2024	It was agreed to defer consideration of this item until the rescheduled meeting with Inland Fisheries Ireland
B – Correspondence from Accounting Officers and/or Ministers and follow up to PAC meetings		Decision
R2424 PAC33	Correspondence received from David Moloney, Secretary General, Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, dated 23/02/2024	It was agreed to note and publish.
R2425 PAC33	Correspondence received from Úna May, Chief Executive Officer, Sport Ireland, dated 23/02/2024	It was agreed to note and publish.
R2427 PAC33	Correspondence received from Ethna Brogan, Assistant Secretary, Department of Transport, dated 26/02/2024	It was agreed to note and publish. It was agreed to write to the DAA and to the Department of Transport to clarify whether there is a potential liability to the State arising from the historic use of PFAS chemicals at Dublin airport and whether the DAA or the Department of Transport would absorb any such cost. It was also agreed to write to the EPA to draw attention to the reported removal of soil contaminated with PFAS chemicals from Dublin Airport and to request a briefing on the EPA's role, oversight, and involvement in this matter.
R2429 PAC33	Correspondence received from David Moloney, Secretary General, Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, dated 27/02/2024	It was agreed to note and publish.
R2430 PAC33	Correspondence received from Colm O'Reardon, Secretary General, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, dated. 27/02/2024	It was agreed to note and publish.
R2432 PAC33	Correspondence received from Kevin Bakhurst, Director General, RTE, dated 28/02/2024	It was agreed to note and publish.

Correspondence received		Decision
C - Correspondence from and related to private individuals and any other correspondence		
R2422 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated. 22/02/2024	It was agreed to note.
R2423 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 22/02/2024	It was agreed to Inform the correspondent that the Committee has written to the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage to request a briefing on the Cork Events Centre project, including project timelines, costs to date and projected final cost.
R2431 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 28/02/2024	It was agreed to note and publish. It was agreed to write to the DHLGH to ascertain what plans are in place to undertake work to secure and maintain the buildings owned by the State at Nos. 14 - 17 Moore Street. It was also agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department for a response.
R2439 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 04/03/2024	It was agreed to add the NPHDB to the work programme.

4. Work Programme

It was agreed to request a briefing note from the Department of Education in advance of the meeting on the 16 May regarding the transfer of assets from religious orders and providing a full over-view of what is still outstanding.

5. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The Committee went into **private** session at 10:16.

6. Private Business

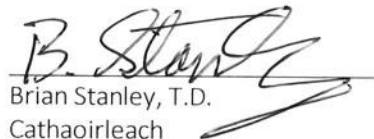
It was agreed to seek certain information from Department of Environment, Climate and Communications.

Sensitive - for consideration in Private session		Decision
R2395 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 16/02/2024	It was agreed to advise the correspondent of the committee's decision
R2421 PAC33	Correspondence received from an individual, dated 22/02/2024	It was agreed to advise the correspondent of the committee's decision

7. Schedule of draft reports

A schedule of draft reports was agreed.

The Committee **adjourned** at 10:57 until Thursday 21 March 2024.


Brian Stanley, T.D.
Cathaoirleach
21 March 2024