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**An Comhchoiste um Choimirce Shóisialach,
Forbairt Pobail agus Tuaithe agus na hOileáin**
An Tuarascáil Feidhmíochta Seirbhíse Poiblí don
RoinnForbartha Tuaithe agus Pobail, 2022

Meán Fómhair 2023

**Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community
and Rural Development and the Islands**
Public Service Performance Report for the Department
of Rural and Community Development 2022

September 2023

Committee Membership



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Cathaoirleachs Foreword



The Public Service Performance report (PSPR) 2022 was published on 21 June 2023 by the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform (DPENDPDR). The aim of the PSPR is to be a public-focused, accessible report providing an overview on what was delivered with public money for each Government Department over the period January 2022 to December 2022. One of the key objectives of our Oireachtas Committee working in tandem with the Department is to ensure that this report achieves its aim of being publically accessible.

Because the core function of our Oireachtas Committee is to monitor the performance of the Department, the PSPR is a key tool in fulfilling that role. The report is a milestone in the parliamentary budgetary cycle, providing a valuable opportunity for sectoral Committees to engage constructively in a more structured calendar of parliamentary oversight of the budgetary process.

Performance-based budgeting aims to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public expenditure by linking the funding of public sector organisations to the results they deliver by making systematic use of performance information. The key output of this project is a framework to tag and track all areas of public expenditure across dimensions of equality, wellbeing, the sustainable development goals, SDGs and green budgeting.

The members of the Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands would like to thank the Officials from the Department of Rural and Community Development for their valuable engagement on the Public Service Performance Report. The Committee are very conscious of the need to engage with the Department on the issues related to it on an ongoing basis as it plays a critical role in urban communities, rural communities and island communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Denis Naughten". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Denis Naughten T.D.

Cathaoirleach to the Committee

September 2023

Table of Contents

Committee Membership.....	1
Cathaoirleachs Foreword	2
Introduction and Witnesses	4
Key Issues	5
Conclusion.....	10
APPENDIX 1A – Metrics.....	11
APPENDIX 1B – Metrics within the REV.....	14
APPENDIX 2 – Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme.....	18
APPENDIX 3 – Empowering Communities Programme	20
APPENDIX 4 – Orders of Reference.....	23
APPENDIX 5 – Links to Meeting Transcripts	34
APPENDIX 6 – Links to Opening Statements	34

Introduction and Witnesses

Dáil Sectoral Committees are tasked with the consideration of a number of fixed elements of the annual parliamentary budgetary cycle that fall within their remit, this report will focus on the Public Service Performance Report 2022. The Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development, and the islands engages with the Department of Rural and Community Development to examine the spending allocations and associated outputs in this regard. It is an ongoing opportunity for the Committee to make the process more transparent and to engage in a meaningful way on the parliamentary budget cycle.

As part of the Committee's work on performance indicators, it is hoped that the Committee can collaborate with the Departments in the coming year on the targets it selects to appear in the Public Service Performance Report (PSPR). Scrutiny of these measures will play a pivotal role in the Committee's consideration of revised estimates and PSPR 2023.

Performance-based budgeting aims to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public expenditure by linking the funding of public sector organisations to the results they deliver, making systematic use of performance information. The key output of this project is a framework to tag and track all areas of public expenditure against dimensions of Equality, wellbeing, sustainable development goals and green budgeting.

Date	Witnesses
12 July 2023	<i>Officials from the Department of Rural and Community Development</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. JP Mulherin – Assistant Secretary General, Corporate Affairs & Strategic Development Division• Ms Deirdre Kelly – Principal Officer, Social Inclusion & Communities Unit• Mr. John Orme – Assistant Principal Officer, Finance & Evaluation Unit

Key Issues

In the course of the meeting with officials on 12 July, the following issues came to the fore; Data and statistics produced by the Department, the policy work of the Department and for the most part, the aims and impact of specific schemes. These schemes included the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP), Revitalising Areas through Planning, Investment and Development (RAPID), CLÁR (Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais), My Open Library, the walks scheme, Our Rural Future and the Mountain Access Scheme.

Following this meeting, the Members of the Committee issued correspondence to the Department requesting clarification on the following questions, to which the Department responded.

1. Can the Department provide any information on the timeline for the review of the Departments targets?

Departmental Response:

The targets within the REV are reviewed annually (during Q3/Q4) as part of the process to develop the REV. This process includes examining the appropriateness of the metrics that are in place, while also balancing the need for consistency over a number of years, so that trends can be monitored.

While there are numerous metrics that could be included in the REV and the Public Services Performance Report, a proportionate number are chosen to give an overall assessment across the Department's work. The number of metrics reflect the space constraints that apply to each publication.

At our discussion on 12th July, the Committee also sought additional information on the various metrics collected by the Department. The main source from which the Department identifies high level indicators for both the REV or Public Service Performance report are annual reports for specific schemes and data held by units delivering those schemes. In Appendix 1A, information is provided to give an overview of the data collected by the Department. In addition, Appendix 1B details those indicators that we use in the RE

2. Can the Department provide justification for cases whereby targets have been set for indicators, but these targets have not been met or the outturn data is not available?

The targets as set out in the Public Services Performance Report were generally met with the exception of the four areas referenced below.

1. The **Rural Regeneration and Development Fund (RRDF)** seeks to support ambitious projects of a large-scale strategic nature which have the potential to be transformative for rural economies and communities. The investment from the Fund aims to deliver key impacts in rural Ireland supporting sustainable communities, economic development, job creation and regional growth. The Fund is aligned with the objectives of 'Our Rural Future', the whole-of-Government policy for rural Ireland for the period 2021-2025.

The metric in the Public Services Performance Report 2022 for this area refers to the completion of 14 projects. That figure was provided in error and a total of 26 RRDF projects were actually completed by end 2022. Completion rates were slower than anticipated in 2022 due to a number of factors. The closure of the construction sector during the COVID-19 Pandemic continued to impact on delivery timeframes, together with the challenges posed by supply chain issues and the impact of inflation. Progress has accelerated significantly in 2023 with 112 RRDF projects currently at implementation stage, with a total value of €225.7 million.

2. The Public Service Performance Report 2022 sets a target of approving 80 **walks scheme trails** with an outturn of 55 trails reported as delivered. There has been a longer than expected timeframe in moving from the initial selection of new walks to having them fully brought into the scheme – each new walk requires engagement with individual landowners to secure their agreement to participate and the development of individualised work plans for each landowner. As of July 2023, 65 trails are fully operational under the scheme and the remaining 15 are expected to be operational by the end of this year.

SICAP work in order to support Ukrainians. This was especially the case in the first half of the year, prior to additional funding of €5m being put in place to support Ukrainians. However, it should be noted that the SICAP targets were met and exceeded in 2022 overall.

4. Can the Department provide the Committee with any metrics regarding the actual impact of SICAP in terms of third-level access?

The current SICAP started in 2018, and information is provided below on life-long learning courses for the period 2018-2022.

Table 1 contains the total number of Individuals who participated in a lifelong learning course by type of course and by source of funding. For table 1, the figure that best corresponds with the request for information on third-level access, is the 2,172 individuals that undertook accredited courses with certification of **NFQ level 6 or above**. Supports provided to Ukrainian nationals relate to 14 out of the total of 2,172 and so are not a significant portion of the total.

Table 2 contains the course outcomes reported for Individuals who participated in a **NFQ level 6 or above** course that was partly or fully funded by SICAP.

Table 1: Number of Individuals participating in a course, by course type and source of funding.

Funding Source	Accredited certification (NFQ level 5 or below)	Accredited certification (NFQ level 6 or above)	Industry certified	No accreditation	Grand Total
Course fully or partly funded by SICAP	5,221	1,151	15,618	30,771	47,815
Course 100% funded by Others	2,026	1,055	1,623	3,750	8,043
Total¹	7,131	2,172	16,895	3,434	53,476

¹Individuals may have been supported under SICAP to complete either courses funded by SICAP, or courses funded by other organisations. These two scenarios are outlined separately within the table, but where individuals participated in both types of courses, they are only counted once in the column/row total.

Table 2: Course outcome for participants of accredited courses (NFQ level 6 or above) fully or partly funded by SICAP.

Outcome	Number of Individuals
Completed successfully	721
Some modules completed successfully	250
Completed unsuccessfully	16
Did not complete (dropped out)	98
No outcome recorded yet	103
Total²	1,151

² Individuals may have different outcomes if they participated in more than one course but are only counted once in the column total.

5. Can the Department provide information to the Committee in relation to the Charities Regulator, specifically on whether there is funding available from the Department to help a community association that is under administrative and regulatory pressure?

There is no specific funding available from the Department to specifically assist community associations under administrative and regulatory pressure, although the Department does have many grants for different purposes for these types of organisations, such as the Community Enhancement Programme which provides small grants for equipment and similar costs, and the Community Services Programme which provides contributions towards employment costs in social enterprises.

The Charities Regulator does not provide funding to charities as this would compromise its independence as a Regulator.

It is also worth mentioning that there is an identified need for proportionate regulation and governance requirements for our charities. The measures proposed in the Charities (Amendment) Bill are designed to strengthen the sector further and to enhance public confidence in charities generally. In many cases, the Bill will ease the administrative burden on smaller charities. It will also further enhance and empower both existing trustees and potential trustees, by giving greater clarity in respect of roles and responsibilities.

Separately the Department's *Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities strategy* reaffirms the Government's commitment to supporting the sector. The strategy commits to reviewing regulatory compliance requirements and supporting capacity in the sector to meet them. Work to implement the strategy is ongoing, including a mapping exercise of existing commissioning and contracting practices which will develop principles and best practice, and gather information on issues such as compliance costs. A research programme is also being completed to establish the skills and the training needs within the sector in order to provide opportunities where gaps exist and help signpost existing resources where that is required.

Areas covered by the Empowering Communities Programme

During discussions, Committee members also requested further detail of the Empowering Communities Programme. There were originally 14 areas to be supported under the programme, which initiated in 2022, with another (in Cherry Orchard) added earlier this year.

Detail on the programme, including the location of the 15 small areas, is provided in Appendix 3.

Conclusion

As part of the Committee's work on performance indicators, it is hoped that we can collaborate with the Department of Rural and Community Development in the coming year on the targets selected to appear in the performance report. Scrutiny of these measures will play a pivotal role in the committee's consideration of the Revised Estimates and the Public Service Performance Report for 2023.

APPENDIX 1A – Metrics

The main source from which the Department identifies high level indicators for both the REV or Public Service Performance Report are annual reports for specific schemes and data held by Units delivering those schemes. The information below gives an overview of the data collected by the Department. In addition, Appendix 1B details those indicators that we use in the REV; these are more comprehensive than those in the Public Services Performance Report, due to space constraints for that report.

The Department's annual report provides an overview of the work of the Department each year, including funding commitments and project approvals each year. It also provides case studies to convey a deeper understanding of the type of work completed. These case studies include projects under the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, the Town and Village Renewal Scheme, LEADER, etc. The annual reports are available on the following link: <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/91ae40-annual-reports/>

Some individual programme areas within the Department also produce their own programme-specific reports, which include valuable metrics and information on those specific areas. These are detailed below and mainly focus on current expenditure programmes:

- Annual reports are published on the Social Inclusion and Community Activation programme. The 2021 report is on the following link: pobal.ie/app/uploads/2022/07/SICAP-2021-Annual-Report.pdf Video case studies are also developed to communicate the varied work completed under the programme, and these are available on the following link: <https://www.pobal.ie/case-study/sicap-video-case-study-pilot-2019/>
- Annual reports are published on the Community Services Programme. The most recent version is on the following link: <https://assets.gov.ie/252171/aae2eeac-b826-462a-9713-2c5110c9771f.pdf>
- Reports are published on the LEADER programme, one at mid-point and one upon completion. The most recent version is on the following link. The report covers the

wider RDP, with section 8 focusing on LEADER: <https://assets.gov.ie/98033/76d72f75-22af-4a2e-882a-4ca498795882.pdf>. In addition, case studies regarding the LEADER programme are available on the following link: <https://www.nationalruralnetwork.ie/case-studies/>

- Annual reports (and action plans) are published regarding the Dormant Accounts Fund. The Department has overall responsibility for the fund, which has expenditure across a range of Departments. Details are available on the following link: <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/769773-dormant-accounts-fund-annual-action-plans-and-reports/>
- The most recent annual report covering the Department's work on Social Enterprises is available on the following link: <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/243226/5ab8bc77-848e-4d35-afad-f8cdc055d5aa.pdf#page=null>
- Reports on the Dublin Northeast Inner-City Initiative, which receives funding from the Department, are available on the following link: <https://www.neic.ie/publications>
- Annual reports on Public Participation Networks are available on the following link: <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/2c4a7a-public-participation-network-annual-reports/>

The Department undertakes a significant programme of work relating to scheme evaluation, which also informs the development of high-level metrics. The evaluation reports published to date are on the following link: www.gov.ie/en/publication/a0a03-programme-evaluation/valuation

The agencies under the Department's aegis also publish their own annual reports, which provide some information on data collected, but also provide a narrative to explain their work.

- The Western Development Commission reports, are on its website on the following link: <https://westerndevelopment.ie/about/publications/annual-reports/>
- Water Safety Ireland publishes its reports on its website on the following link: <https://watersafety.ie/publications/>

- The Charities Regulatory Authority publishes its reports on its website on the following link: <https://www.charitiesregulator.ie/en/who-we-are/reports-and-publications>.

We note the points made by Committee members regarding potential additional metrics for Islands (including crossings cancelled), rural projects completed, and new charities registered. Your suggestions in this regard will factor into our preparations for REV 2024 and future Public Services Performance Reports.

APPENDIX 1B – Metrics within the REV

Alongside Equality Budgeting Objectives and Performance Indicators, data on impacts are published on an annual basis in the Revised Estimates Volumes as follows:

A. Rural Development, Regional Affairs and Islands

- Key Outputs and Service Activities
 - Rural Supports
 - Number of private landholders in Walks Scheme
 - Number of Trails approved under Walks Scheme
 - Number of CLÁR projects approach
 - LEADER
 - Cumulative number of projects supported.
 - Cumulative number of enterprises supported.
 - Regional Economic Development
 - Number of local authorities with digital strategy (or equivalent) in place (cumulative)
 - Number of Broadband connection points (cumulative)
 - Number of hubs on boarded onto the Connected Hubs platform (the National Hub Network)
 - Rural Regeneration and Development
 - Rural Regeneration and Development Fund number of projects completed (cumulative)
 - Number of projects approved for Town and Village renewal funding.
 - Number of projects approved for the Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme
 - Islands
 - Number of lifeline islands services, including ferry, cargo and air services
- Context and Impact Indicators
 - LEADER
 - Total number of individuals who have progressed into employment or self-employment (cumulative)

- Total employment numbers maintained, as a result of RDP interventions (cumulative)
- Number of people who completed LEADER funded training (cumulative)
- Islands
 - Number of people using subsidised travel services to the offshore islands

B. Community Development

- Key Outputs and Service Activities
 - Supports for Community and Voluntary Sector: Senior Alerts
 - Number of approved participants
 - SICAP, Local / Regional Development Supports:
 - Total number of community groups assisted under SICAP.
 - Total number of individuals (15 years upwards) engaged under SICAP on a one-to-one basis.
 - Covid-19 Stability Fund for Community and Voluntary Organisations, Charities and Social Enterprises
 - Number of community and voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises allocated funding under the Stability Fund
 - Covid-19 Innovate Together Fund
 - Number of projects supported.
 - Water Safety Ireland
 - Number of Summer Water Safety Weeks (water rescue courses) organised and run.
 - Libraries Development and Archive Service
 - Number of new My Open Libraries (cumulative)
 - Community Enhancement Programme: Number of initiatives completed.
 - Community Services Programme: Number of organisations supported financially.
 - Number of individuals employed full-time.
 - Number of individuals employed part-time.
- Legislation

- Output Target
- Publish Documents
- Context and Impact Indicators
 - SICAP
 - Number of jobs created by supported social enterprises.
 - Number of individuals who successfully completed their lifelong learning activity (course placement, apprenticeship, work experience)
 - Number of people progressed into employment after SICAP employment supports.
 - Libraries
 - Number of visits to local authority libraries (millions)
 - Total items borrowed (millions)
 - Public Participation Networks
 - Number of member organisations
 - Supports for Community and Voluntary
 - Volunteer response to Covid-19: number registering an interest in volunteering opportunities in response to Covid-19
 - Volunteer response to Covid-19: number of volunteer hours reported by registered volunteers.

C. Charities Regulatory Authority

- Key Outputs and Service Activities
 - Programme
 - Number of charities on the register at the end of the year
- Legislation
 - Output Target
 - Publish Documents
- Context and Impact Indicators
 - Number of charities registered.
 - Section 39 organisations
 - Section 40 organisations
 - Number of applications registered.

- Section 39 organisations
- Section 40 organisations
- Number of Charities deregistered.
- Number of Annual reports received.

APPENDIX 2 – Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme

Key High-Level Metrics: KPI 1 and KPI 2 – excluding beneficiaries identified as Ukrainian.

	2021 Output Target	2021 Output	2022 Output Target	2022 Output
1 Total number of community groups assisted under SICAP	2,220	2,646	2,200	2,695
2 Total number of individuals (15 years upwards) engaged under SICAP on a one-to-one basis	24,081	26,485	23,712	25,085

Context and Impact Indicators: KPI 2 Data - excluding beneficiaries identified as Ukrainian.

	2020	2021	2022
1 Percentage of total individuals supported by age:			
a) 15-24	(a) 4,479 (17%)	a) 4,892 (19%)	a) 4,808 (19%)
b) 25-35	(b) 6,232 (24%)	b) 6,135 (23%)	b) 5,847 (23%)
c) 36-45	(c) 6,755 (26%)	c) 6,746 (26%)	c) 6,033 (24%)
d) 46-55	(d) 4,581 (17%)	d) 4,520 (17%)	d) 4,059 (16%)
e) 56-65	(e) 3,035 (12%)	e) 3,030 (11%)	e) 2,928 (12%)
f) Over 65	(f) 1,096 (4%)	f) 1,162 (4%)	f) 1,410 (6%)
2 Percentage of total individuals supported by gender:			
a) Men	(a) 14,087 (54%)	a) 14,753 (56%)	a) 11,820 (47%)
b) Women	(b) 12,061 (46%)	b) 11,701 (44%)	b) 13,228 (53%)
c) Other Gender		c) 31 (0%)	c) 37 (0%)
3 People with a disability	2,361 (9%)	2,656 (10%)	2,726 (11%)
4 New Communities:			
a) Asylum seeker	(a) 843 (3%)	a) 701 (3%)	a) 1,318 (5%)
b) Refugee	(b) 374 (1%)	b) 520 (2%)	b) 747 (3%)
c) Migrant experiencing socio-economic disadvantage	(c) 2,515 (10%)	c) 2,212 (8%)	c) 2,107 (8%)

5 Ethnic/cultural background

a) White - Irish	(a) 17,771 (68%)	a) 17,725 (67%)	a) 15,899 (64%)
b) White – Irish Traveller	(b) 640 (2%)		b) 868 (3%)
c) any other White background	(c) 3,012 (12%)	b) 713 (3%)	c) 2,540 (10%)
d) Black or Black Irish (African)	(d) 1,142 (4%)	c) 2,560 (10%)	d) 1,530 (6%)
e) Black or Black Irish (any other Black background)	(e) 163 (1%)	d) 1,083 (4%)	e) 188 (1%)
f) Asian or Asian Irish (Chinese)	(f) 100 (0%)	e) 158 (1%)	f) 75 (0%)
g) Asian or Asian Irish (any other Asian background)	(g) 492 (2%)	f) 74 (0%)	g) 657 (3%)
h) Roma	(h) 113 (0%)	g) 479 (2%)	h) 279 (1%)
i) Other (including mixed background)	(i) 458 (2%)	h) 207 (1%)	i) 580 (2%)
j) Not Provided	(j) 2,287 (9%)	i) 484 (2%)	j) 2,469 (10%)
		j) (11%)	

APPENDIX 3 – Empowering Communities Programme

In some communities the challenges posed by high levels of deprivation combined with high incidence of criminality have gone beyond the capacity of existing structures to respond, or individual organisations to tackle alone. While many of these communities receive support under DRCD programmes such as SICAP, LEADER, and the CEP, it is apparent that there are a number of communities across the country where additional, more intensive support is required.

To this end, €2 million in funding was secured to design and implement a new programme aimed at specifically targeting area-based deprivation through a community development approach.

This initiative is also partially in response to a Programme for Government commitment to expand the Dublin North Inner-City model to other areas. The ECP addresses area-based disadvantage in geographic areas on a smaller scale than the NEIC, use learning from the NEIC and other relevant programmes such as RAPID, and takes an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach. That is, the programme prioritises the use of pre-existing structures, resources and services.

The Empowering Communities Programme (ECP) aims to enhance community access to key services and empower local communities to craft their own response to area-based poverty, social exclusion and the resulting consequences, with the support of the relevant Local Community Development Committee (LCDC).

Launched by Minister O'Brien in June 2022, the programme initially focussed on 14 small areas experiencing significant disadvantage, identified using the Pobal HP deprivation index and with regard to geographic spread.

Additional funding of up to €150,000 has been approved for the expansion of the programme to the Cherry Orchard area, following analysis of deprivation in the locality. The ECP is proving itself to be a suitable method for building community trust and integration. With its focus on 'one street at a time' engagement, knocking door to door

and allowing for residents' unique issues to be heard and solutions found, it is ideally placed to provide assistance to the Cherry Orchard community.

Work is ongoing to develop a formal framework for the programme, including strategic objectives and targets and financial reporting mechanisms.

The 15 small areas selected are within the following Local Authorities areas as follows:

- Dublin City (5 areas)
- South Dublin
- Limerick City and County
- Westmeath
- Kildare
- Longford
- Galway County
- Cork City
- Mayo
- Wexford
- Donegal (Árainn Mhór)

Details of the specific small geographic areas selected for the programme are set out below:

Local Authority /LCDC	LDC		Local Electoral Area	Electoral Division (Small Geographic Area)
Cork City	Cork City Partnership		CORK CITY NORTHWEST LEA-6	KNOCKNAHEENY
Donegal	Donegal Development	Local	GLENTIES LEA-6	ARAN
Dublin City	Ballyfermot Partnership	Chapelizod	Ballyfermot-Drimnagh LEA-6	Cherry Orchard A
Dublin City	Dublin Northwest Partnership	Area	CABRA-GLASNEVIN LEA-7	CABRA WEST B
Dublin City	Dublin Northwest Partnership	Area	CABRA-GLASNEVIN LEA-7	INNS QUAY B
Dublin City	Dublin North Partnership		N-FINGLAS LEA-6	FINGLAS SOUTH B

Dublin City	Northside Partnership		ARTANE-WHITEHALL LEA-6	PRIORSWOOD C
Galway County	Galway Rural Development Company		BALLINASLOE LEA-6	BALLINASLOE URBAN
Kildare	County Kildare Partnership	Leader	ATHY LEA-5	ATHY WEST URBAN
Limerick City and County	PAUL Partnership Limerick		LIMERICK CITY NORTH LEA-7	JOHN'S A & JOHN'S B
Longford	Longford Resources	Community	LONGFORD LEA-7	LONGFORD RURAL
Mayo	Mayo Northeast Partnership	Leader	BALLINA LEA-6	BALLINA URBAN
South Dublin	SDC South Dublin Partnership	County	PALMERSTOWN-FONTHILL LEA-5	CLONDALKIN-MOORFIELD
Westmeath	Westmeath Development	Community	MULLINGAR LEA-6	MULLINGAR RURAL
Wexford	Wexford Development	Local	ENNISCORTHY LEA-6	NEWTOWNBARRY

APPENDIX 4 – Orders of Reference

Scope and context of activities of Select Committees (DSO 94 and SSO 70)

DSO 94

- 1) The Dáil may appoint a Select Committee to consider and, if so permitted, to take evidence upon any Bill, Estimate or matter, and to report its opinion for the information and assistance of the Dáil. Such motion shall specifically state the orders of reference of the Committee, define the powers devolved upon it, fix the number of members to serve on it, state the quorum, and may appoint a date upon which the Committee shall report back to the Dáil.

- 2) It shall be an instruction to each Select Committee that –
 - a) It may only consider such matters, engage in such activities, exercise such powers, and discharge such functions as are specifically authorised under its orders of reference and under Standing Orders;
 - b) Such matters, activities, powers, and functions shall be relevant to, and shall arise only in the context of, the preparation of a report to the Dáil;
 - c) It shall not consider any matter which is being considered, or of which notice has been given of a proposal to consider, by the Joint Committee on Public Petitions in the exercise of its functions under Standing Order 125(1); and
 - d) It shall refrain from inquiring into in public session or publishing confidential information regarding any matter if so requested, for stated reasons given in writing, by –
 - i. A member of the Government or a Minister of State, or
 - ii. The principal office – holder of a state body within the responsibility of a Government Department or
 - iii. The principal officer – holder of a non – State body which is partly funded by the State,

Provided that the Committee may appeal any such request made to the Ceann Comhairle, whose decision shall be final.

- 3) It shall be an instruction to all Select Committees to which Bills are referred that they shall ensure that not more than two Select Committees shall meet to consider a Bill on any given day, unless the Dáil after due notice to the Business Committee by a Chairman of one of the Select Committees concerned, waives this instruction.

SSO 70

- 1) The Seanad may appoint a Select Committee to consider any Bill or matter and to report its opinion for the information and assistance of the Seanad and, in the case of a Bill, whether or not it has amended the Bill. Such motion shall specifically state the orders of reference of the Committee, define the powers devolved upon it, fix the number of members to serve on it, state the quorum thereof, and may appoint a date upon which the Committee shall report back to the Seanad.
- 2) It shall be an instruction to each Select Committee that –
 - a) It may only consider such matters, engage in such activities, exercise such powers, and discharge such functions as are specifically authorised under its orders of reference and under Standing Orders;
 - b) Such matters, activities, powers and functions shall be relevant to, and shall arise only in the context of, the preparation of a report to the Seanad;
 - c) It shall not consider any matter which is being considered, or of which notice has been given of a proposal to consider, by the Joint Committee on Public Petitions in the exercise of its functions under Standing Order 108 (1); and

- d) It shall refrain from inquiring into in public session or publishing confidential information regarding any matter if so requested, for stated reasons given in writing, by –
- i. A member of the Government or a Minister of State, or
 - ii. The principal officeholder of a State body within the responsibility of a Government Department, or
 - iii. The principal officeholder of a non-State body which is partly funded by the State,

Provided that the Committee may appeal any such request made to the Cathaoirleach, whose decision shall be final.

Functions of Departmental Select Committees (DSO 95 and SSO 71)

DSO 95

- 1) The Dáil may appoint a Departmental Select Committee to consider and, unless otherwise provided for in these Standing Orders or by order, to report to the Dáil on any matter relating to—
 - a) legislation, policy, governance, expenditure and administration of—
 - i. a Government Department, and
 - ii. State bodies within the responsibility of such Department, and
 - b) That performance of a non – State body in relation to an agreement for the provision of services that it has entered into with any such Government Department or State body.

- 2) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall also consider such other matters which –
 - a) Stand referred to the Committee by virtue of these Standing Orders or statute law, or
 - b) Shall be referred to the Committee by order of the Dáil.

- 3) The principal purpose of Committee consideration of matters of policy, governance, expenditure and administration under paragraph (1) shall be –
 - a) For the accountability of the relevant Minister or Minister of State, and
 - b) To assess the performance of the relevant Government Department or of a State body within the responsibility of the relevant Department, in delivering public services while achieving intended outcomes, including value for money.

- 4) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall not consider any matter relating to accounts audited by, or reports of, the Comptroller and Auditor General unless the Committee of Public Accounts –
 - a) Consents to such consideration, or
 - b) Has reported on such accounts or reports.

- 5) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may be joined with a Select Committee appointed by Seanad Éireann to be and act as a Joint Committee for the purposes of paragraph (1) and such other purposes as may be specified in these Standing Orders or by order of the Dáil: provided that the Joint Committee shall not consider –
 - a) The Committee Stage of a Bill,
 - b) Estimates for Public Services, or
 - c) A proposal contained in a motion for the approval of an international agreement involving a charge upon public funds referred to the Committee by order of the Dáil.

- 6) Any report that the Joint Committee proposes to make shall, on adoption by the Joint Committee, be made to both Houses of the Oireachtas.

- 7) The Chairman of the Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall also be Chairman of the Joint Committee.

8) Where a Select Committee proposes to consider –

- a) EU draft legislative acts standing referred to the Select Committee under Standing Order 133, including the compliance of such acts with the principle of subsidiarity,
- b) Other proposals for EU legislation and related policy issues, including programmes, and guidelines prepared by the European Commission as a basis of possible legislative action,
- c) Non-legislative documents published by any EU institution in relation to EU policy matters, or
- d) Matters listed for consideration on the agenda for meetings of the relevant Council (of Ministers) of the European Union and the outcome of such meetings,

The following may be notified accordingly and shall have the right to attend and take part in such consideration without having a right to move motions or amendments or the right to vote:

- i. Members of the European Parliament elected from constituencies in Ireland,
- ii. Members of the Irish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and
- iii. At the invitation of the Committee, other members of the European Parliament.

9) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may, in respect of any Ombudsman charged with oversight of public services within the policy remit of the relevant Department consider –

- a) Such motions relating to the appointment of an Ombudsman as may be referred to the Committee, and
- b) Such Ombudsman reports laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas as the Committee may select: Provided that the provisions of Standing Order 130 apply where the Select Committee has not

considered the Ombudsman report, or a portion or portions thereof, within two months (excluding Christmas, Easter, or summer recess periods) of the report being laid before either of both Houses of the Oireachtas.

SSO 71

- 1) The Seanad may appoint a Departmental Select Committee to consider and, unless otherwise provided for in these Standing Orders or by order, to report to the Seanad on any matter relating to –
 - a) Legislation, policy, governance, expenditure and administration of –
 - i. A Government Department, and
 - ii. State bodies within the responsibility of such Department, and
 - b) The performance of a non – State body in relation to an agreement for the provision of services that it has entered into with any such Government Department or State body.
- 2) A select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall also consider such other matters which –
 - a) Stand referred to the Committee by virtue of these Standing Orders or statute law, or
 - b) Shall be referred to the Committee by order of the Seanad.
- 3) The principal purpose of Committee consideration of matters of policy, governance expenditure and administration under paragraph (1) shall be –
 - a) For the accountability of the relevant Minister or Minister of State, and
 - b) To assess the performance of the relevant Department, in delivering public services while achieving intended outcomes, including value for money.

- 4) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall not consider any matter relating to accounts audited by, or reports of, the Comptroller and Auditor General unless the Committee of Public Accounts –
 - a) Consents to such consideration, or
 - b) Has reported on such accounts or reports.

- 5) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may be joined with a Select Committee appointed by Dáil Éireann to be and act as a Joint Committee for the purposes of paragraph (1) and such other purposes as may be specified in these Standing Orders or by order of the Seanad: provided that the Joint Committee shall not consider –
 - a) The Committee Stage of a Bill,
 - b) Estimate for Public Services, or
 - c) A proposal contained in a motion for the approval of an international agreement involving a charge upon public funds referred to the Committee by order of the Dáil.

- 6) Any report that the Joint Committee proposes to make shall, on adoption by the Joint Committee, be made to both Houses of the Oireachtas.

- 7) The Chairman of a Joint Committee pursuant to this Standing Order shall be a member of Dáil Éireann.

- 8) Where a Select Committee proposes to consider –
 - a) EU draft legislative acts standing referred to the Select Committee under Standing Order 116, including the compliance of such acts with the principle of subsidiarity,
 - b) Other proposals for EU legislation and related policy issues, including programmes and guidelines prepared by the European Commission as a basis of possible legislative action,

- c) Non-legislative documents published by any EU institution in relation to EU policy matters, or
- d) Matters listed for consideration on the agenda for meetings of the relevant EC Council (of Ministers) of the European Union and the outcome of such meetings,

The following may be notified accordingly and shall have the right to attend and take part in such consideration without having a right to move motions or amendments or the right to vote:

- i. Members of the European Parliament elected from constituencies in Ireland,
 - ii. Members of the Irish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and
 - iii. At the invitation of the Committee, other members of the European Parliament.
- 9) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may, in respect of any Ombudsman charged with oversight of public services within the policy remit of the relevant Department consider –
- a) Such motions relating to the appointment of an Ombudsman as may be referred to the Committee, and
 - b) Such Ombudsman reported laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas as the Committee may select: Provided that the provisions of Standing Order 113 apply where the Select Committee has not considered the Ombudsman report, or a portion or portions thereof, within two months (excluding Christmas, Easter or summer recess periods) of the report being laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas.

Powers of Select Committees (DSO 96 and SSO 72)

Unless the Dáil shall otherwise order, a Committee appointed pursuant to these Standing Orders shall have the following powers:

- 1) Power to invite and receive oral and written evidence and to print and publish from time to time –
 - a) Minutes of such evidence as was heard in public, and
 - b) Such evidence in writing as the Committee thinks fit;
- 2) Power to appoint sub-Committees and to refer to such sub-Committees any matter comprehended by its orders of reference and to delegate any of its powers to such sub-Committees, including power to report directly to the Dáil/Seanad;
- 3) Power to draft recommendations for legislative change and for new legislation;
- 4) In relation to any statutory instrument, including those laid or laid in draft before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas, power to –
 - a) Require any Government Department or other instrument-making authority concerned to –
 - i. Submit a memorandum to the Select Committee explaining the statutory instrument, or
 - ii. Attend a meeting of the Select Committee to explain any such statutory instrument: Provided that the authority concerned may decline to attend for reasons given in writing to the Select Committee, which may report thereon to the Dáil/Seanad, and
 - b) Recommend, where it considers that such action is warranted, that the instrument should be annulled or amended;
- 5) Power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State shall attend before the Select Committee to discuss –
 - a) Policy, or

- b) Proposed primary or secondary legislation (prior to such legislation being published),

For which he or she is officially responsible: Provided that a member of the Government or Minister of State may decline to attend for stated reasons given in writing to the Select Committee, which may report thereon to the Dáil: and provided further that a member of the Government or Minister of State may request to attend a meeting of the Select Committee to enable him or her to discuss such policy or proposed legislation;

- 6) Power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State shall attend before the Select Committee and provide, in private session if so requested by the attendee, oral briefings in advance of meetings of the relevant EC Council (of Ministers) of the European Union to enable the Select Committee to make known its views: Provided that the Committee may also require such attendance following such meetings;
- 7) Power to require that the Chairperson designate of a body or agency under the aegis of a Department shall, prior to his or her appointment, attend before the Select Committee to discuss his or her strategic priorities for the role;
- 8) Power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State who is officially responsible for the implementation of an Act shall attend before a Select Committee in relation to the consideration of a report under DSO 197/SSO 168;
- 9) Subject to any constraints otherwise prescribed by law, power, to require that principal officeholders of a –
 - a) State body within the responsibility of a Government Department or
 - b) Non-State body, which is partly funded by the State,

Shall attend meetings of the Select Committee, as appropriate, to discuss issues for which they are officially responsible: Provided that such an officeholder may decline to attend for stated reasons given in writing to the Select Committee, which may report thereon to the Dáil/Seanad; and

10) Power to –

- a) Engage the services of persons with specialist or technical knowledge, to assist it or any of its sub-Committees in considering particular matters; and
- b) Undertake travel;

Provided that the powers under this paragraph are subject to such recommendations as may be made by the Working Group of Committee Chairmen under DSO 120 (4)(a)/SSO 107 (4)(a)

APPENDIX 5 – Links to Meeting Transcripts

Joint Committee meeting with Officials from the Department of Rural and Community Development

12th July 2023

Meeting transcript available [here](#).

APPENDIX 6 – Links to Opening Statements

Joint Committee meeting with Officials from the Department Rural and Community Development

Mr JP Mulherin, Assistant Secretary General Opening statement available [here](#)

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