



BUNREACT NA ÉIREANN  
CONSTITUTION OF IRELAND



Tithe an  
Oireachtais  
Houses of the  
Oireachtas

**An Comhchoiste Um Choimirce Shóisialach, Forbairt  
Pobail Agus Tuaithe Agus Na Hoileáin  
Clár Oibre**

**2024**

**Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and  
Rural Development and the Islands  
Work Programme**

**2024**

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## Committee Membership



Sen. Paddy Burke  
Fine Gael



Jackie Cahill T.D.  
Fianna Fáil



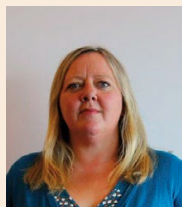
Joe Carey T.D.  
Fine Gael



Joan Collins T.D.  
Independents 4 Change



Paul Donnelly T.D.  
Sinn Féin



Sen. Róisín Garvey  
Green Party



Sen. Paul Gavan  
Sinn Féin



Sen. Eugene Murphy  
Fianna Fáil



Denis Naughten T.D.  
Independent  
Cathaoirleach



Marc Ó Cathasaigh T.D.  
Green Party



Éamon Ó Cuív T.D.  
Fianna Fáil



Donnchadh Ó Laoghaire  
Sinn Féin



John Paul Phelan T.D.  
Fine Gael



Sen. Mark Wall  
Labour

## 1. Introduction

The Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands was established following Orders of Dáil Éireann on 30 July 2020 and Seanad Éireann on 25 September 2020.

Standing Orders 89(4) Dáil Éireann and 75(4) Seanad Éireann require that *“as soon as may be following its appointment and thereafter at annual intervals, each Select Committee shall prepare a work programme and lay such programme before Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann”*.

## 2. Select Committee

The Function of the Select Committee is to consider Bills, Estimates and other business referred to it by Dáil Éireann which relate to the Department of Social Protection and Department of Community and Rural Development.

### **a. Legislation (Bills) See 3(c) also**

Legislation to be introduced available in Legislation Programme Autumn Session 2020 at: <http://assets.gov.ie/87242/bbb45d43-576e-4213-8055-15f56f2e7942.pdf>

### **b. Estimates and other Financial Matters**

Select Committees are tasked with consideration of annual Estimates for Public Services that fall within their remit. The Estimates are Ministers' spending plans for the coming financial year.

When the Estimates are referred to Select Committees for consideration, this Committee will have an opportunity to question the Minister for Social Protection and Minister for Community and Rural Development on financial allocations and associated output targets for the coming year. A revised Estimate was considered in October 2020 as additional monies were required by the Department of Community and Rural Development.

Note: The Select Committee is required to consider the Estimates but is **not** empowered to amend them.

### **c. Referrals of Motions and Other Matters**

From time to time, matters may arise and may be referred to the Select Committee by the Dáil. It is not possible to say in advance what those matters might be or when they might arise.

## **3. Joint Committee**

The duties of the Joint Committee are discharged in two ways:

- (i) There will be items of business referred to it by one or both Houses, and
- (ii) It can select business for consideration itself, from the areas within its terms of reference.

In practice, the Joint Committee's core work comprises EU business and key policy governance priorities.

### **a. EU Business**

#### **Scrutiny of EU Legislative Proposals**

The scrutiny of draft EU legislative proposals will continue to be a standing agenda item of the Joint Committee. Draft proposals will be brought to the attention of the Joint Committee by setting out priority (Schedule A) and non-priority (Schedule B) items.

The Committee will seek information on relevant legislative proposals at the earliest stage after publication and invite submissions from stakeholders on same. It will also engage with relevant European Parliament Committee on legislative proposals and submit reports (Reasoned opinions or Political Contributions) to EU Institutions in relation to proposed legislative changes.

#### **Engagement with Ministers**

Ministers of the Government attend EU Council meetings in their relevant policy areas, and it is intended that the Joint Committee will invite the Minister for Social Protection and/or Minister for Community and Rural Development from time to time

to give oral briefings either in advance of her attendance at the Employment, Social Policy, Health, and Consumer Affairs Council (ESPCO) Council meetings or following such meetings.

### Engagement on the Statutory Departmental Scrutiny Report

There is a requirement under S.2 (5) of the European Union (Scrutiny) Act 2002 for Ministers to report twice yearly to both Houses on the measures, proposed measures, and other developments in relation to the European Communities and the European Union connected with their departments. The Joint Committee can consider these reports with the Secretary General of the Department.

### Engagement with European Bodies

The Committee will continue to further its engagement with European bodies such as the EU Commission and the EU Parliament and its committees during 2024, including delegation visits where appropriate.

## **b. Key Policy Priorities**

The Joint Committee is empowered to consider such other policy issues as it may select within its terms of reference. During 2024, in addition to core business such as legislation, it will be possible to focus on a few major topics within the remit of the Department, with the aim of submitting well-researched reports to the Houses.

The following are key policy issues suggested for examination:

### **Social Protection**

#### **1. Energy Poverty**

- An examination of the Energy Poverty Action Plan (out of the Department of Environment, Climate and Communications)
- The rollout of Home Retrofits for those in Energy Poverty, particularly those in social housing
- The suitability and future of Fuel Allowance



- The potential for Social Tariffs, and including disconnections, in particular for vulnerable customers, considering Pay as You Go customers
  - Examination of urban/rural divide, particularly with respect to home heating
2. Performance Indicators of the Department
  3. Consideration of the Sustainable Development Goals
  4. Review of the Roadmap for Social inclusion
  5. Review of working hours in relation to carers allowance with the Department of Social Protection and Home and Community Care Ireland (HCCI)
  6. Consideration of the eligibility of Gardaí and other public servants to access payments when they retire at 60 as opposed to Jobseekers Allowance.
  7. The eligibility of self-employed in claiming Illness Benefit

### **Rural and Community Development**

1. Review of Our Rural Future/Town Centres First
  - Appointment of Town Regeneration Officer (TRO) in local authorities
  - Formation of Town Teams and the associated supporting structure.
  - Funding for Collaborative Town Centre Health Check programme (with specific input from Heritage Council)
  - Application of Croí Cónaithe funding in Towns and Villages to reactivate Vacant and derelict properties and approaches to tackling vacancy and dereliction in towns and villages.
  - Support for Local Small Businesses in Rural Ireland and Sustainability through main street rejuvenation in towns and villages.
  - Examine six towns involved in pilot projects to encourage town centre living.
2. Review of the CLÁR areas and CLÁR Programme with a focus on matching funding.
3. Funding of Community Groups and Social Enterprises – specifically in relation to the necessity for bridging finance for grant-aid
4. Performance Indicators of the Department
5. Consideration of the Sustainable Development Goals

6. Provision of Rural Public Transport

- Progress in Connecting Ireland programme.
- Issues of transport deprivation and forced car ownership in rural communities.
- Challenges facing Local Link services in increasing provision in rural areas and the integration and co-ordination of transport services
- Barriers to Active Transport in rural settings
- ‘Every Village, Every Hour’ models in other jurisdictions.
- Bikes and Bus shelters

7. Dog Breeding Establishments (Amendment) Bill 2021

8. Opportunities for investment in Heavy Rail & Western Rail Corridor

- Heavy rail links with ports and airports
- Commuter and intercity rail services
- Line speeds, line capacity, and signalling on rural railway lines
- Protection of closed and abandoned railway lines
- Consideration of whether EU funding is available for heavy rail investment, including for “Ten-Intermodal Nodes. Ten-T western arc isn’t on the revised plan – waiting on rail review.

9. Leader Funding – Review of the application process

- LEADER (Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l’Economie Rurale)

10. Issues relating to Water and Sewerage

- Private Wastewater Treatment Plants and Planning Permission policy for one off builds.
- Provision of water and wastewater to rural areas and state contribution to same.

11. RAPID Programme

- Review of Communities Facilities Scheme and RAPID. (Revitalising areas by planning, investment, and development)



## 12. Regional Rural Cohesion Funding and the Effects of Brexit.

- Impact of Brexit on INTERREG Funding
- Impact of Brexit on current INTERREG projects between Ireland and Wales
- Potential future partnerships with EU countries for INTERREG projects

### **The Islands**

1. Examine the critical service and infrastructure deficits on the islands.
2. Energy Self Sufficiency (including through EU funding)
3. Consideration of the Sustainable Development Goals
4. Seek annual update on 'Our Living Islands'
5. Waste Management on the islands
6. Developing the Fishing Industry (fishing rights, access to resources (piers etc.))

In addition to this core work, the Joint Committee is also empowered to consider the examination of the general scheme or draft heads of Bills and to consider any post-enactment report on any Bill enacted in the previous 12 months by the Houses of the Oireachtas in respect of the Departments under its remit. Detailed scrutiny under Dáil Standing Order 148B, shall be conducted from a policy, legal and financial perspective, and in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Memorandum of Understanding agreed between the Dáil and the Government and laid before Dáil Éireann.

### **c. Engagement with Chairperson designates**

The Joint Committee is also empowered to engage with the Chairpersons designate of a body or agency under the aegis of the Department of Social Protection and the Department of Community and Rural Development, prior to their nomination for appointment, to discuss their strategic priorities for the role.

This Work Programme of the Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development, and the Islands was agreed by the Joint Committee at its meeting on 31 January 2024. In accordance with Standing Orders of Dáil Éireann

and the Seanad Éireann, it was agreed that the Work Programme be laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Denis Naughten", written over a horizontal line. The signature is cursive and fluid.

Denis Naughten T.D

Cathaoirleach

31 January 2024

## Appendix 1: Terms of Reference of the Joint Committee

### 1. **Scope and Context of Activities of Committees** (Derived from Standing Orders – 050 84, 550 70)

- a. The Joint Committee 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 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 and/ or Seanad.
- c. The Joint Committee shall not consider any matter which is being considered, or of which notice has been given of a proposal to consider, by the Committee of Public Accounts pursuant to Standing Order 186 and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993.
- d. The Joint Committee 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 111A; and

The Joint Committee 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 body under the aegis of a Department of which is partly or wholly funded by the State or established or appointed by a member of the Government or by the Oireachtas.

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

- e. 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 given by the Chairman of the Select Committee, waives the instruction on motion made by the Taoiseach pursuant to Standing Order 28. The Chairmen of Select Committees shall have responsibility for compliance with this instruction.

### 2. **Functions of Departmental Committees** (derived from Standing Orders – D50 84A and 550 70A).

- a. The Select Committee shall consider and report to the Dáil on
  - i. Such aspects of the expenditure, administration and policy of a Government Department or Departments and associated public bodies as the Committee may select, and
  - ii. European Union matters within the remit of the relevant Department or Departments
- b. The Select Committee may be joined with a Select Committee appointed by Seanad Éireann for the purposes of the functions set out in this Standing Order, other than at paragraph (3), and to report thereon to both Houses of the Oireachtas.
- c. Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (1), the Select Committee shall consider, in respect of the relevant Department or Departments, such –
  - i. Bills
  - ii. Proposals contained in any motion, including any motion within the meaning of Standing Order 187
  - iii. Estimates for Public Services, and

As shall be referred to the Select Committee by the Dáil, and

  - iv. Annual Output Statements including performance, efficiency, and effectiveness in the use of public moneys, and
  - v. Such value for Money and Policy Reviews as the Select Committee may select.
- d. Without prejudice to generality of paragraph (1), the Joint Committee may consider the following matters in respect of the relevant Department or Departments and associated public bodies:
  - i. Matters of policy and governance for which the Minister is officially responsible.
  - ii. Public affairs administered by the Department.
  - iii. Policy issues arising from Value for Money and Policy Reviews conducted or commissioned by the Department.
  - iv. Government policy and governance in respect of bodies under the aegis of the Department.

- v. Policy and Governance issues concerning bodies which are partly or wholly funded by the State, or which are established or appointed by a member of the Government or the Oireachtas.
  - vi. The general scheme or draft heads of any Bill.
  - vii. Any post – enactment report laid before either House or by both Houses by a member of the Government or Minister of State on any Bill enacted by the Houses of the Oireachtas.
  - viii. Statutory instruments, including those laid or laid in draft before either House or both Houses and those made under the European Communities Acts 1972 to 2009.
  - ix. Strategy statements laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas pursuant to the Public Service Management Act 1997.
  - x. Annual reports or annual reports and accounts, required by law and laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas, of the Department or bodies referred to in subparagraphs (4) and (5) and the overall performance and operational results, statements of strategy and corporate plans of such bodies, and
  - xi. Such other matters as may be referred to it by the Dáil from time to time.
- e. Without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (a), the Joint Committee shall consider, in respect of the relevant Department or Departments –
- i. EU draft legislation acts standing referred to the Select Committee under Standing Order 114, including the compliance of such acts with the principle of subsidiarity.
  - ii. 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.
  - iii. Non – legislative documents published by any EU institution in relation to EU policy matters, and
  - iv. Matters listed for consideration on the agenda for meetings of the relevant EU Council of Ministers and the outcome of such meetings.
- f. Where the Select Committee has been joined with a Select Committee appointed by Seanad Éireann, the Chairman of the Dáil Select Committee shall also be the Chairman of the Joint Committee.

- g. The following may attend meetings of the Select or Joint Committee, for the purposes of the functions set out in paragraph (e) and may take part in proceedings without having a right to vote or to *move* motions and amendments:
    - i. Members of the European Parliament elected from constituencies in Ireland, including Northern 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.
  - h. The Joint Committee may, in respect of any Ombudsman charged with oversight of public services within the policy remit of the relevant Department or Departments, consider –
    - i. Such motions relating to the appointment of an Ombudsman as may be referred to the Committee, and
    - ii. Such Ombudsman reports laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas as the Committee may select.
3. **Powers of Committees** (derived from Standing Orders – DSO 85, 114 and 116 and SSO 71, 107 and 109)

The Joint Committee has:

- a. Power to take oral and written evidence and to print and publish from time – to – time minutes of such evidence taken in public before the Select Committee together with such related documents as the Select Committee thinks fit.
- b. Power to invite and accept oral presentations and written submissions from interested persons or bodies.
- c. 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.
- d. Power to draft recommendations for legislative change and for new legislation.
  - i. Power to examine any statutory instrument, including those laid or laid in draft before either House or both Houses and those made under the European Communities Acts 1972 to 2009, and to recommend, where it considers that such action is warranted, whether the instrument should be annulled or amended.

- ii. For the purposes of paragraph (di), power to require any Government Department or instrument – making authority concerned to submit a Memorandum to the Select Committee explaining any statutory instrument under consideration or to attend a meeting of the Select Committee for the purpose of explaining any such statutory instrument: provided that such Department or authority may decline to attend for stated reasons giving in writing to the Select Committee, which may report thereon to the Dáil.
- e. Power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State shall attend before the Select Committee to discuss policy 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 giving 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.
- f. Power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State shall attend before the Select Committee to discuss 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 proposed legislation.
  - i. Power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State shall attend before the Select Committee and provided, in private session if so requested by the member of the Government or Minister of State, oral briefings in advance of meetings of the relevant EU Council of Ministers to enable the Select Committee to make known its views: provided that the Committee may also require such attendance following such meetings.
  - ii. 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.
  - iii. 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 Standing Order 164A.



- g. Subject to any constraints otherwise prescribed by law, power to require that principal office – holders in bodies in the State which are partly or wholly funded by the state or which are established or appointed by members of the Government or by the Oireachtas shall attend meetings of the Select Committee, as appropriate, to discuss issues for which they are officially responsible: provided that such an office – holder may decline to attend for stated reasons given in writing to the Select Committee, which may report thereon to the Dáil.
- h. Power to engage, subject to the consent of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission, the services of persons with specialist or technical knowledge, to assist it or any of its sub – Committees in considering particular matters and
- i. Power to undertake travel, subject to –
  - i. Such recommendations as may be made by the Working Group of Committee Chairmen under DSO 108(2)(a) and 550 104(2); and
  - ii. The consent of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission, and normal accounting procedures.

In accordance with Articles 6 and 8 of Protocol No. 2 to the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (*Protocol on the Application of the Principles of Subsidiarity and Proportionality*) as applied by sections 7(3) and 7(4) of the European Union Act 2009, the Joint Committee has the power to

- i. Consider whether any act of an institution of the European Union infringes the principle of subsidiarity.
- ii. Form a reasoned opinion that a draft legislative act (within the meaning of Article 3 of the said Protocol) does not comply with the principle of subsidiarity.

## Appendix 2: Schedule of Meetings for 2024

### January to March 2024

Date	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
15 - 18 January			Energy Poverty and retrofitting, suitability of fuel allowance		
22 - 26 January			Select Committee Stage of Social Welfare (Liable Relatives and Child Maintenance) Bill 2023		
29 January – 2 February			Pre-Legislative Scrutiny of the General Scheme of the Social Welfare (Pay-Related Social Insurance and Jobseeker's Pay-Related Benefit Provisions) Bill 2024		
6 – 9 February			Consideration of the Revised Estimates Volume (REV)		
12 - 16 February			Energy Poverty with DSP and DECC		
19 - 23 February			Energy Poverty with Energy Cloud and Irish Rural Link		
26 February – 1 March					
4 – 8 March					
11 – 15 March	St. Patrick's Day Recess				
18 – 22 March					
25 March – 5 April	Easter Recess				

<b>8 – 12 April</b>			Committee Stage of the Charities Bill 2022		
<b>15 -19 April</b>					

## Appendix 3: Agencies under the aegis of the Department of Social Protection

### The Citizens Information Board

The Citizens Information Board (CIB) is responsible for supporting the provision of information, advice and advocacy relating to social services and entitlements.

All appointments are made by the Minister and the legislative provisions governing board membership of the CIB are contained in the Comhairle Act 2000 and the Citizens Information Act 2007. The legislation provides that:

- The Board shall consist of fifteen members.
- One member of the Board shall be designated as chairperson.
- The period of membership shall not exceed five years.
- The members of the Board shall include one officer of the Minister, three members representative of people with disabilities and one member of the staff of the Board.
- Not less than six members of the Board shall be female and not less than six shall be male.

The legislation also provides that a member of the Board whose period of membership expires by the effluxion of time (passing of five-year term) shall be eligible for re-appointment as a member of the Board.

### The Pensions Authority (Formerly Pensions Board)

The Pensions Authority is a regulatory body operating under the aegis of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection and the statutory role of the Authority is to monitor and supervise the operation of the Pensions Act 1990.

Oversight of the Pensions Authority is provided by a three-person board. This consists of the following:

- Mr David Begg, Chairperson
- Mr Ciarán Lawler, responsibility for the finance function in the Department of Social Protection, including the Budget and Estimates process and the preparation of the annual Appropriation Account and Social Insurance Fund Account
- Mr Michael McGrath, in the Department of Finance, who represents the Minister for Finance.

The role CEO of the Pensions Board is now renamed the Pensions Regulator, with Mr Brendan Kennedy continuing in that role. These changes took effect 6th March 2014.

### Social Welfare Tribunal

The Social Welfare Tribunal is a statutory body set up in 1982 to deal with cases where entitlement to Jobseekers Benefit or Jobseekers Assistance is refused due to an involvement in a trade dispute.

The legislation governing the operation of the Social Welfare Tribunal is provided for in Sections 331 to 333 of the Social Welfare (Consolidation) Act, 2005.

The Tribunal consists of a Chairman and four ordinary members, two nominated by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and two nominated by an organisation representative of employers. All members are appointed by the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection for a term of three years

### Social Welfare Appeals Office

The Social Welfare Appeals Office is an independent agency established to provide an appeals service to persons who are unhappy with decisions of the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection on questions relating to entitlement to social welfare payments and insurability of employment under the Social Welfare Acts.

The Office is headed by a Chief Appeals Officer and has its own Appeals Officers. You can contact the Social Welfare Appeals Office at:

Social Welfare Appeals Office D'Olier House

D'Olier Street Dublin 2

[www.socialwelfareappeals.ie](http://www.socialwelfareappeals.ie)

Telephone: (01) 6732800

Locall 1890 74 74 34

If calling from outside the Republic of Ireland, please call +353 1 6732800

#### The Pensions Council

The Pensions Council was established to provide pension policy advice to the Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection. Its membership ensures that the relevant skills, knowledge, and experience is available to provide the necessary advice and information in the development of pensions policy.

If you wish to contact the Pensions Council, you can email [info@pensionscouncil.ie](mailto:info@pensionscouncil.ie).

## Appendix 4: Agencies under the aegis of the Department of Rural and Community Development

### Charities Regulator

“The Charities Regulator is Ireland’s national statutory regulator for charitable organisations. The Charities Regulator is an independent authority and was established in October 2014 under the Charities Act 2009.

The key functions of the Regulator are to establish and maintain a public register of charitable organisations operating in Ireland and ensure their compliance with the Charities Acts.

The Regulator also engages in the provision of services to charities including the authorising of appointments of new charitable trustees, the framing of schemes of incorporation, authorisation of Cy-près schemes and disposition of lands held upon charitable trusts.”

### Accountability of Chief Executive (of the Charities Regulator) to the Committee (Charities Act 2009 (Revised))

1. In this section “Committee” means a Committee appointed by either House of the Oireachtas or jointly by both Houses of the Oireachtas (other than the Committee referred to in section 22 or the Committee on Members’ Interests of Dáil Éireann or the Committee on Members’ Interests of Seanad Éireann) or a subcommittee of such a Committee.
2. Subject to subsection (3), the chief executive shall, at the request in writing of a Committee, attend before it to give account for the general administration of the Authority.
3. The chief executive shall not be required to give account before a Committee for any matter which is or has been or may at a future time be the subject of proceedings before a court or Tribunal in the State.



4. Where the chief executive is of the opinion that a matter in respect of which he or she is requested to give an account before a Committee is a matter to which subsection (3) applies, he or she shall inform the Committee of that opinion and the reasons for the opinion and, unless the information is conveyed to the Committee at a time when the chief executive is before it, the information shall be so conveyed in writing.
5. Where the chief executive has informed a Committee of his or her opinion in accordance with subsection (4) and the Committee does not withdraw the request referred to in subsection (2) in so far as it relates to a matter the subject of that opinion:
  - a. the chief executive may, not later than 21 days after being informed by the Committee of its decision not to do so, apply to the High Court in a summary manner for determination of the question whether the matter is one to which subsection (3) applies, or
  - b. the Chairperson of the Committee may, on behalf of the Committee, make such an application, and the High Court shall determine the matter.
6. Pending the determination of an application under subsection (5), the chief executive shall not attend before the Committee to give account for the matter the subject of the application.
7. If the High Court determines that the matter concerned is one to which subsection (3) applies, the Committee shall withdraw the request referred to in subsection (2), but if the High Court determines that subsection (3) does not apply, the chief executive shall attend before the Committee to give account for the matter.
8. In the performance of his or her duties under this section, the chief executive shall not question or express an opinion on the merits of any policy of the

Government or a Minister of the Government or on the merits of the objectives of such a policy.

#### Irish Water Safety

“The statutory, voluntary body and registered charity established to promote water safety and reduce drownings in Ireland.

Our focus is on Public Awareness and Education. Tragically, an average of 133 people drown in Ireland each year, eleven every month. We strive to reduce these fatalities by increasing water safety awareness and by changing attitudes and behaviours so that our aquatic environments can be enjoyed with confidence and safety.”

#### POBAL

“Pobal is a not-for-profit company that manages programmes on behalf of the Irish Government and the EU.

We are an intermediary that works on behalf of Government to support communities and local agencies toward achieving social inclusion, reconciliation, and equality. We do this by managing funding and providing resources for suitable programmes. In 2016, we provided management and support services to circa 24 programmes for four different Government departments and EU bodies.”

#### Western Development Commission

“The Western Development Commission is a state body set up to develop the Western Region by:

Ensuring that government policy is directed at improving the social and economic situation in the Western Region from Donegal to Clare. Developing projects on a regional basis in sectors such as tourism, industry, marine, renewable energy, technology, and organic agri-food.

Operating a €32 million Western Investment Fund that provides loans and equity to business and local communities in the Western Region. This Fund operates on a

commercial basis and aims to become revolving, re-investing monies back into the Region.”

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