

## **Tullamore Tribune**

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### **Flanagan satisfied with terms of reference of Disclosures Tribunal**

Justice Minister Charlie Flanagan told the Dáil he is satisfied that the terms of reference which the Dáil formulated and agreed, provide a wide discretion to the Charleton Tribunal which is examining the garda whistle blowing affair.

He said it was his priority, and that of the Government, to let Judge Charleton get on with his critical work. "I ask all Members to accept, as I believe they will, that it is imperative that the tribunal be allowed to proceed with its work," he said.

"No one in the House wishes to further delay a tribunal which is undertaking vital work and which, indeed, has brought forward its work in recognition of definite matters of urgent public importance," he said. "We are all agreed that not only are these matters important, but they have now become urgent. We all look forward to the commencement of the public sessions on 8 or 9 January."

Speaking during the same debate, Sinn Féin Deputy Carol Nolan said the recent events have raised serious questions regarding the culture in the Department of Justice and Equality. "The fundamental question is why the documents at the heart of this controversy were not discovered much earlier and sent to the Charleton Tribunal," she said. It has become very clear that without questions being raised in this House and the subsequent tabling of motions of no confidence, these documents might never have appeared before the tribunal."

She said Sinn Féin was calling on the Dáil to agree that the terms of reference of the Charleton Tribunal need to be amended in order that the Minister for Justice and Equality and the Department officials are explicitly included. "The possibility of a deliberate failure to disclose central documents by both the Department and the Minister needs to be examined," she said. "The motivation for any such action must also be examined in fine detail."

"If justice for the McCabe family was a priority, which it should have been, a trawl would have been carried out much sooner. It was merely done to avoid a general election and save the political careers of Fine Gael TDs and perhaps even Fianna Fáil ones too. It makes a mockery of the Tribunal."

### **Cowen introduces more transparency in sales**

New legislation to accommodate a ten-day freeze during a property sales during which an investigation can be carried out by the Property Services Regulatory Authority, was introduced in the Dáil by Fianna Fáil Deputy Barry Cowen.

At present, during the process of the purchase of a property, he said agents retain the records associated with any bids made on the property and, if there is a fear on the part of those seeking to buy a property that there may have been fake bids during that process, it is only after the transaction that this can be investigated by the regulatory authority. "While we do

not cast any doubt on the industry or on the regulatory authority that is in place at present, we feel there is a gap in the legislation,” he said.

As there is this fear, he said he believed this Bill can be used to accommodate a ten-day freeze during which an investigation can be carried out by the authority. “It is up to the third party investigation to clarify that fact for all concerned; the procedure can proceed thereafter and there would be no cloud over the transaction once it is completed.”

This is not to cast any aspersion on the industry and the current system but, especially given the current crisis, Deputy Cowen said he believed every effort has to be made to ensure that those who are seeking to purchase property can do so without any doubt about the process they enter into.

There has to be fair play for everyone concerned and I believe this Bill sets about addressing that issue.