



Coimisiún Thithe
an Oireachtais
Houses of the
Oireachtas Commission

**Sixth Meeting AUDIT COMMITTEE
For the 33rd Dáil and 26th Seanad**

**Wednesday, 07 July 2021 at 3pm
[Held online due to Covid-19 restrictions]**

MINUTES

Attendance - Members of Audit Committee:

Pat McLoughlin (Chair), external member
Deputy Francis Noel Duffy
Senator Victor Boyhan
Cyril Maybury, external member
Noreen Fahy, external member
Charles Hearne, member of Service staff

Apologies received from:

Deputy Mairéad Farrell
Deputy Eimear Higgins

Visitor

Peter Finnegan, Clerk of the Dáil and Secretary General

Internal Audit Unit:

Máirín Devlin, Head of Internal Audit & Chief Risk Officer
Catherine Kiernan, Internal Auditor

Secretariat:

Kay Brennan, Office of the Commission & Secretary General.

The meeting convened at 3pm. The Chair welcomed the members to the sixth meeting of the Audit Committee of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission for the 33rd Dáil/ 26th Seanad.

1. Conflict of Interest

There were no declarations of interests in relation to any of the agenda items.

2. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

The Committee agreed the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting of 26 May 2021.

The Committee was provided with an update of 'matters arising' from the Committee meeting on 26 May including:

- The updated PRA guidelines were approved by the Commission on 31 May 2021 and agreed to be circulated to all members of the Houses.
- The Audit Committee noted the arrangements and systems in place for Service staff to support compliance with the provisions of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997, particularly in the context of remote working. The Head of HR will be attending the Audit Committee regarding the implementation of recommendations on the *IA report of the Houses of the Oireachtas Staff salaries and overtime payments* which will provide further opportunity to discuss. The Audit Committee noted that Members HR have and continue to provide guidance and support to Members on their obligations to their staff and suggested that communication of these guidelines should continue to ensure compliance.
- The Audit Committee noted that H&S risk assessments were being carried out for Service staff working remotely while Members as employers are responsible for the H&S of their staff (Secretarial Assistants/Parliamentary Assistants). Members HR have and continue to provide guidance and support to Members on their obligations to their staff. It was recommended that communication of these requirements should continue to ensure compliance.
- The Audit Committee noted the update regarding the *ICT Acceptable Usage Policy* and the arrangements currently in place regarding how compliance is being monitored in respect of social media assets used across the Service. It noted that a social media policy is under review by the Communications unit who are in consultation with the HR Unit. Audit Committee recommends ongoing communication to the Oireachtas community regarding the ICT acceptable usage policy and use of social media.

The Committee noted the update on matters arising from the Committee meeting on 26 May.

3. Commission Annual Report

Peter Finnegan, Secretary General and Clerk of the Dáil presented the Commission's Annual Report 2020 and outlined the achievements and progress made in this period, noting the exceptional challenges which the Service faced to continue to support the Houses of the Oireachtas.

He also addressed the challenges that lie ahead for the Service over the next 12 months to include the H&S of the Parliamentary community; recruitment and retention of staff particularly for specialised posts; the on-going Digital Transformation and Digital Parliament programmes; Cyber security; the development of a new Strategic plan 2022-2024 and the negotiation for the 3 year

funding to support it.

Mr Finnegan acknowledged the high level of commitment of all staff of the Service in the delivery of their everyday duties particularly in the context of COVID-19.

Mr Finnegan thanked the members of the Audit Committee for their work, commitment, expertise and the assurance and oversight they provide to him in his capacity as Secretary General and Accounting Officer.

The Audit Committee acknowledged the support provided to them and noted the degree of professionalism available to the Committee in their work, particularly in relation to Risk Management, Internal Audit and briefing papers and presentations provided by staff.

The Audit Committee acknowledged the importance of the ongoing communication by the Secretary General during this period in his weekly updates presented on the Plinth which provided assurance to the 'Oireachtas family'.

Following discussion, the Audit Committee noted the Commission Annual Report 2020 and thanked Mr Finnegan for accepting the invitation to address the Committee.

4. Risk Management

The Chief Risk Officer presented the **Risk Management Report for Qtr. 2 2021**.

The Committee noted the progress made on the reporting of risk and on embedding a risk aware culture across the organisation. It noted the ongoing engagement by the Risk Office supporting Business Users in the reporting on the eRisk system and recent developments incorporated by the OGCI0 in the system. It noted the corporate risk assessments carried out by the Management Board and ongoing review of mitigants.

The Committee noted the Risk Management Report for Qtr. 2 2021 and expressed overall satisfaction with the progress made on the reporting of risk and on embedding risk across the organisation.

5. Internal Audit (IA) Plan 2021 – Update

The Internal Auditor provided an update on the Internal Audit Plan 2021/ 2022 and confirmed that work on the following reports will be presented to them at their next meeting in Autumn / Q4 2021.

1. Assessing financial management practices using the Financial Management Maturity Model
2. Review of financial controls on processing of non-pay payments during Covid-19
3. Review of implementation of Audit Recommendations.

The Audit Committee noted the update on the *Internal Audit Work Plan 2021/2022*.

6. Audit Committee -Continuous Professional Development (CPD)

The Head of Internal Audit presented a paper outlining CPD options available to the Members, including briefing sessions of potential interest to the Board.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed that a survey be carried out with members of the Audit Committee to identify their individual training requirements/ areas of interest to facilitate planning a CPD programme.

7. Administration and Reporting

Draft Schedule of meetings for September to December 2021 was discussed.

8. AOB

No matters raised.

Pat McLoughlin
Chair, Audit Committee
17 November 2021