



Coimisiún Thithe an Oireachtais
Houses of the Oireachtas Commission

Minutes of the Commission
Wednesday, 18th June, 2008

1. The fourth meeting of the Commission of 2008 took place at 5 p.m. in Room 2, Leinster House.

2. MEMBERS PRESENT.

Deputy John O'Donoghue, Ceann Comhairle (*Chairperson*), Senator Paul Bradford, Mr. Kieran Coughlan, Secretary General, Deputy Tom Hayes, Senator Cecilia Keaveney, Deputy Séamus Kirk, Deputy Dan Neville, Deputy Pat Rabbitte and Senator Jim Walsh. Apologies were received from Senator Pat Moylan, Cathaoirleach of the Seanad.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING.

The minutes of the meeting of 30th April, 2008, were agreed by the Commission.

4. GRAPHIC DESIGN FACILITIES FOR MEMBERS – REPORT FROM THE PRINTING USERS' COUNCIL ON OPTIONS FOR THE PROVISION OF GRAPHIC DESIGN FACILITIES.

The Commission had before it for consideration a report from the Printing Users' Council on options for the provision of graphic design facilities for members [04-01-08].

The Commission approved the following recommendations of the Printing Users' Council:

- (i) that the contracts for the four existing graphic designers be renewed for the duration of the 30th Dáil;
- (ii) that the graphic design capacity be supplemented with an outsourcing budget of €90,000 per annum to be split proportionally between the parties;
- (iii) that if one party drew down its full allocation then requests for further amounts to be sought from the Commission

The Commission noted that in view of its decision to renew the contracts of the Graphic Designers, that their request for re-grading would be a matter for the Department of Finance which has responsibility for terms and conditions of employment and that it would be taken up with that Department via the HR Unit.

5. HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS ANNUAL RESOURCE PLAN, 2008-2009.

The Commission had before it for consideration the 2008-09 Annual Resource Plan for the civil service staff of the Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas [04-02-08].

The Commission:

- (i) noted that the sanctioned number of permanent civil service posts for the Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas was 432 posts as at 1st April, 2008.
- (ii) noted the sanctioning arrangements approved by the previous Commission on 27th April, 2007.
- (iii) approved the recommended net increase for 2008-09 of three posts to ensure the continued development of the Library & Research Service (two posts) and to manage

the increased workload and management of risk in the Salaries Section (one post); and the Commission noted that this increase does not include the budget for resources for the implementation of the ICT Strategy separately approved by the Commission on 30th April, 2008, which will be met from within existing ICT budgets.

- (iv) noted that four Researcher posts for the Library and Research Service will now be filled on a permanent basis as originally envisaged by the IBR.

6. RATIONALISATION OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES.

The Commission had before it a reply received from the former Minister for Finance [04-03-08] regarding the revisions to members' allowances as proposed by the Commission at its meeting on 11th March, 2008.

The Ceann Comhairle proposed that in order to progress this issue that a sub-Committee of the Commission be established to identify workable options in relation to the rationalisation of members' allowances which would meet with the transparency and verifiability requirements of the Audit Committee.

The Commission agreed the establishment of the sub-Committee and set a report back date of mid July. The following members were appointed to the sub-Committee: Deputy John O'Donoghue, Ceann Comhairle (*Chairperson*), Deputies Tom Hayes and Séamus Kirk, Senator Pat Moylan, Cathaoirleach of the Seanad, and Deputy Pat Rabbitte.

7. LEINSTER HOUSE CONSERVATION WORKS.

The Commission noted correspondence received from Mr. Seán Benton, Chairman, OPW, regarding the Leinster House conservation works [04-04-08].

8. OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY ECONOMIC CONFERENCE 2009.

The Commission noted:

- (i) the decision of the Management Committee of the Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas to accede to a request from the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE to host an OSCE Economic Conference in May/June 2009.
- (ii) that Ireland to date has not hosted an OSCE conference since becoming a member in 1973.
- (iii) the conference (venue yet to be determined) will be a three day event and will be managed by the Inter-Parliamentary Unit of the Office.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

- (i) *Commemoration of 90th Anniversary of the Dáil – 21st January, 2009.*
Deputy Rabbitte questioned whether plans were being put in place by the Houses of the Oireachtas to commemorate the 90th anniversary of the Dáil next January. The Ceann Comhairle stated that a number of high profile projects are currently being considered by the Houses of the Oireachtas Communications Unit and confirmed that these proposals would be rolled out in close consultation with the political parties. The Ceann Comhairle undertook to revert to the Commission in due course with firm proposals in this matter.
- (ii) *Leinster Lawn pond.*
The Commission questioned whether protective measures may be taken to prevent the ducklings in the Leinster Lawn pond from being killed by magpies as happened last year. The Office undertook to make contact with animal care charity organisations to find out whether preventative measures may be taken to resolve this particular problem.

10. ADJOURNMENT.

The meeting adjourned at 5.40 p.m.

JOHN O'DONOGHUE, T.D.,
Ceann Comhairle and Chairperson of the Commission.

Dated: