



Houses of the
Oireachtas Commission
Coimisiún Thithe
an Oireachtais

*Minutes of the Commission
Tuesday, 24th April, 2012*

1. The fifth meeting of the Commission of 2012 took place at 12.00 p.m. in Room 2, Leinster House.

2. **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Deputy Seán Barrett, Ceann Comhairle (Chairperson), Senator Paddy Burke, Cathaoirleach of the Seanad (Deputy Chairperson), Deputy Catherine Byrne, Mr. Kieran Coughlan, Secretary General, Deputy Frank Feighan, Senator Marc MacSharry, Deputy Dan Neville, Deputy Jack Wall and Senator John Whelan.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of 27th March, 2012, were agreed by the Commission.

4. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES of 28th February 2012**

The Commission were advised that the legal firm representing the former Judge Curtin has accepted the original offer made of €977,794.02 in full and final settlement of outstanding legal costs liabilities in relation to the Article 35 Committee. The Commission agreed a press release should issue on the matter.

5. **UPDATE FROM THE CHAIRPERSONS OF SUB-COMMITTEES**

- (i) **Update from the sub-Committee on Communications**

The Ceann Comhairle advised the Commission that:

- the sub-Committee would meet with the contractor engaged to provide specialist broadcasting assistance at its next meeting on 3rd May 2012;
- the Working Group of Committee Chairpersons have been asked to supply exact dates and times of meetings in order to facilitate live broadcasts of Committee meetings;
- UPC is carrying out audience research on the UPC 801 pilot transmission channel and will report back their findings; and
- efforts are on-going to get Sky to carry the pilot transmission channel.

The Commission noted the update.

(ii) Update from the sub-Committee on Accommodation

Deputy Jack Wall advised the Commission that, at its meeting on 18th April 2012, the sub-Committee received a briefing from the Chairman of the OPW regarding the accommodation issues in the Houses of the Oireachtas. This was followed by an escorted tour of the areas concerned.

The matter will be revisited by the Commission at a later date.

The Commission noted the update.

6. STRATEGIC PLAN 2010-2012 – 2011 PROGRESS REPORT

The Commission noted a progress report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan from the Secretary General, as required by section 16(1)(k) of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2009 [05-01-12, 05-01a-12], and referred the progress report to the sub-Committee on Communications for further consideration.

7. INFORMATION ITEMS FOR NOTING

(i) Service Level Agreement for the Print Facility

The Commission considered the draft Service Level Agreement [05-02-12, 05-02a-12] and agreed the proposed amendments in sections 8(5) and 11(b). In relation to section 8(4) of the draft SLA which proposed to prohibit the printing of any material which refers to any forthcoming or proposed referendum in line with the "McKenna" judgment of the Supreme Court, it was agreed that the Print User's Council would seek the advice of Senior Counsel to clarify what is allowable in law in terms of giving information on a referendum in newsletters.

(ii) Office Holders Satisfaction Survey 2012

The Commission noted the Office Holders Satisfaction Survey 2012 [05-02b-12, 05-02c-12] and agreed to refer the recommendation in relation to the "effectiveness of Commission communications" to the sub-Committee on Communications for further consideration.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) Cycle to work scheme

Senator Paddy Burke, Cathaoirleach, raised the issue of members availing of the Cycle to Work scheme which was discussed at the last meeting of the Finance Committee. An update on the eligibility of members under the scheme will be provided at the next meeting.

(ii) Catering facilities

Deputy Byrne raised the matter of catering facilities and the need for a designated catering area for visitors, especially when large groups are visiting the Houses. The Commission noted that arrangements were in place with the National Library and National Museum to cater for large groups during peak times. The matter will be considered further by the sub-Committee on Accommodation.

(iii) Letter to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Mr. Coughlan undertook to circulate to the Commission the letter which issued to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in relation to the assignment of a Liaison Officer from the Comptroller and Auditor General's Office to the Public Accounts Committee.

(iv) JobBridge initiative

The Commission noted that clarifications are being sought from the JobBridge National Steering Group on the issue of assigning interns to members under the initiative.

SEÁN BARRETT, T.D.,
Ceann Comhairle and Chairperson of the Commission.

Dated: