



*Minutes of the Commission
Tuesday, 25th September, 2012*

1. The eighth 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 John Browne, , Mr. Kieran Coughlan, Secretary General, Senator Marc MacSharry, Deputy Dan Neville, Senator Tom Sheahan, Deputy Jack Wall and Senator John Whelan.

Apologies were received from Deputies Catherine Byrne and Frank Feighan.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of 17th July, 2012, were agreed by the Commission.

4. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

- (i) **Update from the Sub-Committee on Accommodation & Catering**

Deputy Wall advised the Commission that the sub-Committee had met last week and was briefed by a catering expert on the catering and bar facilities. Mr. Wall stated that work was progressing well and that the interviews for the Catering Manager post would be held later this week. Deputy Wall mentioned that the sub-Committee was still awaiting a report from OPW on the works to be carried out in the Leinster House complex.

- (ii) **Parliamentary Channel**

The Ceann Comhairle advised members that he had met with the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources on the development of the parliamentary channel. Since then, a meeting has been held at official level and the officials will brief the Minister on their discussions. There is a meeting of the sub-Committee on Communications taking place next week and the sub-Committee will brief to the Commission on any developments.

- (iii) **Committee Resourcing**

The Commission noted that the review of Committee resources, which began before the summer recess, is almost complete and it is expected that the final report will be presented to the Commission at its October meeting.

(iv) JobBridge Initiative

The Commission noted that Department of Social Protection has advised that it is expected that the JobBridge Steering Group will sign-off on a policy decision on the issue of political parties taking on interns through the Initiative at its meeting on 26th September and that political parties or members cannot currently advertise internship opportunities. It was agreed to notify Commission members of the Steering Group's decision as soon as it is known.

(v) Staffing issues

Mr. Coughlan advised members that Mr. Conan McKenna, Assistant Secretary, after 18 years' service in the Service, has transferred to the Department of Justice and Equality arising from a modernisation initiative under the Senior Public Service (SPS) scheme which allows for mobility across the Public Service. Mr. Michael Errity, an Assistant Secretary currently serving in the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, will replace Mr. McKenna under the initiative. The Commission noted its appreciation of the service given by Mr. McKenna and wished him well in his new position.

A general discussion on staffing took place focusing on future appointments at usher grade, the recruitment of the new Food and Beverage Manager and appointments under the 1959 legislation. It was noted that proposed changes to the legislation would come before the Commission for approval for submission to Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform who is the Minister responsible for bringing forward the amending legislation which will also provide for the three year funding for the Commission.

5. UPDATE ON WORKS TO THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF IRELAND

Mr. John McMahon, Commissioner for Public Works, Ms. Colette Davis, Project Management Services, OPW, and the Superintendent joined the meeting.

The Ceann Comhairle advised that as the original decision to facilitate roof repairs to the National Gallery of Ireland was referred to the Dáil Committee on Procedure and Privilege that a decision on any new application permitting the use of the car park would not be taken without reference to the Committees of Procedure and Privilege of both Houses.

Mr. McMahon advised the Commission that the OPW wish to carry out Phase 3 restorative works to the National Gallery over a further period of two years [08-01-12] from March/April 2013 which would necessitate the retention of the compound in the Merrion Street car park of Leinster House up to 2015 approximately. However as circumstances regarding enabling works had changed in the past week, it was now possible to remove the compound for a period of approximately six months, when it is expected the works will be ready to proceed, subject to Commission agreement.

The Ceann Comhairle said it was still not clear as to why the full area of the compound was required for the work proposed, and the OPW should be aware that the consequences of the compound being there poses car parking and aesthetic issues around Merrion Lawn. It is important for the OPW to justify the size of the area required and why it is the only location suitable for the compound.

It was agreed that the compound should be removed without delay and that the OPW should make a fresh application for the works proposed to take place from 2013 and would make a technical submission at a future meeting of the Commission and the Committees on Procedure and Privilege in due course. Following which, the Commission would make a decision on the application.

Mr. McMahon and Ms. Davis withdrew from the meeting.

6. REPORT ON EMAILS' SIZE LIMITS ARISING FROM THE ICT ACCEPTABLE USAGE POLICY FOR MEMBERS

The Commission noted a paper [08-02-12] regarding the operation of the size limits for emails which were introduced by the Commission arising from its consideration of the ICT Acceptable Usage Policy for members. The Commission agreed that the ICT Manager could have discretion to increase the limits as required to assist with business requirements of certain sections.

On the issue of the purchase of media tablet devices for members, it was noted that the tender closing date was approaching and there had been significant expressions of interest in the tender documentation to date.

7. HOUSEKEEPING MATTERS

(a) Correspondence from the Glenree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation regarding the Ulster Covenant centennial commemorations

The Commission noted a letter from the Glenree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation [08-03-12] in relation to the staging of a docudrama to commemorate the centenary of the Ulster Covenant. It was agreed that the Superintendent would meet with the CEO of the Centre, in conjunction with the Communications Unit, to discuss logistical matters and would revert to the Commission with options thereafter.

(b) Correspondence from the Seanad CPP in relation to the return of pre-paid envelopes from former members since the 2002 elections

The Commission noted the contents of a letter from the Seanad CPP [08-03a-12] and agreed that those former members who ceased being members on the occasion of the 2002 elections should be contacted to seek the return of any pre-paid envelopes still in their possession.

(c) Outline Meetings Schedule for remainder of 2012

The Commission noted an indicative meetings schedule to December 2012 [08-03b-12].

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