



*Minutes of the Commission
Tuesday, 23rd October, 2012*

1. The ninth 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), Mr. Kieran Coughlan, Secretary General, Senator Marc MacSharry, Deputy Dan Neville, Senator Tom Sheahan, and Senator John Whelan.

Apologies were received from Senator Paddy Burke, Cathaoirleach of the Seanad (Deputy Chairperson), and Deputy John Browne, Deputy Frank Feighan and Deputy Jack Wall.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of 25th September, 2012, were agreed by the Commission.

4. **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

- (i) **JobBridge Initiative**

The Commission noted that the Department of Social Protection has advised that the JobBridge Steering Group, at its meeting on 26th September, 2012, deemed it not appropriate for political parties or individual members of the Oireachtas to apply as Host Organisations for the JobBridge initiative. The Department is reviewing the eligibility criteria for the scheme and it is expected that the report will be available at the end of the year. It is understood that the terms and conditions of the scheme, including eligibility criteria for political parties and individual members of the Oireachtas, will also be reviewed.

- (ii) **Correspondence from the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation regarding the Ulster Covenant centennial commemorations**

Members noted that the Superintendent and the Head of Communications had met with a representative from the Glencree Centre and plans are underway to host the docudrama in a nearby location in early November.

5. UPADTE FROM THE SUB-COMMITTEES

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

The Commission was provided with an update on the following matters:

- (a) The sub-Committee is awaiting a report from the OPW on essential works required in the Leinster House complex and it is understood the report is nearing completion. The sub-Committee will meet to discuss the report as soon as it is received and will provide an update for the next meeting of the Commission.
- (b) A recruitment process for the new Food and Beverage Manager is now complete and the successful candidate will commence employment on 30th October, 2012.

(ii) Update from the Sub-Committee on Communications

The Commission heard that sub-Committee met on 2nd October, 2012, and discussed the following matters:

- (a) Update on the development of a parliamentary channel:
It is expected that the Ceann Comhairle will meet with the Minister for Communications, Energy & Natural Resources shortly when it is hoped progress will be made on the issue of RTE's proposed fees for a pilot channel. The Minister was presented with a copy of the broadcasting expert's report previously and meetings have also been taking place at official level to try to progress the matter. The Ceann Comhairle also met with Sky and it is hoped that progress will be made for Sky to also host a pilot parliamentary channel.
- (b) Communications Strategy 2012-2014 and Value for Money Report on Communications Strategy 2007-2009:
The sub-Committee noted the Communications Strategy and the Value for Money Report. Members put forward various proposals in relation to the Communications Strategy and a paper is being prepared for the next meeting of the sub-Committee on these proposals. The sub-Committee will review the Communications Strategy every 6 months. The Commission noted the work of the Communications Unit in relation to refuting misleading media reports relating to members' pay and expenses.
- (c) Strategic Plan 2010-2012 – Progress Report from the Secretary General 2011:
The sub-Committee noted Progress Report and agreed to revisit the report every 3 months, to examine its contents in more detail and receive updates on various areas, following which the sub-Committee will report back to the Commission.
- (d) Office-holders Satisfaction Survey 2012 – effectiveness of commission communications:
The sub-Committee noted the survey. The Commission agreed with the suggestion that Commission members could address their party's parliamentary party meetings on a monthly basis to improve communications from the Commission to members.

The Commission noted the updates provided by the sub-Committees.

6. REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

(i) Draft Financial Report for the period 1 January – 30 September 2012

The Commission noted a financial report for the quarter ended 30 September 2012 [09-02-12]. It was noted that, of 68.38 vacancies in place, 49 of those vacancies will not be filled due to the moratorium on recruitment. It was agreed that the financial and performance information to end of September 2012 on the budget should be made public by publishing it on the Oireachtas website.

(ii) Statement of Estimates of Expenditure for the period 1st January – 31st December 2013

The Commission had before it for consideration:

- (a) Summary Statement of Estimate for 2013 [09-02b-12],
- (b) Summary table placing the Estimate in the context of 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012 outturns [09-02c-12], and
- (c) Explanatory note on the scope of each subhead [09-02d-12].

The Commission approved the Statement of Estimates 2013 and noted the Estimate overview, summary table and explanatory note. It was noted that the Estimate will be presented to the Dáil on Thursday, 25th October, 2012, for noting by way of motion, in accordance with the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2009.

It was noted that negotiations are continuing at official level on the 3 year budget allocation for 2013 – 2015 inclusive but there has been no indication of the allocation to date from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The Commission noted that there is an increase of €3.69 million in the Estimates for 2013 over the projected outturn for 2012 to take account of the costs associated with the EU Presidency, Committee inquiries and the development of a parliamentary channel. In the absence of the Minister for Finance's Representative on the Commission, Deputy Neville was nominated to move the motion in the Dáil.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Commission welcomed a note for information previously circulated in relation to Ushers setting out their duties, the numbers in place and the arrangements for future appointments. It was agreed that the issue of ushers and security procedures would be discussed at a future meeting of the Commission, and that the CPP would also have a role in relation to the matter.

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

Dated: