



*Minutes of the Commission
Thursday, 18th April, 2013*

1. The second meeting of the Commission of 2013 took place at 12.00 p.m. in Room 2, Leinster House.

2. **MEMBERS PRESENT**

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

Apologies were received from Senator Tom Sheahan.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of 19th February, 2013, were agreed by the Commission.

4. **UPDATES FROM SUB-COMMITTEES**

- (a) **Sub-Committee on Accommodation and Catering**

Deputy Wall advised that, at its meeting on 12 March 2013, the sub-Committee on Accommodation and Catering discussed the OPW proposals for restoration works to the Leinster House complex. The sub-Committee had agreed that the proposals should be presented by OPW to the Commission and, as the item was already on the Commission's agenda, further discussion would take place when the item was reached.

- (b) **Sub-Committee on Communications**

The Ceann Comhairle advised that he was still pursuing RTÉ regarding their intention to charge for hosting the pilot parliamentary channel in view of RTÉ's legislative requirement to host such a channel on the digital terrestrial television (Saorview) platform. It was agreed an update on this and other matters relating to the development of the parliamentary channel would be provided at the next meeting. It was also agreed that the matter of regional coverage of parliament would be discussed in terms of the coverage on local radio stations and in local newspapers.

The Commission noted the update from the sub-Committees.

5. UPDATE FROM THE LEGAL ADVISOR REGARDING THE APPEAL OF THE CALELLY CASE

The Commission noted correspondence from the Office of the Parliamentary Legal Adviser providing an update on the case of *Callely v. Moylan & Others*.

6. REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Senator Paddy Burke, Cathaoirleach and Chair of the Finance Committee, presented a report from the Finance Committee on the outturn for the financial year 2012. The Commission noted that total expenditure to the end of December 2012 was €105.5m as against a budget of €115.6m, resulting in an underspend of just over €10.1m. The Commission noted that the underspend arose as a result of careful monitoring of budgets and expenditure by the Commission and the Service.

The report also contained recommendations to recover the amounts owed to the bars and restaurant. The Commission agreed that in order to avail of the credit facility in future, members and former members will be required to provide their credit card details to both the restaurant and bars and any outstanding balances will be applied to the relevant card after a period of 60 days.

It was also agreed that members would be advised of the new arrangements which are being introduced for the convenience of members. The Commission further agreed that persons with outstanding balances would be written to advising them that the balance must be paid within a 60 day period and that no further credit could be extended if the balance was not cleared. The Commission asked to be kept informed of progress on the matter.

The Commission noted the report from the Finance Committee, and the revised projections for the 3 year budget 2013 – 2015.

7. CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE REVENUE COMMISSIONERS CONCERNING THE AUDIT OF THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS

The Commission noted the update provided of the correspondence to date between the Service and the Revenue Commissioners regarding the full audit of the Service which commenced on 5th March 2013 and asked to be kept informed of developments on the matter.

8. STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION REPORT FROM THE SECRETARY GENERAL – 2012 PROGRESS REPORT

Mr. Coughlan presented his progress report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan as required under Section 16(1)(k) of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts. Mr. Coughlan highlighted that there has been a lot of activities undertaken during the year notwithstanding the reduction in staff across the Service and it was noted that the Service compares well against other parliaments in a benchmark comparison exercise contained in the report. Mr. Coughlan also mentioned the need to update the legislation dating back to 1959 to allow for modernisation of the Service's staffing structure.

9. OUTLINE WORK PROGRAMME AND MEETINGS SCHEDULE

The Commission noted the outline work programme and indicative meetings schedule to July 2013.

10. PRESENTATION BY THE OPW ON PROPOSED WORKS FOR THE PERIOD 2013 - 2016

Mr. John Cahill, Senior Architect from OPW, provided an update for members on proposed works to be carried out to the Leinster House complex between 2013 and 2016. The Commission agreed that the project for 2013 and 2014 should proceed to planning stages for the proposed enabling works and also that the proposed work should proceed. The Commission also agreed that the OPW Commissioner would attend the next Commission meeting to provide assurances that the Leinster House complex remained a priority for the OPW in terms of providing funding so that, as a historic building of national importance, Georgian Leinster House would not be left to deteriorate further before the proposed necessary restorative works take place.

The meeting adjourned at 2.05 p.m.

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

Dated: