



*Minutes of the Commission
Thursday, 27th June, 2013*

1. The fourth 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, Senator Tom Sheahan, Deputy Jack Wall and Senator John Whelan.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of 28th May, 2013, were agreed by the Commission.

4. **UPDATES FROM THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON ACCOMMODATION AND CATERING**

Deputy Jack Wall, Chairman of the sub-Committee, provided an update on the recent improvements made to catering facilities. In relation to future proposals for the operation of the catering facilities in the bars and restaurants, it was agreed a sub-group comprising of members of the Commission's sub-Committee on Catering and Accommodation and the Joint sub-Committee on Administration would be formed to agree proposals which would be brought before the Commission for approval.

It was agreed that the Commission would be kept informed of proposals once the Oireachtas Síopa has been vacated by the current operators.

It was also agreed the protocol relating to the use of the AV Room should be re-circulated and adhered to by all users.

5. **UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PARLIAMENTARY CHANNEL**

The Commission noted an update from the sub-Committee on Communications regarding the delivery on a phased introduction of a "produced channel" with effect from September 2013. Following the procurement of specialist channel content management technology and the establishment of new work functions in the Oireachtas Broadcasting Unit, the content of the channel will be captioned in plain English and contextualised to allow for the promotion of other material to be broadcast each day through the use of a ticker on the bottom of the screen and social media information along the right side of the screen.

The Ceann Comhairle advised the Commission that he intends to write to the Director General of RTÉ in the context of the upgrade of the parliamentary channel and RTÉ's obligations under the Broadcasting Act 2009 to facilitate enhanced coverage of parliamentary proceedings on the digital platform, Saorview.

6. REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Senator Paddy Burke, Cathaoirleach and Chair of the Finance Committee, presented a report from the Committee on the outturn for the period 1st January to 31st May 2013. The Commission noted that total expenditure to the end of May was €41.2m against a budget of €44.6m. However if payments due are factored in, 'real' expenditure to date totals €43.4m, which is only €700,000 below budget. The bulk of the difference is due to pay and pensions, Members' Allowances and invoice timing and contractual commitments, most of which will be spent during the year.

The Commission noted that it is necessary to have the Estimate noted in the Dáil before it goes into recess in July in view of (i) the Government Decision to bring forward budget day, and (ii) the statutory obligation on the Commission to present its Statement of Estimates to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform 30 days before the Minister presents his white paper on the Budget. The draft Estimates for 2014 were circulated for information and it was agreed to consider them in further detail at the next meeting in July.

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

Mr. John McMahon, Commissioner, Mr. John Cahill, Assistant Principal Architect, and Mr. Ciarán McGahon, Senior Architects, OPW, gave a presentation on the potential implications of the upcoming works to the National Gallery of Ireland. Mr. McMahon stressed the importance of the works as the Government has prioritised the funds so that the works can be completed in time for the Gallery to be a 2016 memorial project and also for tourism reasons as parts of the Gallery are currently closed. Following the presentation, a discussion took place on the OPW request to access the part of the Oireachtas car park adjoining Leinster Lawn which had been used during Phase 1 of the works where up to 60 alternative car parking spaces have been provided. The Ceann Comhairle advised that this arrangement would not be a suitable working arrangement at this time considering the forthcoming disruption to traffic resulting from the Luas extension works nearby.

It was agreed that the OPW would revert in the near future with a report on the implications of applying for planning permission to use Leinster Lawn as a temporary car park for the duration of the works as was done during the construction of LH 2000. It was considered that, in view of the financial investment in the project, the employment it would generate and the traffic disruption arising from the Luas works, it is hoped the relevant authority would accede to the planning request.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (i) Correspondence from the Standards in Public Office Commission

The Commission noted the correspondence from the Standards in Public Office Commission and agreed to refer it to the Members' Interest Committees for consideration and that the Committees should report back to the Commission on completion of their consideration.

- (ii) Information Note on the salaries of the various grades of Ushers

The Commission noted the information note provided.

- (iii) Best Energy Management Team National Award

The Ceann Comhairle advised the Commission that the Service's Energy Management Team has won the OPW's "Optimising Power @ Work" National Award for the Best Energy Management Team out of over 290 energy management teams nationwide. It was agreed a letter of congratulations would be sent on behalf of the Commission.

The meeting adjourned at 1.45 p.m.

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

Dated: