



*Minutes of the Commission  
Tuesday, 12<sup>th</sup> November, 2013*

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

2. **NEW MEMBER**

The Ceann Comhairle welcomed Deputy Bernard Durkan, who was appointed to the Commission on 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2013 in place of Deputy Catherine Byrne. The Ceann Comhairle paid tribute to Deputy Byrne for her work on the Commission since her appointment in 2011 until her resignation on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

3. **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Deputy Seán Barrett, Ceann Comhairle (Chairperson), Deputy John Browne, Mr. Bernard Durkan, Deputy Frank Feighan, Deputy Dan Neville, Senator Marc MacSharry and Senator Tom Sheahan.

Apologies were received from Senator Paddy Burke, Cathaoirleach of the Seanad (Deputy Chairperson) and Senator John Whelan.

4. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The minutes of the meetings of 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> July, 2013, were agreed by the Commission.

5. **UPDATE BY THE PARLIAMENTARY LEGAL ADVISOR ON VARIOUS LEGAL CASES AND OTHER MATTERS**

The Commission noted the update provided including that a settlement had been made in relation to costs for a case arising from the Mini-CTC inquiry.

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

The Commission heard an update on the developments undertaken during recent months whereby a new-look Oireachtas Channel has been rolled out. Capital investment in equipment has also taken place resulting in the introduction of high definition cameras in the Dáil chamber with plans for similar upgrades for the Committee rooms and the Seanad chamber. In addition, new plain English captioning has increased the quality of production of the channel to a level comparative with other parliamentary and public information channels in other jurisdictions. Future plans include the purchase of a "channel in a box" solution which would allow for a ticker and side panel of information for viewers, similar to that seen on news channels. Efforts are continuing to increase the carriage of the channel on the Saorview, Sky and eircom platforms. The Commission noted the update provided.

## **7. REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

In the absence of the Cathaoirleach and Chair of the Finance Committee, Deputy Neville presented a report from the Finance Committee on expenditure to end September 2013. Expenditure to the end of September was €73.5m which is a variance against budget of €6.4m. Based on the current information the projected outturn for 2013 is approximately €106m which will be an underspend of €3.3m.

The Finance Committee noted that the recent Dáil reform initiatives will have financial implications as will the proposed banking inquiry, neither of which were factored into the current three year budget as they were unknown at the time of negotiation. The report was noted.

The Commission approved:

- (i) the virement between subheads where savings are anticipated to meet excesses occurring provided that no virement occur in the case of subheads 2(d), 2(e) and 2(h);
- (ii) that authority to vire additional funds between subheads be delegated by the Commission to the Assistant Secretary Corporate & Members Services in respect of expenditure incurred before 31 December 2013; and
- (iii) to formally note the final position in relation to virement as soon as may be following the closure of the 2013 Account.

## **8. CORRESPONDENCE**

- (i) Letters from the Members Interests Committees of Dáil and Seanad Éireann

The Commission noted the correspondence received from the Members' Interest Committees of both Houses regarding correspondence received from the Standards in Public Office Commission.

- (ii) Correspondence from the Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform

The Commission noted that a response had been received from the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform in response to the Commission's letter on responsibility for the provision of remuneration and supports to Members. It was noted that the Minister's letter confirmed that the Commission has no role in relation to setting the level of salaries, allowances or other entitlements of Members of the Houses.

## **9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- (i) Membership of the Print Users Council and the sub-Committee on Accommodation & Catering

It was agreed that Deputy Bernard Durkan be appointed to the print Users' Council and the sub-Committee on Accommodation & Catering in place of Deputy Catherine Byrne.

- (ii) Note on the launch of the L&RS online public access catalogue

The Commission noted the Library & Research Service's (L&RS) will launch its online public access catalogue (OPAC) on 27 November which will provide the public with access to documents laid since 1922 to date and to historical pre-1922 L&RS collections with over 80,000 reports, pamphlets, maps and other documents available as a public resource.

- (iii) Eligibility of certain expenses under the Parliamentary Representation Allowance

Senator MacSharry raised the issue of eligibility of expenses under the Public Representation Allowance of certain office costs incurred by Senators and asked for the matter to be raised at the appropriate forum. The Chairman advised members that the Commission had no role in such matters and that it was a matter for the Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform.

The meeting adjourned at 1.35 p.m.

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

Dated: