



*Minutes of the Commission
Tuesday, 10th December, 2013*

1. The eighth 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 Chairperson), Deputy Bernard Durkan, Deputy Frank Feighan, Deputy Dan Neville, Senator Marc MacSharry, Deputy Jack Wall and Senator John Whelan.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The minutes of the meetings of 12th November, 2013, were agreed by the Commission.

4. **REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Senator Paddy Burke, Cathaoirleach and Chair of the Finance Committee, presented a report from the Finance Committee on expenditure to end October 2013. It was noted that, in this first year of the current three year budget, expenditure to the end of October was €81.2m which is a variance against budget of €7.9m of which €1.5m relates to pay and €6.4m relates to non-pay.

Based on current information, the projection for the 2013 outturn is approx. €106m which would represent an underspend of €3.3m. It was noted that the recent Dáil reform initiatives agreed by the House will have an impact and it is estimated that they will cost the Service over €800k per annum. There will also be costs associated with the proposed banking inquiry which are difficult to quantify until the Terms of Reference are known. It was also noted that these issues were not factored into the three year budget as they were unknown at the time of negotiation.

The Commission noted the report. It was also noted that the local newspaper and radio station service was under review and that a report on the matter would be brought before the next meeting.

5. **AUDIT GUIDELINES FOR MEMBERS**

The Commission had before it the Revised Audit Guidelines for the Public Representation Allowance (PRA) for Members and a letter from Dáil CPP which referred three matters for the Commission to consider relating to the PRA. The revised Guidelines provide additional clarification on allowable expenses and documentation requirements. Additional changes arising from issues identified by the independent auditor were also included. Those changes also addressed

the matters referenced in the letter to the Commission from Dáil CPP. A discussion on the revised Guidelines took place. Senator MacSharry raised the issue of eligibility under the Parliamentary Representation Allowance of certain office costs incurred by Senators. The Chairman advised members that the Commission had no role in such matters, that the Seanad CPP could raise the matter again with the Joint sub-Committee on Administration or directly with the Minister for Public Expenditure & Reform who has responsibility for that matter.

Following a voice vote, the Commission agreed to note the guidelines and to approve the circulation of them to Members and also noted the correspondence from Dáil CPP. Senators MacSharry and Whelan asked that their dissension be recorded.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) Annual Statement of Interest for Designated Directors

Members were reminded that, by virtue of being designated directors, they are required to prepare and furnish a statement in writing of our interests to the Standards in Public Office Commission in respect of 2013 before 31 January 2014.

(ii) An Síopa

The Ceann Comhairle raised the matter of An Síopa and asked what the plans were for its future. It was agreed that a report would be brought to the next meeting, including the options for direct access from Kildare Street.

(iii) Resources in Committee Secretariat

Deputy Durkan raised the matter of resources in the Committee Secretariat. It was agreed the matter would be considered during the Commission's consideration of the Annual Resource Plan in early 2014.

The meeting adjourned at 1.39 p.m.

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

Dated: