



Houses of the  
Oireachtas Commission  
Coimisiún Thithe  
an Oireachtais

*Minutes of the Commission  
Tuesday, 21<sup>st</sup> January, 2014*

1. The first meeting of the Commission of 2014 took place at 12.00 p.m. in Room 2, Leinster House.

2. **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Deputy Seán Barrett, Ceann Comhairle (Chairperson), Senator Paddy Burke, Cathaoirleach of the Seanad (Deputy Chairperson), Deputy Bernard Durkan, Deputy Frank Feighan, Deputy Dan Neville, Senator Marc MacSharry, Senator Tom Sheahan, Deputy Jack Wall and Senator John Whelan.

Apologies were received from Deputy John Browne.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The minutes of the meetings of 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2013, were agreed by the Commission.

4. **CORRESPONDENCE**

- (a) Letter from Chairman of Working Group of Committee Chairmen (WGCC) re: Dáil Reform measures and implications for sectoral committees.

The Commission noted a letter from the Chairman of WGCC regarding recent reform measures and their implications for sectoral committees. It was agreed that the Ceann Comhairle would write to the Chairman inviting him and a small delegation from the WGCC to meet with a delegation from the Commission to discuss the issues raised in more detail. It was noted that it is proposed to address the staff resources raised in the context of the Annual Resource Plan which will be considered at the next meeting of the Commission.

- (b) Letter from Dáil CPP to request the Commission to consider that the audit of members' claims under the PRA should be carried out by staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service

The Commission noted the correspondence and that a report on various options will be brought before the Commission in February following consultation. It was also noted that the current contract is not due to expire until the end of the year.

- (c) Letter from OPW regarding the National Gallery of Ireland refurbishment

The Commission noted the correspondence and the update provided. It was agreed that the parking designated in the Moat area would be restricted for fire safety purposes until it was ascertained if those spaces could be re-allocated at the grass area by the curved wall in the Merrion Street car park. It was agreed

that the Superintendent would liaise with the OPW and that the OPW would make a presentation on the matter at the next meeting.

## **5. FUTURE OF AN SÍOPA**

The Commission noted the update provided and that a business case for the development of An Síopa will be presented at the next meeting.

## **6. REPORT ON COVERAGE OF OIREACTHAS BUSINESS**

The Commission noted the information note provided on the local newspaper and radio station service. It was agreed that the Communications Unit would continue to pursue local radio stations to broaden the base of stations that broadcast the weekly report until Easter, at which point the continuation of the service will be reviewed. In relation to local newspapers, it was agreed to continue to rollout the delivery of the weekly reports to the regional areas not currently serviced in line with demand.

It was also agreed to that the apparent decrease in coverage of Seanad business on Oireachtas Report would be raised with RTÉ and to bring a report on the matter to Seanad CPP.

## **7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **(i) Annual Statement of Interest for Designated Directors**

Members were reminded of their obligation to return a statement of interests for 2013 to the Standards in Public Office Commission and the Ceann Comhairle before 31 January 2014.

### **(ii) Future meeting dates for Commission meetings**

The Commission noted a list of indicative dates for Commission meetings up to the summer recess as well as an outline work programme.

### **(iii) Transparency regarding members' salaries and expenses**

It was agreed that a draft booklet with such details would be considered at the next meeting of the sub-Committee on Communications. It was also agreed that the Head of Communications would be asked to present options on how this information should be communicated publicly.

### **(iv) Eligibility criteria under the Public Representation Allowance (PRA)**

In relation to the extension of items allowable for Senators under the PRA, it was agreed that the Commission would write to the Joint sub-Committee on Administration to ask it to examine the matter, as the Commission has no role in this area.

(v) Opening hours of restaurants

It was agreed that catering facilities would be made available outside of regular opening hours on non-sitting days to facilitate visiting delegations when required.

The meeting adjourned at 1.32 p.m.

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

Dated: