



Houses of the
Oireachtas Commission
Coimisiún Thithe
an Oireachtais

*Minutes of the Commission
Tuesday, 15th April, 2014*

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

Apologies were received from Deputy John Browne and Senator Marc MacSharry.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of 11 March, 2014, were agreed by the Commission.

Matters Arising

Members noted the process involved in the Revenue audit of the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Members also underlined the importance, from an efficiency perspective, of streamlining the process involved in the audit of members' claims under the Public Representation Allowance.

4. **UPDATE ON AGED CATERING DEBTORS**

The Commission noted an update on the aged catering debtors listing the outstanding balances for Oireachtas bars and restaurants customer accounts.

The Commission were informed that the vast majority of Members settle their catering accounts within the normal credit limits.

The Commission agreed a multi-step approach to deal with the outstanding accounts, to be implemented as soon as possible. It was decided that the maximum credit period would be one month from the date of the sale transaction. Where accounts remain outstanding after one month, no further credit would be extended until the account is paid in full. The Commission requested that payment options including deductions from salary or pension payments, as appropriate, be explored.

The Commission requested the Facilities Management Unit to make direct contact with the persons concerned with a view to agreeing a schedule of payments to pay off outstanding balances. It also requested that a progress report on this matter be brought to the Commission for consideration at its next meeting.

5. BRIEFING ON SUPREME COURT DECISION IN CALLELY Vs MOYLAN AND OTHERS

The Commission received a briefing on the main points of the Supreme Court judgment in *Callely Vs Moylan and others* by the Parliamentary Legal Adviser.

The Commission noted that the Supreme Court, by a majority of four to three, allowed the appeal in the matter.

The Commission requested the Parliamentary Legal Adviser to prepare an overview briefing paper on the judgment for consideration by the Commission at its next meeting. The Commission would give further consideration to the judgment to ensure that the rules and procedures of the Houses are in accordance with the Court's findings.

In accordance with its statutory obligation to oversee ongoing expenditure by the Houses, including the efficient use of public resources, the Commission agreed that an application for an order for the legal costs incurred by the Houses in connection with the legal proceedings would be made to the Court. It would be a matter for the Court to determine the amount of costs payable.

6. UPDATE ON THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF IRELAND REFURBISHMENT WORKS

The Commission received an update from the Office of Public Works (OPW) on the refurbishment works underway to the National Gallery of Ireland.

The Commission expressed concern that the hoarding erected on the site boundary between Leinster House and the National Gallery, and the traffic congestion caused by the displacement of car park spaces, may impede access for Emergency Services to Leinster House. OPW maintained that access for Emergency Services was not impeded by the hoarding.

The Commission made it clear that the hoarding could remain in place solely as long as actual works which required it were taking place and no longer. If such works did not commence imminently the hoarding would have to be removed.

The Commission requested that a written note be provided to the Superintendent, for the information of the Commission, setting out precise details of the work that required the hoarding to be in place.

7. UPDATE ON THE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

The Commission received an update from the Communications Unit on the Communications Strategy.

The Commission noted that the focus for 2014 includes making further progress in developing a Parliamentary TV Channel, implementing a social and digital media strategy and developing an online Oireachtas Education Programme.

The Parliamentary TV Channel will broadcast live and recorded proceedings of the Dáil, Seanad and Committees as well as educational content and edited proceedings from the Northern Ireland Assembly and the European Parliament.

8. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE OF THE FORMER SIOPA

The Commission considered a letter from Deputy Timmy Dooley regarding the proposed development of the site of the former Siopa in Leinster House as agreed at the last meeting. The Commission also considered a letter from the Proprietor of Petit Café Food Company, Kildare Street concerning the same matter.

The Commission agreed that clarification of this matter would be conveyed.

9. SUBMISSION ON THE GENERAL SCHEME OF THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACTHAS COMMISSION (AMENDMENT) BILL 2014

The Commission noted a letter from the Clerk to the Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform in relation to the Commission's submission on the General Scheme of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Bill 2014.

10. RECOMMENDATION ON APPOINTMENT OF CLERK-ASSISTANT OF DÁIL ÉIREANN

In accordance with section 5 of the Staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Act 1959 (as amended by the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Act 2003), the Ceann Comhairle consulted with the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission on his recommendation to An Taoiseach that Mr. Peter Finnegan, Assistant Secretary, be appointed Clerk-Assistant of Dáil Éireann.

11. RECOMMENDATION ON APPOINTMENT OF CLERK-ASSISTANT OF SEANAD ÉIREANN

In accordance with section 6 of the Staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Act 1959 (as amended by the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Act 2003), the Cathaoirleach consulted with the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission on his recommendation to An Taoiseach that Mr. Martin Groves, Principal Officer, be appointed Clerk-Assistant of Seanad Éireann.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 2.05 p.m.

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

Dated: