



*Minutes of the Commission Meeting  
Tuesday, 24 June, 2014*

1. The fifth 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 John Browne, Deputy Bernard Durkan, Deputy Frank Feighan, Senator Marc MacSharry, Deputy Dan Neville, Deputy Jack Wall and Senator John Whelan.

Apologies were received from Senator Tom Sheahan.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of 13 May 2014 were agreed by the Commission.

4. **MATTERS ARISING**

The Commission agreed to give further consideration to the proposed development of the site of the former Siopa at its next meeting.

5. **DRAFT ESTIMATE FOR 2015**

The Commission had before it the Draft Estimate for 2015.

The Commission undertook initial consideration of the Draft Estimate. It noted that the Estimate for 2015 was €112,279m which was an increase of €3.6m on the Estimate for 2014. The increase was mainly attributable to costs associated with the Oireachtas banking inquiry, ICT licensing agreements and upgrading of the voting and sound systems in the chambers. The additional expenditure arising was offset to some degree by a reduction of €1m in members' pay and €0.5m in the grant in aid in respect of Ciste Pinsean.

The Commission noted that the sub-Committee on Finance will consider each expenditure allocation in the Draft Estimate in detail at its next meeting, and will report thereon to the Commission at its meeting in July.

The Commission noted that the form of the Estimate is prescribed by the Commission Acts and as such the categories of expenditure set out in the Estimates can only be changed by legislation.

The Commission agreed to give further consideration to the Draft Estimate, with a view to approval, at its next meeting.

**6. ESTABLISHMENT OF A WORKING GROUP TO REVIEW STANDING ORDERS ARISING FROM THE SUPREME COURT JUDGMENT IN *CALLELY v. MOYLAN AND OTHERS***

Arising from the briefing on the Supreme Court judgment in the case of *Callely v. Moylan and others* at its last meeting, the Commission agreed a recommendation on the establishment of a working group to review the procedures and Standing Orders of both Houses, to determine any necessary changes and to make recommendations as appropriate.

The Commission agreed to forward its recommendation to the Committees on Procedure and Privileges of the Dáil and Seanad for their consideration and implementation as appropriate.

**7. REVIEW OF CATERING SERVICES IN THE HOUSES**

The Commission received and noted an update on the provision and usage of catering services in the Houses.

The Commission expressed appreciation for the enhancements introduced in the catering services over recent times. With a view to ensuring that the service is provided as cost effectively and efficiently as possible, it requested that options for operational savings be prepared for consideration at its meeting in the autumn.

In developing options for consideration the Commission also requested that the needs of the Houses and the needs and preferences of members, staff and other users of the service be taken into consideration.

**8. UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENT OF A PARLIAMENTARY TV CHANNEL**

The Commission considered a business case for the development of a parliamentary channel. It noted that the sub-Committee on Communications had considered the proposal in detail over a number of meetings.

The Commission noted that the key objective of developing an Oireachtas channel was to make the work of the Oireachtas more accessible by providing live television coverage of the debates and proceedings of the Houses and their committees.

The Commission was informed that the Channel will broadcast live and a replay of the daily proceedings of the Houses and committees. A memorandum of understanding has also been agreed which allows the broadcast of content from the European Parliament. The Commission was also informed that in the future a similar arrangement would be made so that edited proceedings of the Northern Ireland Assembly will be provided. Broadcasts will also include educational content and archived material.

The Houses of the Oireachtas will provide the technical feeds to the networks. The networks will, in turn, make the Channel available to their subscribers as part of their TV service.

It was noted that this was an efficient and effective way to provide live coverage of the daily proceedings of the Houses and will significantly increase the number of people who will have access to televised parliamentary debates and proceedings.

The Commission noted that the relevant committees in the Houses will be briefed on the Oireachtas Channel and information sessions on the Channel will be organised for members and staff prior to its launch.

The Commission approved the business case and budget for the Channel for 2014 and 2015.

It requested that a proposal on establishing an editorial board in the Houses to oversee guidelines and protocols governing the broadcasting of proceedings be prepared for the Commission's consideration at its next meeting.

The Commission also approved the use of Oireachtas branding in the committee rooms to enhance the coverage of proceedings.

## **9. STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION REPORT TO INCLUDE THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE**

The Commission had before it a progress report on the implementation of the strategic plan, to include the annual report of the Audit Committee, as required under Section 16(1)(k) of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts. The strategic plan implementation report forms part of the Commission's annual report for presentation to the Houses.

The Commission noted the progress report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan. It also approved the draft annual report on its activities in 2013 to be laid before the Houses in accordance with section 6 of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Act 2003.

## **10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

(1) The Commission noted the following:

- (a) Proposed Temporary Car Parking Arrangements at Leinster House;
- (b) Value for Money and Policy Review Report on the Library and Research Service;
- (c) Report of the Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform on the Draft General Scheme of the Houses of the Oireachtas (Amendment) Bill 2014;
- (d) Report from Standards in Public Office Commission: Annual Statements of Expenditure of Exchequer and related Auditor's Reports.

(2) Parliamentary Allowances:

Senator MacSharry requested that further consideration be given to (i) the categories of allowable expenses, that apply to Senators, under the Parliamentary Representation Allowance, and (ii) the rate of allowance payable to Senators as members of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission.

It was noted that the Commission had decided to examine matters related to implementation of the system for members' allowance under the Public Representation Allowance in the autumn, as agreed at its meeting on 11 March 2014.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 1.50 p.m.

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

Dated: