



*Minutes of Commission Meeting
Tuesday, 21 October, 2014*

1. The ninth 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 and Deputy Dan Neville.

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

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of 8 October 2014 were agreed by the Commission.

4. **MATTERS ARISING FROM LAST MEETING**

The Commission considered and noted correspondence from Minister of State Gerald Nash, and the response issued by the Secretariat to the Minister, in connection with the legal proceedings initiated against members of the Committee of Public Accounts and others.

It was agreed that a follow-up letter would issue to members who had not responded to the letter from the Commission issued on 13 October in this matter.

5. **REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Senator Paddy Burke, Cathaoirleach and Chair of the Finance Committee, presented a report from the Finance Committee on expenditure for the period January to August 2014. It was noted that total estimated expenditure for the current year was €108.3m with actual expenditure incurred to end of August being €65.7m.

Recommendation to the Commission

The Finance Committee made the following recommendation to the Commission:

In order to achieve savings in parliamentary printing and circulation costs the Committee recommends to the Commission that, subject to Members' requirements, the Houses move to electronic only publishing and circulating in respect of certain parliamentary documents such as Bills, Amendment Lists, Acts, Order Papers and Committee Reports.

The Commission agreed with the recommendation. It further agreed that the recommendation would be implemented in a manner that would allow members, on request, to continue to receive parliamentary documents in paper format.

6. GUIDELINES IN RESPECT OF OIREACTHAS INQUIRY LEGAL COSTS

The Commission had before it revised draft Guidelines for the information of witnesses and others in respect of the recoupment of legal costs incurred in relation to Oireachtas inquiries, as prescribed by the Oireachtas (Inquiries, Privileges and Procedures) Act 2013.

The Commission noted that a consultation process on the guidelines had been undertaken in accordance with the legislation.

The Commission approved the Guidelines on Inquiry Legal Costs to be issued in accordance with section 46 of the Houses of the Oireachtas (Inquiries, Privileges and Procedures) Act 2013.

7. PARLIAMENTARY INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME IN THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACTHAS

The Commission was briefed by the Superintendent on the operation of the Parliamentary Internship Programme.

The Commission noted that, in future, interns would have the opportunity to provide formal feedback on the Programme.

The Commission requested that a review of the Internship Programme be undertaken by the Joint sub-Committee on Administration to include options for expanding the Programme. It also requested that opportunities for students from other EU countries to participate in the Programme, with reciprocal arrangements for internship placements in EU national parliaments and the European Parliament, be considered in the review.

The Commission asked that an information paper on the outcome of the review be prepared for consideration at a future meeting.

8. REIMBURSEMENT OF TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION EXPENSES UNDER THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDARD ALLOWANCE

The Commission was briefed on the Travel and Accommodation Allowance payable to members in accordance with the relevant regulations.

9. AUDIT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Commission made the following appointments to the Audit Committee to fill vacancies arising in the membership of the Committee:

- (i) Deputy Joe Costello, in accordance with section 14A(3)(b) of the Commission Acts, to fill the vacancy arising following the resignation of Deputy Kevin Humphreys on his appointment as Minister of State;
- (ii) Mr. Charles Hearne, in accordance with section 14A(3)(d) of the Commission Acts, to fill the vacancy arising following the retirement of Mr. Padraic Donlon from the Service.

10. CORRESPONDENCE

Houses of the Oireachtas Service Policy on Communicating with Visiting Members the Deaf Community

The Commission considered a letter from Senator Mark Daly concerning the establishment of a policy in the Houses for communicating with visiting members of the deaf community.

The Commission noted that the Service is currently working towards developing a policy in this matter as a key element of its disability awareness policy.

It further noted that, on receipt of advance notice from members, appropriate arrangements are put in place as required to facilitate communication with visiting members of the deaf community, including sign language interpretation.

It was agreed that the Secretariat would issue a reply in this matter on behalf of the Commission.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 1.30 p.m.

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

Dated: