



Houses of the
Oireachtas Commission
Coimisiún Thithe
an Oireachtais

*Minutes of Commission Meeting
Tuesday 24 March 2015*

1. The second meeting of the Commission of 2015 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 Olivia Mitchell, Deputy Dan Neville, Senator Tom Sheahan, Deputy Jack Wall 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 10 February 2015 were agreed by the Commission.

4. **PROGRAMME OF STRUCTURAL AND UPGRADE WORKS FOR GEORGIAN LEINSTER HOUSE**

The Commission was briefed by the Office of Public Works on proposed essential structural and upgrade works for Georgian Leinster House. The focus of the project is to address structural deterioration and to upgrade services in the building.

The Commission noted the necessity to undertake the works. It requested that options and associated costs for the project, including relocating the Parliament to an alternative site to ensure the operational requirements of the Houses are met while essential work is undertaken, be prepared for consideration to ensure that the work will have minimal impact on the sittings of the Houses and the core parliamentary functions and operations.

The Commission was of the view that the works should be scheduled to commence when the current Dáil is dissolved as the dissolution period would be the most appropriate time to relocate the Dail and Seanad chambers temporarily to ensure minimal disruption to the business of the Houses and to members in the performance of their parliamentary functions.

5. REPORTING AND PRESENTATION OF INFORMATION RELATING TO MEMBERS OF THE HOUSES

The Commission was briefed on the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

The Commission requested that proposals be prepared to improve the quality and timeliness of information on the activities of Members on the Oireachtas website in order to allow greater access to information and thereby reduce the requirements for interested persons to request information under the Freedom of Information Act.

6. UPDATE ON THE OPERATION OF THE OIREACHTAS CHANNEL

The Commission received an update on the operation of the Oireachtas Television Channel which began live broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings in September 2014.

The Commission requested that proposals on marketing the Channel and weekly broadcast schedule, to raise awareness of the parliamentary agenda and to improve public information on and engagement with the parliamentary process, be prepared for consideration at its next meeting.

The Commission also agreed to refer matters relating to television broadcasting of the Channel to the sub-Committee on Communications for further consideration.

7. PROVISION OF SECRETARIAL FACILITIES TO QUALIFYING PARTY

The Commission approved the provision of a secretarial assistant to the Anti-Austerity Alliance Party in accordance with the Oireachtas (Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices) (Amendment) Act 2014. It requested that the necessary regulations to give effect to the change be prepared for its next meeting.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Crosscare Internship Scheme in the Houses of the Oireachtas

The Commission noted correspondence from Crosscare Migrant Project in relation to the operation of the *Crosscare Internship Scheme* in the Houses. It also considered a note from Senator Averil Power concerning the same matter.

It was agreed that the Secretariat would respond to the correspondence to clarify the matters raised.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 2.00 p.m.

SEÁN BARRETT, T.D.

Ceann Comhairle and Chairperson of the Commission

Dated: