



*Minutes of Commission Meeting
Tuesday 26 May 2015*

1. The fifth 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 John Browne, Deputy Bernard Durkan, Deputy Dan Neville, Senator Tom Sheahan, Deputy Jack Wall and Senator John Whelan.

Apologies were received from Senator Marc MacSharry and Deputy Olivia Mitchell.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The minutes of the meetings of 29 April 2015 and 14 May 2015 were agreed by the Commission.

4. **UPDATE ON CONVERSION OF AN SIOPA PREMISES**

The Commission noted progress on the conversion of An Siopa for use as a souvenir shop for the sale of Houses of the Oireachtas souvenir products. It also noted the options that were being considered for the operation of the shop. It was agreed that the Service would put appropriate arrangements in place to staff and manage the shop.

5. **REQUEST FROM NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND IRELAND FOR USE OF AN SIOPA PREMISES**

The Commission considered a request from the National Council for the Blind Ireland for the use of An Siopa premises for a one month period for the purpose of establishing a temporary shop and information centre. The Council also proposed to use the shop for organised talks from people experiencing sight loss.

The Commission was advised that there are construction works currently underway in redeveloping An Siopa site and fitting out the premises for use as a souvenir shop.

On that basis the Commission decided it was not possible to facilitate the request at this time.

It was agreed that the Secretariat would write to the National Council for the Blind Ireland to clarify the position in this regard.

6. PROGRAMME OF STRUCTURAL AND UPGRADE WORKS FOR GEORGIAN LEINSTER HOUSE

The Commission noted the options being examined by the Office of Public Works (OPW) to accommodate the business of both Houses for the duration of the planned structural and upgrade works to Georgian Leinster House. The OPW have advised that parts of the building will be closed off for the duration of the works, including the Seanad Chamber.

The Commission proposed that the Dáil Chamber, access to which will not be affected by the structural works, could be used for plenary sittings of both the Dáil and the Seanad (at different intervals) for the duration of the project to ensure that the work will have minimal impact on the sittings and business of both Houses and the core parliamentary functions and operations.

The Commission re-stated its view that the works should be scheduled to commence when the current Dáil and Seanad are dissolved as the dissolution period would be the most opportune time to relocate functions and services temporarily to ensure minimal disruption to the business of the Houses and to members in the performance of their parliamentary functions.

Given that the capital expenditure associated with this project will come from the OPW budget, the Commission requested the OPW to draw up a project plan for consideration at a meeting before the summer recess.

7. NECESSARY MAINTENANCE WORKS IN LEINSTER HOUSE

The Commission noted the progress in relation to necessary maintenance works in Leinster House.

8. BRIEFING ON RECENT COURT CASES INVOLVING THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS

The Commission was briefed by the Parliamentary Legal Adviser on recent court cases involving the Houses of the Oireachtas.

In noting that legal costs awarded to the Commission and other amounts remained outstanding, and in accordance with its statutory obligation to oversee ongoing expenditure by the Houses, the Commission agreed that further correspondence would issue to the parties concerned to seek recovery of costs and moneys owing.

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

The Commission noted the draft Strategic Plan Implementation Report, which included the 2014 Annual Report of the Audit Committee. The report was presented to the Commission in accordance with section 16(1)(k) of the Houses of the

Oireachtas Commission Acts. The Commission noted that the Strategic Plan Implementation Report forms part of the Commission's annual report, the final draft of which will be brought to the next meeting.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) *Interim Report from Working Group on Ethics*

The Commission noted the Interim Report from the Working Group on Ethics.

(ii) *Library & Research Service's Proposed Survey of Members*

The Commission noted that the L&RS proposed to undertake a survey of a cohort of up to 40 Members and their staff to evaluate their experience of the L&RS 'on-demand' enquiry service and to identify and respond to their ongoing requirements in relation to the service.

(iii) *The Commission requested that papers be prepared on the following matters for its next meeting:*

- (a) The operation of the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance, including the terms of employment of persons employed under the Scheme;
- (b) The general maintenance service for the Leinster House complex;
- (c) An audit of office accommodation in the Leinster House complex.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 1.45 p.m.

SEÁN BARRETT, T.D.

Ceann Comhairle and Chairperson of the Commission

Dated: