



*Minutes of Commission Meeting  
Tuesday 23 June 2015*

1. The sixth 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 and Senator John Whelan.

Apologies were received from Senator Marc MacSharry, Deputy Olivia Mitchell, Deputy Dan Neville and Deputy Jack Wall.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The minutes of the meetings of 26 May 2015 were agreed by the Commission.

4. **FINANCIAL REPORTS FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

- (i) *Financial Report for the period January to May 2015*

Senator Paddy Burke, Cathaoirleach and Chair of the Finance Committee, presented a report from the Finance Committee on expenditure for the period January to May 2014. It was noted that total estimated expenditure for the current year was €112.3m. Actual expenditure to end of May was €40.70m against a budget of €44.72m.

The Commission noted the report.

- (ii) *Draft Estimate for 2016*

The Commission had before it the Draft Estimate for the year 2016.

The Cathaoirleach and Chairman of the Finance Committee, Senator Paddy Burke, reported on the review of the Draft Estimate undertaken by the Finance Committee at its meeting on 18 June.

The Commission undertook initial consideration of the Estimate. It noted that the Estimate for 2016 was €130,362m.

It was agreed to hold a special meeting of the Commission to consider the Estimate in further detail. Members were invited to submit questions to the Secretariat in advance of the meeting to facilitate more detailed consideration of expenditure allocations under the Estimate.

(iii) *Estimate for 2016 - summary, together with an explanatory note on the scope of each subhead*

The Commission noted the Estimate summary and the explanatory note on the scope of each subhead.

## **5. ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE SCHEME FOR SECRETARIAL ASSISTANCE**

The Commission considered a report on the operation of the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance and policy issues arising since the last report was presented in May 2014.

In noting the administrative difficulties that arise when a member of the political staff is appointed to work with a Minister/Minister of State in a Government Department and, under current arrangements, is required to transfer out of the Scheme to the relevant Department for the duration of the Minister's appointment, the Commission was of the view that political staff should continue to be employed under the Scheme in these circumstances and seconded to the relevant Government Department.

The Commission was informed that the Service has met with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform on this matter. The Department are responsible for the guidelines relating to Ministerial staff appointments. A report would be brought to the Commission in due course.

## **6. REQUEST FOR CONSENT FOR ENGAGEMENT OF SPECIALIST EXPERTISE TO SUPPORT THE JOINT COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO THE BANKING CRISIS**

The Commission considered a letter from the Chairman of the Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis, Deputy Ciarán Lynch, requesting the consent, in writing, of the Commission for the Joint Committee to engage the services of persons with technical knowledge or expertise in accordance with section 67(2) of the Houses of the Oireachtas (Inquiries, Privileges and Procedures) Act 2013.

Pursuant to the said section 67(2), the Commission agreed to grant its consent for the Joint Committee to engage the services of persons as set out in the Annex to these minutes.

## **7. 2016 CENTENARY YEAR: COMMEMORATIVE INITIATIVE FOR THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS**

The Commission deferred consideration of this matter to a future meeting.

## **8. ACCOMMODATION AND MAINTENANCE IN LEINSTER HOUSE COMPLEX**

### *(i) Audit of Office Accommodation*

The Commission noted an Information Note on the allocation of office accommodation for members in the Leinster House Complex.

### *(ii) General Maintenance Service for Leinster House Complex*

The Commission noted an Information Note on the general maintenance service provided by the Office of Public Works for the Leinster House Complex.

The Commission was of the view that, having regard to the role and business of the Houses, and the historical importance of Leinster House, an ongoing sustained programme of maintenance work for the building is required, including improvements to the grounds and landscaping.

### *(iii) Necessary Maintenance Works in Leinster House*

The Commission noted the progress in relation to necessary maintenance works in Leinster House. It requested that an updated report, to include up-to-date information on the current status of individual tasks, be submitted to the Commission at its monthly meetings.

## **9. DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2014**

The Commission approved the draft annual report on its activities in 2014 to be laid before the Houses in accordance with section 6 of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Act 2003.

## **10. BRIEFING ON LEGAL PROCEEDINGS ISSUED AGAINST THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION AND OTHERS**

The Commission was briefed by the Parliamentary Legal Adviser on legal proceedings issued against the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission and others in relation to various utterances made in the Dáil.

The Commission granted authorisation to instruct legal representatives in accordance with the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts in relation to the proceedings.

## **11. BUSINESS CASE FOR ACTING-UP ALLOWANCE**

The Commission noted that the post of Secretary General of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service has been vacant since August 2013. It also noted that the responsibilities, including the statutory functions, of the post were being carried out by the two Assistant Secretaries in the Service since that time.

The Commission approved the payment of one acting-up allowance, at the entry level of the Secretary General payscale, to be split equally between the two Assistant Secretary posts, in accordance with section 4(2)(a) of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 and 2012, and Circular 38/2007 "Allowances for the

performance of the duties of a higher grade", from the date of the commencement of each of their respective acting-up roles, being 06 August 2013, until such time as the appointment of a new Secretary General of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service.

## **12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### *(i) Correspondence from Senator Marc MacSharry*

The Commission noted correspondence from Senator MacSharry to the Chairperson.

### *(ii) Correspondence from Deputy David Stanton*

The Commission considered correspondence from Deputy Stanton in relation to Inter-Parliamentary Friendship Groups in the Houses.

The Commission noted the important role of inter-parliamentary friendship groups in strengthening links and fostering inter-parliamentary relations and cooperation between members of the Houses and parliamentarians in other countries. It proposed that a framework would be put in place to further develop the programme of inter-parliamentary friendship groups in the Houses.

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:

## **ANNEX**

### **GRANT OF CONSENT PURSUANT TO SECTION 67(2) OF THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS (INQUIRIES, PRIVILEGES AND PROCEDURES) ACT 2013**

Pursuant to section 67(2) of the Houses of the Oireachtas (Inquiries, Privileges and Procedures) Act 2013, the Commission grants its consent, in writing, to the Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis to engage the services of persons with technical knowledge or expertise, as set out hereunder, being technical knowledge or expertise that is relevant to the functions required to be performed by the Committee, to assist it in performing those functions:

- **Services relating to the investigation of matters pertaining to the “Nexus Phase” of the Inquiry covering Banking Systems and Practices, Regulatory Systems and Practices and Crisis Management Systems and Policy Responses:** Fergus MacLeod, Eddy Van Cutsem, Rory Mahon, David Douglas.
- **Legal services relating to the Inquiry:** Morgan Crowe.