



*Minutes of Commission Meeting
Tuesday 24 November 2015*

1. The eleventh 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 and Deputy Jack Wall.

Apologies were received from Deputy John Browne and Senator John Whelan.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of 20 October 2015 were agreed by the Commission.

The Commission approved the note of the incorporeal decision of the Commission of 16 November 2015.

4. **UPDATE ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE CATERING SERVICES IN THE HOUSES**

The Commission received an update on the catering services in the Houses including the current position in relation to outstanding balances for Oireachtas bars and restaurants customer accounts.

The Commission noted that the vast majority of customers settle their catering accounts within the normal credit periods. It also noted the significant reduction in the number of outstanding accounts since the last update and the ongoing efforts in this regard.

The Commission agreed that further contact would be made with the small number of customers whose outstanding balances pre-date 2015 and, where necessary, they would be requested to pay the total amount owing immediately or agree a schedule of payments to clear the outstanding balances.

The Commission directed that all necessary steps be taken to ensure that the sums outstanding were recovered.

5. USE OF SERVICES AND FACILITIES PROVIDED OUT OF PUBLIC FUNDS FOLLOWING DISSOLUTION OF DÁIL ÉIREANN.

The Commission had before it for consideration draft Guidelines for members of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann, in accordance with section 4(4A) of the Commission Acts, incorporating specified charges to be applied in respect of the use of services and facilities during an election period by outgoing Deputies and Senator candidates contesting the next Dáil General Election.

Subject to final clarification in relation to ICT devices, the Commission:

- (i) approved the statutory Guidelines, charges and charging approach, for implementation at the dissolution of the 31st Dáil;
- (ii) agreed that the Guidelines be circulated to all members in advance of the dissolution together with details of the actual salaries paid to their staff and that a note on the taking of annual leave by members' staff in the election period would also be circulated to members;
- (iii) agreed that the guidelines be published in accordance with the Commission Acts.

The Commission noted that information seminars for members on the application of the Guidelines would be organised by the Training Unit.

6. SCHEME FOR SECRETARIAL ASSISTANCE

The Commission received an update on the operation of the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance and policy issues arising since the last report was presented in June 2015.

The Commission:

- (i) noted the arrangements in place for staff employed under the Scheme during the dissolution period and following the General Election;
- (ii) approved the proposal, to be sanctioned by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, that political staff appointed to work with a Minister/Minister of State in a Government Department would remain employed under the Scheme and would not be required to transfer out of the Scheme to the employment of the relevant Department. The Commission noted that, under this arrangement, there would be a corresponding adjustment in the Commission's funding to cover the additional staffing costs arising;
- (iii) noted the report on the guidance and supports provided to members of the Houses as employers of political staff and approved a proposal to introduce an Employee Assistance Programme for staff employed under the Scheme;
- (iv) noted the current position in relation to the allocation of political party staff under the Scheme.

7. RULES OF PROCEDURE GOVERNING THE CONDUCT OF COMMISSION BUSINESS

In line with best practice in corporate governance principles, the Commission agreed to update the Rules of Procedure governing the conduct of Commission business, specifically to include:

- (i) a procedure for convening an incorporeal meeting of the Commission where the Chairperson considers it to be necessary;
- (ii) the noting of attendance at Commission and committee meetings in the Commission's Annual Report;
- (iii) circulation of the minutes of committee meetings to the full Commission for information.

The Commission agreed that the updated Rules of Procedure would be prepared for the incoming Commission following the establishment of the 32nd Dáil.

8. NECESSARY MAINTENANCE WORKS IN LEINSTER HOUSE

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

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Information Item

The Commission noted that the tenders for the Parliamentary Broadcasting Contract and the Managed IT Service Contract have been evaluated in accordance with the public procurement process. The new contracts will commence in January 2016.

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: