



Houses of the
Oireachtas Commission
Coimisiún Thithe
an Oireachtais

*Minutes of Commission Meeting
Tuesday 15 December 2015*

1. The twelfth 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 Olivia Mitchell and Deputy Dan Neville.

Apologies were received from Deputy Jack Wall and Senator John Whelan.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of 24 November 2015 were agreed by the Commission.

4. **REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

- (i) **Financial report for the reporting period January to October 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 October 2015.

It was noted that the projected outturn for this year (2015) is €107m. Actual expenditure incurred to end of October was €85.5m against a budget of €90.4m resulting in a budget variance of €4.9m (5%). Based on current information, the total projected expenditure for the 3-years 2013-2015 will be €310.6m against a budget of €324m, resulting in a saving of €13.4m (4%).

The Commission noted the report.

- (ii) **Commission funding allocation 2016-2018**

The Commission noted that the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Bill 2015* was published on 8 December 2015. The main purpose of the Bill is to provide the Commission's funding, in the amount of €369m, for the 3-year period 2016 to 2018. The Commission also noted that the Bill was scheduled to be passed by both Houses before the Christmas recess.

5. MEMBERS' PUBLIC REPRESENTATION ALLOWANCE (PRA)

The Commission had before it revised Audit Guidelines on the audit of expenditure under the Public Representation Allowance (PRA) and a paper setting out options for undertaking the Audit of the 2015 PRA payments.

The Commission:

- (i) approved the revised Guidelines, subject to modification as agreed, and agreed that the Guidelines, as amended, would be circulated to Members;
- (ii) in noting that the contract of the current external auditor is due to expire at the end of 2015, agreed:
 - (I) that the Service should proceed to put arrangements in place for a tender competition to be undertaken in early 2016 for the appointment of a suitably qualified external auditor to conduct the next audit of the PRA, with an option to extend the term of the auditor's contract for one year; and
 - (II) to review the position in December 2016 following the completion of the 2015 PRA audit.

6. 2016 CENTENARY YEAR: COMMEMORATIVE INITIATIVE FOR THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS

Further to its decision of 15 July 2015 in relation to commissioning the production of a co-produced documentary on the Houses of the Oireachtas to commemorate the 2016 Centenary Year, the Commission considered and agreed the proposed content of the documentary.

The Commission also approved expenditure, not exceeding the amount of €32,000, for production of the documentary.

7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) The Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Bill 2015

The Commission noted an Information Note on the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Bill 2015*. The Bill was published on 8 December 2015.

(ii) Legal update from the Office of the Parliamentary Legal Adviser

The Commission was briefed by the Office of the Parliamentary Legal Adviser on legal proceedings involving the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The Commission also noted that legal costs awarded to the Commission were received and were paid into the Commission account.

(iii) Correspondence from Deputy Clare Daly

The Commission noted correspondence from Deputy Clare Daly concerning the placing of a plaque at the front of Leinster House to commemorate Countess Markievicz in the context of the 2016 Centenary Programme. It was agreed to refer the correspondence to the Committee on Procedure and Privileges of Dáil Éireann for consideration.

SEÁN BARRETT, T.D.

Ceann Comhairle and Chairperson of the Commission

Dated: