



*Minutes of Commission Meeting
Thursday 14 July 2016*

1. The third meeting of the Commission of 2016 took place at 3.00 p.m. in Room 2, Leinster House.

2. **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil, Ceann Comhairle (Chairperson), Senator Denis O'Donovan, Cathaoirleach of the Seanad (Deputy Chairperson), Deputy Joe Carey, Senator Paudie Coffey, Senator Gerard P. Craughwell, Deputy Timmy Dooley, Mr. Peter Finnegan, Secretary General, Deputy Martin Heydon, Deputy Catherine Murphy, Deputy Louise O'Reilly, and Senator Ned O'Sullivan.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The minutes of the meeting of 27 January 2016 were agreed by the Commission.

4. **APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE COMMISSION**

The Chairperson informed the Commission that pursuant to section 7(3)(a) of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2015, he had appointed Senator Denis O'Donovan, Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann, as Deputy Chairperson of the Commission.

5. **FINANCE COMMITTEE – MEMBERSHIP**

The Commission appointed the following members to serve on the Commission's Finance Committee: Senator Denis O'Donovan, Cathaoirleach of the Seanad, Senator Paudie Coffey, Senator Gerard P. Craughwell, Deputy Timmy Dooley, Deputy Martin Heydon and Deputy Louise O'Reilly. The Commission also appointed Senator Denis O'Donovan, Cathaoirleach of the Seanad, as Chairperson of the Committee.

6. AUDIT COMMITTEE – MEMBERSHIP

The Commission appointed the following members to serve on the Commission's Audit Committee in accordance with section 14A of the Commission Acts:

(i) Commission member (section 14A(3)(a):

Senator Ned O'Sullivan.

(ii) Non-Commission members (section 14A(3)(b):

Senator Catherine Ardagh, Senator Victor Boyhan and Senator Kieran O'Donnell.

(iii) External representation (section 14A(3)(c):

Mr. Eddie Sullivan, former Secretary General, Departments of Finance and Social Welfare;

Mr. Pat McLoughlin, former Chief Executive, Irish Payment Services Organisation; former CEO of the South Eastern Health Board; and lead investigator on the Oireachtas Banking Inquiry.

(iv) Member of the staff of the Service (section 14A(3)(d):

Mr. Charles Hearne, Principal Officer, Houses of the Oireachtas Service.

The Commission agreed that Mr. Eddie Sullivan be appointed as Chairperson of the Audit Committee.

7. PRINTING USERS' COUNCIL – MEMBERSHIP

The Commission appointed the following members to serve on the Printing Users' Council:

Commission Members:

Senator Denis O'Donovan, Cathaoirleach of the Seanad, Deputy Joe Carey, Senator Gerard P. Craughwell and Deputy Louise O'Reilly.

Senior Manager from the Service

Mr. Derek Dignam, Principal Officer, Houses of the Oireachtas Service.

Solicitor from the Office of the Parliamentary Legal Advisor

Ms. Ramona Quinn, Solicitor, Office of the Parliamentary Legal Adviser, Houses of the Oireachtas Service.

8. FINANCIAL MATTERS

(i) Financial report for the reporting period January to June 2016

The Finance Officer presented a report on expenditure for the period January to June 2016.

It was noted that the Estimate for 2016 is €130.99m. Expenditure to the end of June 2016 was €56.23m against a budget of €65.35m which represents an underspend of €9.12m – a pay underspend of €3.28m and a non-pay underspend of €5.84m.

The Commission noted the report.

(ii) Reclassification of grants and grants-in-aid

The Commission granted approval to seek sanction from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER), in accordance with the provisions of DPER Circular 13/2014, to continue with existing arrangements for the management of grant-in-aid subheads.

(iii) Commission's Annual Accounts 2015

The Commission noted the 2015 Annual Accounts which were signed by the Accounting Officer and submitted to the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) in March 2016 pursuant to the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts.

The Commission also noted that the 2015 Annual Accounts were certified by the C&AG in July 2016.

9. COMMUNICATIONS AND BROADCASTING

The Commission granted approval for the signing of a contract with RTÉ to allow Oireachtas TV to be broadcast on the Saorview multiplex platform.

The Commission noted that access to the Saorview platform would significantly extend broadcast coverage of Oireachtas TV giving more than 98% coverage nationwide for the proceedings of the Houses and their Committees.

The Commission, in welcoming the development, asked that specific emphasis on promoting Oireachtas TV, such as advertising via traditional and social media, be included in the forthcoming Commission's Communications Strategy in order to increase awareness of the availability of the channel among the wider public.

10. 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 noted the briefing.

11. ANNUAL RESOURCE PLAN 2016

The Commission had before it the Annual Resource Plan for the Service for 2016 setting out the anticipated resource requirements for the next 12 months.

The Commission:

- (i) noted that there are resource implications (people, money and accommodation) to meet the demand for expansionary services arising from the recently agreed Dáil reform measures, particularly in the Committees secretariat area and organisation reform;
- (ii) confirmed the appointment of 30 staff (15 staff have been assigned and 15 are in process of being filled through the Public Appointments Service) to fill posts for which management have approved business cases and have been put in place since the last Commission approval of April 2015 to deal with unavoidable work pressures identified to date;
- (iii) sanctioned the commencement of the appointment process for increased staffing, not to exceed 20 posts, noting the timescale to recruit staff to implement Dáil and organisation reforms, subject to the submission of a detailed business case to the Commission in October 2016;
- (iv) noted that the additional staff sanctioned may be drawn down only on the basis of actual increased demand materialising, supported by a business case, and subject to the sanctioning arrangements for the Service;
- (v) noted that a further report on the resource requirements to implement the parliamentary reform programme, following a detailed examination of the requirements, including associated costings, will be presented to the Commission for approval following the Summer recess.

12. POLICY PROPOSALS IN RELATION TO THE SCHEME FOR SECRETARIAL ASSISTANCE

The Commission had before it for consideration a discussion paper on the allocation of resources under the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for the 32nd Dáil/25th Seanad.

The Commission referred the matter to the Finance Committee for further consideration and decision, taking into consideration the recommendations of the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform in its report of 24 May 2016 regarding the provision of administrative support for Technical Groups [Ref: page 17, Appendix 1: Recommendations, *Groups, Resources for Members*]. It requested the Committee to report back to the Commission at its next meeting so that the necessary changes to the Regulations can be made to implement the decision on the allocation of resources under the Scheme for the 32nd Dáil/25th Seanad.

13. OIREACHTAS OFFICE-HOLDERS – PROPOSALS FOR STAFFING LEVELS

The Commission had before it for consideration a discussion document on proposed staffing levels for Oireachtas Officeholders for the 32nd Dáil/25th Seanad (for the Ceann Comhairle, Leas Cheann Comhairle, Cathaoirleach and Leas Chathaoirleach)

The Commission noted and approved the proposed staffing levels for Oireachtas Officeholders which are in line with the *Guidelines on Staffing of Ministerial Offices* issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in June 2016.

14. HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT 2015

The Commission approved the draft 2015 Annual Report to be published and laid before the Houses in accordance with section 6 of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts.

15. PROGRAMME OF STRUCTURAL AND UPGRADE WORKS FOR GEORGIAN LEINSTER HOUSE, INCLUDING THE ACCOMMODATION PLAN FOR THE DURATION OF THE WORKS

The Commission received a presentation from the Office of Public Works (OPW) on the planned programme of structural and upgrade works for Georgian Leinster House, including the timescales involved. The Commission was also briefed on the accommodation plan for the duration of the works.

The Commission noted that the main structural works are due to commence in August 2016. The project is due to be completed by Summer 2018.

16. SENIOR PUBLIC SERVICE APPOINTMENT:

(a) Recommendation of the Top Level Appointments Committee to the Commission on Appointment of Assistant Secretary, Parliamentary Services Division, Houses of the Oireachtas Service

The Commission appointed Ms. Elaine Gunn to the post of Assistant Secretary, Parliamentary Services Division in the Houses of the Oireachtas Service, in accordance with the letter of recommendation of the Top Level Appointments Committee (TLAC) to the Ceann Comhairle dated 30 May 2016, pursuant to the *Staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Act 1959*, as amended, and the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2015*.

(b) Recommendation of the Ceann Comhairle to the Commission on Appointment of Clerk-Assistant of Dáil Éireann

The Commission, on the recommendation of the Chairperson of Dáil Éireann, also appointed Ms. Elaine Gunn as Clerk-Assistant of Dáil Éireann in accordance with

section 5 of the *Staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Act 1959*, as substituted by section 1 of the *Houses of the Oireachtas (Appointments to Certain Offices) Act 2015*.

The Commission congratulated Ms. Gunn on her appointments.

17. TECHNOLOGY IN THE CHAMBERS PROJECT – RETROSPECTIVE SANCTION

The Commission noted that in the absence of a new Commission following the dissolution of the Dáil, the Service's Management Committee and the Ceann Comhairle had, following the completion by the Service of competitive tendering processes, approved the awarding of the contracts for the Technology in the Chamber project in view of the procurement timelines, operational requirements and the schedule of structural works for Georgian Leinster House.

In line with its financial governance control procedures, the Commission granted retrospective approval for the awarding to the preferred suppliers of the following contracts:

- Lot 1: A supplier for the provision, installation and support of Chamber equipment (replacement of delegate units, electronic voting system and sound equipment).
- Lot 4: An ICT Partner for the delivery of a full Enterprise Architecture, implementation of a data warehouse, redevelopment of the Oireachtas website and the provision of systems integration services.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Commission Meeting Schedule

The Commission agreed that its regular meetings would take place once a month, on Tuesdays at 11.30 am, when the Houses are sitting.

SENATOR DENIS O'DONOVAN

Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann and Deputy Chairperson of the Commission

Dated: