



*Minutes of Commission Meeting  
Tuesday 15 November 2016*

1. The fifth meeting of the Commission of 2016 took place at 10.00 a.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, 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 MEETING**

The minutes of the meetings of 4 October 2016 were agreed by the Commission.

4. **PROGRAMME OF STRUCTURAL AND UPGRADE WORKS FOR GEORGIAN LEINSTER HOUSE**

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:

- noted the temporary relocation of the occupants of old Leinster House had now been completed;
- welcomed the resolution, to everyone's satisfaction, of the proposed temporary relocation of the Seanad Chamber to the Ceramics Room in the National Museum;
- noted, that in deciding on a relocation venue for the Seanad, account was taken of key criteria such as security, accessibility for Members, adequacy of space, access to technical and support services, the impact on core parliamentary activities, such as Committee meetings, accessibility for visitors, and cost;

- noted that additional exhibition space and an AV room will be developed in the Museum which will be of long-term practical assistance to the Museum; a lift to allow universal access will be installed in the museum; alarm systems will be upgraded and financial assistance for project management will be provided;
- noted that the Ceramics Room may be available to the Museum for seminars and lectures when the Seanad is in recess.

The Commission thanked the Board, Management and Staff of the National Museum for accommodating the temporary relocation of the Seanad in the Museum while the urgent essential works are being carried out.

The Commission noted that the main structural project is due to be completed by Summer 2018.

## **5. SCHEME FOR SECRETARIAL ASSISTANCE**

### **Draft Statutory Instrument under the Oireachtas (Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices) (Amendment) Act 2014**

The Commission approved the Draft Statutory Instrument to give legal effect to its decision on the allocation of resources under the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for the 32<sup>nd</sup> Dáil/25<sup>th</sup> Seanad in accordance with the Oireachtas (Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices) (Amendment) Act 2014.

The Statutory Instrument makes provision, inter alia, for:

- (i) the allocation of secretarial facilities to qualifying parties;
- (ii) the allocation of secretarial facilities to holders of Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices;
- (iii) the allocation of one secretarial assistant to the co-ordinator of each Technical Group in the Dáil and Seanad that consists of Independent Members only. This is an administrative measure pending the change in primary legislation by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform;
- (iv) the allocation of additional secretarial facilities to members with disabilities to assist them in their work;
- (v) the creation of a new staff grade under the Scheme, as may be established from time to time by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

## **6. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATION OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE ON DÁIL REFORM TO ESTABLISH AN INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICE**

The Commission noted the steps being taken to implement the recommendation of the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform on the establishment of an Independent Parliamentary Budget Office in the Houses of the Oireachtas Service.

The Commission granted approval for the creation of a new position of Head of the Parliamentary Budget Office at Assistant Secretary level within the Houses of the Oireachtas Service, subject to the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform as required by section 12(3)(c) of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2015.

## **7. DRAFT STRATEGIC PLAN 2016 – 2018**

In accordance with section 16(4) of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003-2015, the Secretary General presented a draft Strategic Plan to the Commission for the period 2016 - 2018.

The Commission approved the Strategic Plan, without amendment, to be laid before the Houses and published.

## **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### *(i) Letter from the Seanad Committee on Procedure and Privileges*

The Commission noted a letter from the Seanad Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommending that the provision of a room in Leinster House for Members to use for quiet reflection, prayer, etc., be considered on completion of the structural works currently underway to the House.

### *(ii) Email regarding the application of Statutory Instrument No. 84/2010*

The Commission noted correspondence in relation to the application of Statutory Instrument No. 84/2010.

### *(iii) Email regarding the proposed temporary relocation of Seanad Éireann to the National Museum of Ireland*

The Commission noted an email from the School of Archaeology, UCD, regarding the proposed temporary relocation of Seanad Éireann to the National Museum of Ireland.

*(iv) Appointment of Member to serve as Chair of the Commission's Statutory Audit Committee*

The Commission appointed Mr. Pat McLoughlin to serve as Chair of the Commission's Statutory Audit Committee to fill the vacancy arising following the stepping down from the position as Chair, for personal reasons, of Mr. Eddie Sullivan.

The Commission thanked Mr. Sullivan for his work as Chair of the Audit Committee and as a member of the Service's Management Committee over a number of years.

*(v) Visit by a Delegation from the House of Commons, 6 – 7 December*

The Ceann Comhairle informed members that a delegation from the Administration Committee of the House of Commons would visit the Houses on 6-7 December. The Commission would host a working lunch for the delegation on 7 December.

SEÁN Ó FEARGHAÍL, T.D.

Ceann Comhairle and Chairperson of the Commission

Dated: