[Draft] Minutes of Commission Meeting
Tuesday 9 May 2017

1. The fourth meeting of the Commission of 2017 took place at 11.30 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 Gerard P. Craughwell, Mr. Peter Finnegan, Secretary General, Deputy Catherine Murphy, Deputy Louise O'Reilly and Senator Ned O'Sullivan.

Apologies were received from Deputy Timmy Dooley and Deputy Martin Heydon.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of 4 April 2017 were agreed by the Commission.

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

The Commission received an update presentation from the Office of Public Works (OPW) on progress in relation to the programme of structural and upgrade works for Georgian Leinster House.

The Commission was informed that three submissions were received during the consultation process undertaken in accordance with Part 9 of the Planning Regulations 2001 in respect of the project. These submissions are currently being reviewed and a report on the outcome of the review will be completed by 19 May 2017 following which a formal decision on the proposed works will be made.

OPW has issued a request for tender for the project. The Commission was informed that the deadline for submission of tenders may be extended to the end of June in view of requests received from prospective tenderers for an extension.

Based on current timelines, the work will commence in August 2017. The overall project is due to be completed at the end of 2018.

The Commission underlined the importance of managing the project according to the agreed timeframe.

The Commission thanked the OPW staff for their work.
5. REPORTS FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

(i) Financial report for the reporting period January to March 2017

Senator Denis O’Donovan, Cathaoirleach and Chair of the Finance Committee, presented a report on expenditure for the period January to March 2017.

It was noted that the Estimate for 2017 is €127m. Expenditure to the end of March 2017 was €26.48m against a budget of €31.37m which represents an underspend of €4.89m – a pay underspend of €2.16m and a non-pay underspend of €2.73m.

The Commission noted the report.

(ii) Commission’s Annual Accounts 2016

The Commission noted the 2016 Annual Accounts which were signed by the Accounting Officer and submitted to the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) in March 2017 pursuant to the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts.

6. ICT STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

The Commission considered a Business Case for the development of a new Procedural System to support the business of the Houses and their Committees. The Procedural System Project is part of the Parliamentary Procedural Programme of development which is one of four development programmes that comprise Oireachtas 2020 - A Digital Transformation.

The Commission approved the Business Case for the project including the related expenditure of €6.01m.

The Commission welcomed the project and thanked the development team for their work.

7. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

The Commission noted the work to date on the Website Development Project. It also noted that the beta version of the new website was launched on 2 May and had received positive feedback from users. The beta version will operate in parallel with the old website while it continues to be tested and improved.

The Commission noted expenditure to date for releases 1 and 2 of the project of €767,447. The Commission granted approval to proceed to the next phase of development and also approved the related expenditure for release 3 of €545,000.

The Commission welcomed the progress on the Website Development Project and thanked the development team for their work.
8. LIBRARY AND RESEARCH SERVICE

(i) Strategic Plan and Statement of Services

The Commission considered the Draft Library & Research Service’s Strategic Plan 2017 – 2018 and Statement of Services for the same period.

It welcomed the Plan and the specific initiatives focussed to support the four strategic objectives under the current Strategic Plan for the Service.


(ii) Proposed Survey of Members’ Staff

The Commission noted that the Library & Research Service proposed to undertake a survey of members’ staff to help guide the design and implementation of an information skills training programme for staff to support them in accessing information and research in an efficient and effective manner.

9. LEGAL UPDATE FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY LEGAL ADVISER

The Commission received an update from the Parliamentary Legal Adviser in relation to legal matters.

10. HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT AND STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION REPORT 2016

The Commission noted the Strategic Plan Implementation Report which was presented to the Commission in accordance with section 16(1)(k) of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts. It also noted that the Implementation Report forms part of the Commission’s annual report. The Commission approved the draft annual report on its activities in 2016 to be laid before the Houses in accordance with section 6 of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts.
11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) Correspondence

The Commission noted the following:

(a) *Letter with enclosures from the Cathaoirleach of the Seanad*

It was agreed that the Secretariat would respond to the correspondence.

(b) *Letter from the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform*

The Commission agreed to request the Minister to consider amending the relevant Regulations to make express provision for additional postal facilities for University Senators.

(c) *Letter from Department of Law at Maynooth University*

It was agreed that the Secretariat would respond to the correspondence.

(ii) Official Travel Policy

The Commission requested an update on the Travel Policy governing official travel by members and staff at its next meeting.

(iii) Employee Assistance Programme

The Commission noted the services available under the Employee Assistance Programme.

(iv) LEGAL UPDATE

The Commission noted an update in relation to legal proceedings to enforce a liability to the Commission.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 1.30 p.m.