1. The fifth meeting of the Commission of 2017 took place at 11.30 a.m. in Room 2, Leinster House.

2. MEMBERS PRESENT

Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl, 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 Catherine Murphy and Senator Ned O’Sullivan.

Apologies were received from Deputy Louise O’Reilly.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of 9 May 2017 were agreed by the Commission.

4. LEGAL PROCEEDINGS ISSUED AGAINST THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION AND OTHERS

The Commission was briefed by the solicitor from the Office of the Parliamentary Legal Adviser that, in the case of Denis O’Brien v Clerk of Dáil Éireann and others (High Court record number 2015/4888P), an application for leave and notice of appeal to the Supreme Court and a notice of appeal to the Court of Appeal had been served on the Office of the Parliamentary Legal Adviser.

The Commission granted authorisation for the continued defence of this case in accordance with the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts.
5. **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 the planning process with respect to the works to Georgian Leinster House and the works to facilitate the temporary relocation of the Seanad Chamber to the National Museum of Ireland had concluded. The deadline for submission of tenders for the project is mid June 2017. It is expected that the main contract for the work will be placed in mid July 2017 and the contractor will be on site in August 2017. Site enabling work is continuing in the interim period.

The Commission was also informed that the relocation of the Seanad Chamber to the Ceramics Room in the National Museum will be completed in time for the resumption of Seanad sittings after the summer recess this year. The Commission was advised that the overall project is due to be completed by the end of 2018.

The Commission thanked the OPW staff for their work.

6. **OFFICIAL TRAVEL POLICY**

The Commission considered the Travel Policy governing official travel by members of the Houses and staff of the Service. The Commission noted that the policy and related procedures are in line with the guidelines on official travel set down by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The Commission also noted that Inter-Parliamentary Unit is currently undertaking a review of the Travel Policy and is engaging with relevant persons and groups in the Houses in the course of the review. The revised draft Travel Policy will be submitted to the Commission for approval following completion of the review.

7. **VISITOR SAFETY AND SECURITY POLICY**

The Commission considered and approved a draft policy on Visitor Safety and Security for the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The Commission also requested the Leinster House Security Committee to review the current access and security arrangements to establish what further steps might be taken to ensure these arrangements are appropriate in a parliamentary environment.
8. **LEINSTER HOUSE FLAG**

The Commission noted that access to the flagpole on the roof of Leinster House would be closed off for the duration of the structural work to the building and agreed that the flagpole would be temporarily relocated to an appropriate area of Leinster Lawn while the work is underway.

The Commission also approved a proposal from the Superintendent of the Houses, subject to consultation with the Dáil Committee on Procedure and the Seanad Committee on Procedure and Privileges, that the flag at Leinster House would be flown every day of the year as a change to the current practice of flying the flag only on sitting days of the Houses of the Oireachtas.

9. **AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2016**

The Commission noted the 2016 Annual Report of the Audit Committee which was presented to it in accordance with section 14A(10)(c) of the Commission Acts 2003-2015. The Annual Report of the Audit Committee will be published with the Commission’s Annual Report 2016.

10. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

   (i) **Correspondence**

   The Commission noted the following:

   (a) Email from Deputy Louise O’Reilly in relation to the business of the Commission.

   (b) Letter from the Chairman of the Committee of Public Accounts of Dáil Éireann requesting an increase in staff resources to support the Committee.

   (c) Email from Deputy Thomas Byrne proposing the establishment of an Apprenticeship Scheme in the Houses of the Oireachtas.

   The Commission noted that a paper on the proposal to establish an Apprenticeship Scheme in the Houses would be submitted to it for consideration at its next meeting.

   It was agreed that the Secretariat would respond to the correspondence received.
(ii) **Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members**

The Commission noted the incremental credit scheme for Secretarial Assistants employed under the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 12.30 p.m.

SEÁN Ó FEARGHAÍL, T.D.

Ceann Comhairle and Chairperson of the Commission

Dated: