



Houses of the  
Oireachtas Commission  
Coimisiún Thithe  
an Oireachtais

*Minutes of Commission Meeting  
Tuesday 3 October 2017*

1. The seventh meeting of the Commission of 2017 took place at 11.30 a.m. in Room 160, Leinster House.

2. **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil, Ceann Comhairle (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.

Apologies were received from Senator Denis O'Donovan, Cathaoirleach of the Seanad (Deputy Chairperson) and Senator Gerard P. Craughwell.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of 11 July 2017 were agreed by the Commission.

4. **PROGRAMME OF STRUCTURAL AND UPGRADE WORKS FOR GEORGIAN LEINSTER HOUSE: STATUS REPORT ON THE PROGRAMME OF WORK**

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 noted that the work to prepare the temporary Seanad Chamber in the National Museum was completed, on schedule, for the resumption of Seanad sittings after the summer recess. The Commission expressed its appreciation for the work carried out by the OPW, the Superintendent of the Houses and their staff in bringing this phase of the project to completion.

The Commission was informed that the main contract for the project is expected to be placed by mid October and the contractor is expected to be on site at the end of October.

The Commission was also advised that the structural work is due to be completed by the end of 2018. The main contract period is 54 weeks. The final phase of the planned works will involve preparing the House for reoccupation and this will comprise a series of small scale projects to reinstate systems and services in the building. Reoccupation of the Georgian House will then take place on a phased basis.

The Commission noted progress to date and thanked the OPW staff for their work.

**5. HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS SERVICE ANNUAL RESOURCE PLAN 2017 - 2018**

The Commission had before it for consideration the Annual Resource Plan for the Service setting out the anticipated resource requirements for the period 2017-2018.

The Commission:

- (i) noted the resource requirements to support the parliamentary reform programme implemented by the Houses in 2016-2017 and the organisational change programme, including associated costs;
- (ii) sanctioned, subject to normal governance procedures, an additional 44 posts to meet the demand for expansionary services;
- (iii) noted that financial provision for the additional posts of €3.25m was included in the Commission's Annual Estimate for 2018.

**6. SCHEME FOR THE SECRETARIAT ASSISTANCE: UPDATE ON CLAIM SUBMITTED FOR THE RESTORATION OF REDUCTION TO WEEKLY OVERTIME**

The Commission noted that HR Services were engaging with the Party Administrators and their union on the claim for the restoration of the two-hour reduction to weekly overtime hours that may be claimed by political staff employed under the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance, and related matters. The reduction in overtime was implemented by the Commission in 2011 as a cost saving measure.

The Commission agreed to consider the claim for the restoration of the reduction to overtime hours in the first instance and requested the Head of Human Resources to prepare a proposal on this matter for consideration at its next meeting.

**7. REVIEW OF THE CURRENT INTERNSHIP PROGRAMME IN THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS**

The Commission noted the current position in relation to the review of the Internship Programme in the Houses that is currently underway by HR Services. A paper will be submitted to the Commission following completion of the review.

## **8. DRAFT STATEMENT OF ESTIMATES 2018**

The Commission considered the Draft Statement of Estimate for 2018.

It noted that the Draft Estimate for 2018 represents an increase of approximately 16% on the Estimate for 2017. The increase is mainly attributable to costs associated with implementation of the programme of parliamentary reform.

The Commission:

- (i) approved the Statement of Estimate 2018, providing for gross expenditure of €135.9m and noted that the Estimate will be presented to the Dáil on Thursday 5 October, for noting by way of motion, in accordance with the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2015. Deputy Martin Heydon, the Minister's Representative on the Commission, was nominated to move the motion in the Dáil.
- (ii) noted the Estimate summary and the explanatory note on the scope of each subhead.

## **9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **(i) Correspondence:**

The Commission noted the following:

- (a) *Letter from Senator Keith Swanick regarding the public display of material relating to the First Dáil Éireann in the Houses of the Oireachtas.*

The Commission agreed to refer the letter to the Working Group in the Houses on the commemoration of the centenary of the First Dáil Éireann for consideration.

- (b) *Email from Senator Ivana Bacik regarding the installation of recycling facilities in the LH2000 Coffee Dock.*

The Commission noted initiatives in the Catering Services and Facilities Management Unit to support recycling efforts across the Leinster House complex. These initiatives will be progressed under the direction of the Management Committee in the first instance.

- (c) *Email from a member of the public regarding catering accounts in the Houses.*

The Commission noted that a revised credit policy for the catering services will be submitted to the Commission for approval at its next meeting.

- (d) *Correspondence from Deputies Colm Brophy, Aengus Ó Snodaigh, Noel Rock and the IMPACT Trade Union regarding public tours of Leinster House.*

The Commission was of the view that it would not be feasible to conduct guided tours of Leinster House on Saturdays while the structural upgrade work to the House is underway.

- (e) *Proposal forwarded through the Ceann Comhairle's Office regarding the 1919 Commemorative Programme.*

The Commission agreed to refer the letter to the Working Group in the Houses on the commemoration of the centenary of the First Dáil Éireann for consideration.

- (f) *Letter from Seanad Committee on Procedure and Privileges in relation to the Leinster House flag.*

The Commission noted the correspondence.

**(ii) Availability of Video Files of the Parliamentary Proceedings on the Website**

The Commission was briefed on the current position in relation to the availability of video files of the proceedings of the Houses on the website. It requested the Head of Communications to prepare a paper on digitising the full broadcasting archive since 1990 and making the digitised content accessible and available online, including a detailed costing for the project. The Commission agreed to consider the paper at its next meeting.

**(iii) Houses of the Oireachtas Guided Tours**

In view of the high demand for tours of the Houses, and the necessity to restrict the number of tours of Historic Leinster House for the duration of the structural upgrade works, the Commission requested the Superintendent of the Houses to examine the feasibility of extending the guided tour hours on sitting days for tours to view the Chambers and the live proceedings and to report back to the Commission with recommendations as appropriate.

**(iv) Facilities for the Oireachtas Press Gallery**

Further to a request from the Chairman of the Oireachtas Press Gallery, the Commission noted that interim accommodation would be made available in the Leinster House complex for the weekly briefings of members of the Oireachtas Press Gallery by the Government Press Secretary while the structural upgrade work to Leinster House is underway. It also noted that access to the fitness room and to the crèche facility would be available to members of the Press Gallery subject to the normal criteria for access to each facility.

The meeting adjourned at 12.55 p.m.



SEÁN Ó FEARGHAÍL, T.D.

Ceann Comhairle and Chairperson of the Commission

Dated: