



Houses of the  
Oireachtas Commission  
Coimisiún Thithe  
an Oireachtais

*Minutes of Commission Meeting  
Tuesday 14 November 2017*

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

Apologies were received from Senator Paudie Coffey.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of 3 October 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 was informed that the main contract for the project was placed on 13 November 2018 and the contractor is now on site. Four specialist works contractors are engaged as sub-contractors to the main contractor. The main contract period is 54 weeks.

The Commission was advised that the structural work is due to be completed by the end of November 2018. The final phase of the project will then commence and will focus on preparing the Georgian House for reoccupation. The work will comprise a number 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 expected completion date of the overall project is spring 2019.

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

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

The Commission considered a recommendation from the Working Group established to consider a claim for the restoration of the reduction to weekly overtime hours that may be claimed by staff employed under the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance (the Scheme), and related matters. The reduction in weekly overtime hours was introduced by the Commission as a cost saving measure in 2011.

Based on the findings of a review undertaken by the Working Group of the actual overtime hours worked by the staff concerned, the Group recommended that the two hours reduction in overtime be restored for staff employed under the Scheme.

The Committee noted that the estimated cost for the overtime restoration would be €1.136m and that this cost can be achieved within the expenditure limit for the Scheme under the Commission's current three-year budget framework.

The Commission approved the recommendation from the Working Group and agreed that the restoration of overtime hours would be effective from the date of the Commission's decision in this matter.

**6. OFFICIAL TRAVEL POLICY**

The Commission considered the revised Travel Policy governing official travel by members of the Houses and staff of the Service.

The Commission noted that Inter-Parliamentary Unit had undertaken a formal review of the Policy and had consulted with relevant persons and groups in the Houses in the course of the review. Based on feedback received, a Frequently Asked Questions was also developed which provides supplementary information on implementation of the Policy.

The Commission approved the revised Travel Policy and the Frequently Asked Questions to accompany the Policy.

**7. OIREACHTAS PRINTING FACILITY**

**Print Equipment Replacement Project**

The Commission considered a Business Case for the purchase of new Printing Equipment to replace existing aging print equipment in the Oireachtas Print Facility. It noted that the current printing equipment in the Facility is over 12 years old, fully depreciated and is leading to an increase in repair and maintenance costs as the equipment ages.

The Commission approved the Business Case for the replacement Printing Equipment including the estimated maximum budget for the equipment of €1.5m.

## **8. COMMUNICATIONS AND BROADCASTING**

### **Broadcast Equipment Replacement Project**

The Commission considered a Business Case for the purchase of a new Recording and Archive System to replace the main components of the broadcast equipment currently in use in the Oireachtas Broadcast Unit. It noted that the current system is now end-of-life and a significant number of the equipment elements are no longer supported and therefore must be replaced.

The Commission approved the Business Case for the replacement Recording and Archive System including the estimated maximum budget for the System of €2m.

## **9. EU GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION**

### **Implementation Strategy for the Houses of the Oireachtas**

The Chair of the Service's Working Group on the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) presented a progress report to the Commission on preparations for implementation of the GDPR in the Service including the support provided to members in preparing for GDPR compliance.

The Commission noted progress including the actions taken in this matter.

## **10. DIGNITY AND RESPECT IN THE WORKPLACE**

The Commission was briefed on the policies in place in the Service and by the political parties represented in the Houses to promote dignity and respect in the workplace. The Commission agreed that the Houses of the Oireachtas should adopt common standards to promote the maintenance of a respectful workplace and a positive workplace environment. It requested the Head of HR Services to consult with the Party Administrators and representatives of the political groups on this matter and to report back to the Commission with recommendations on establishing a Statement of Principles, to complement existing policies, on the maintenance of dignity and respect in the parliamentary workplace.

## **11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

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

The Commission noted the following:

(a) *Letter from Deputy Noel Rock regarding ICT services for members*

The Commission noted that ICT Unit had addressed the issues concerning access to the parliamentary network in the member's constituency office. It also noted that the ICT Unit is currently implementing a Digital Transformation Programme which will deliver a number of new services in 2018.

(b) *Letter from Senator Joan Freeman regarding the provision of a room in Leinster House for members to use for quiet reflection, prayer, etc*

The Commission noted that at its meeting on 15 November 2016, it received a letter from the Seanad Committee on Procedure and Privileges recommending to the Commission that such a room be made available on completion of the structural works currently underway to the House.

(c) *Email from Deputy Louise O'Reilly regarding the provision of an Adrenaline Auto-Injection Station in the Leinster House complex*

The Commission requested the Superintendent of the Houses to examine this proposal and to report back to the Commission accordingly.

(d) *Letter from Deputy Michael Moynihan regarding the establishment of a Code of Conduct for the Houses to promote dignity and respect in the workplace*

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

### **(ii) Accessibility of the Oireachtas Broadcast Archive**

The Commission noted that a proposal on digitising the full broadcasting archive since 1990 and making the digitised content accessible and available online would be submitted to the Commission for consideration at its next meeting.

### **(iii) Revised Credit Policy for Catering Services**

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

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

The Commission noted that the Superintendent's Section plans to introduce a new tour programme for guided tours of the Houses on sitting days, including educational visits by schools, in order to reduce the waiting time for tours as a result of the renovation works to Georgian Leinster House. The new tour programme will include an introductory talk at the *Markievicz* entrance followed by a visit to the Dáil and Seanad Galleries to view the live proceedings. To enhance the tour experience while access to Historic House is closed, a viewing of suffragette exhibition items along the access routes to the Galleries will be included. The Superintendent's Section also plans to extend the tour hours on sitting days. The new tour arrangements will begin in January 2018.

The meeting adjourned at 12.40 p.m.

SEÁN Ó FEARGHAÍL, T.D.

Ceann Comhairle and Chairperson of the Commission

Dated: