



**Coimisiún Thithe  
an Oireachtais  
Houses of the  
Oireachtas Commission**

*Minutes of Commission Meeting  
Tuesday 6 March 2018*

1. The first meeting of the Commission of 2018 took place at 11.30 a.m. in Room 160, Leinster House.

2. **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil, Ceann Comhairle (Chairperson), Senator Denis O'Donovan, Cathaoirleach of the Seanad (Deputy Chairperson), Senator Paudie Coffey, Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy, Senator Gerard P. Craughwell, Mr. Peter Finnegan (Secretary General), Deputy Martin Heydon, Deputy Catherine Murphy and Deputy Louise O'Reilly.

Apologies were received from Senator Ned O'Sullivan.

3. **CHANGE IN MEMBERSHIP OF COMMISSION**

The Ceann Comhairle welcomed Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy, as a new member of the Commission, to the meeting.

4. **MEMBERSHIP OF COMMISSION SUB GROUPS**

**Printing Users' Council and Working Group on the Commemorative Programme for the Centenary of the First Dáil**

The Commission appointed Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy to serve on the *Printing Users' Council* and the *Working Group on the Commemorative Programme for the Centenary of the First Dáil* to fill the vacancies arising in the membership of these sub groups as a consequence of the resignation of Deputy Joe Carey from the Commission.

5. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of 12 December 2017 were agreed by the Commission.

The Commission approved a note of the incorporeal decision of the Commission of 25 and 26 January 2018 concerning a request received from a litigant in judicial review proceedings seeking the Commission's intervention in the proceedings [*High Court Record number: 2016/380MCA*].

## **6. 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 Chairperson thanked OPW Commissioner John McMahon and the Superintendent of the Houses for facilitating a site visit by members of the Commission to see the work underway to the House. A second visit will be scheduled at a future date.

The Commission was informed that the project is progressing on schedule. The installation of specialist historical building scaffolding for external fabric works to the building, including repairs to the roof, is nearing completion. Work on constructing a covered walkway, linking LH2000 with the new access at the *Markievicz* Hall entrance, is continuing and is planned to be completed in mid March 2018. Work was delayed for two days in the past week due to severe weather conditions. The construction project is scheduled for completion at the end of 2018.

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

## **7. REPORTS FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

In the unavoidable absence of the Chair of the Finance Committee for part of the meeting the Finance Officer presented two reports from the Finance Committee:

### **(i) Financial report for the reporting period January to December 2017**

The Commission noted that the provisional outturn for 2017 was €112.7m against a budget of €127.4m resulting in a budget variance of €14.7m (11.6%) of which €5.7m relates to pay and €9m relates to non-pay.

The Commission also noted the final position in relation to virement of funds between subheads, as authorised by the Commission, in respect of expenditure incurred before 31 December 2017.

### **(ii) Financial Overview for 2018**

The Commission noted the annual estimate of ongoing expenditure and an overview of expenditure allocations for 2018. A detailed report on financial performance will be presented to the Commission at the end of the next reporting period, January-March 2018.

## **8. ICT STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION**

The Commission received a presentation on the provision of members' ICT services and digital transformation projects in 2018 to support members in their work and to enhance the operational efficiency of core business processes that support the work of the Houses.

The Commission noted that Head of ICT will liaise with the Party and Group Administrators to arrange a proof of concept exercise for the migration to the new email system to assess whether the new system meets the needs of members and other users.

## **9. LEGAL BRIEFING FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY LEGAL ADVISER**

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

*Senator Denis O'Donovan declared an interest in this item and withdrew from the discussion.*

*At 12.30 pm the Chairperson vacated the Chair and the Deputy Chairperson of the Commission assumed the Chair.*

## **10. EU GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR)**

The Commission received a presentation on the Second Progress Report from the Service's Working Group on GDPR, including information on the support provided to members in preparing for implementation of the GDPR.

The Commission noted that a series of GDPR information seminars for members and their staff is currently underway and a training programme on GDPR will be organised through the Training Unit in the coming weeks.

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

## **11. OUTLINE WORK PROGRAMME AND MEETING SCHEDULE 2018**

The Commission noted an outline work programme and meetings schedule for 2018.

## 12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

### (i) *Maternity Leave for Members of the Houses*

The Commission agreed to consider proposals for a system of maternity leave for members of the Houses. It requested the Head of HR Services to prepare a paper for its consideration.

### (ii) *Correspondence*

- (a) *Letter from the Seanad Committee on Procedure and Privileges regarding the payment of allowances to certain Committee Chairpersons.*

The Commission agreed to refer the letter to the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform.

- (b) *Email from Senator Gerard Craughwell regarding training for members and their staff on the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)*

The Commission noted the Programme of Information Seminars on GDPR currently in place and the planned GDPR Training Programme for members and their staff.

- (c) *Letter from Deputy Caoimhín Ó Caoláin regarding car parking for members in the Leinster House complex*

The Commission requested the Superintendent of the Houses to circulate details of allocated parking spaces in the Leinster House complex to each Party and Group Administrator with a view to reminding members to park in their designated parking space only in light of the limited number of spaces available.

The Commission also requested the Superintendent to prepare a paper for its consideration on options to increase the space available for parking within the precincts of Leinster House, including proposals for the relocation of the monuments.

### (iii) *Information Items for Noting*

- (a) *Handover of official portraits to the Houses of the Oireachtas*

The Commission noted that the official portrait of President Michael D Higgins will be handed over to the Houses of the Oireachtas from the Office of Public Works later this month. The portrait of current women members of the Houses of the Oireachtas, commissioned under the Vótáil 100 programme, will be handed over to the Houses of the Oireachtas in early March. The portraits will hang at the bottom of the stairway to the Dáil Chamber until the Leinster House refurbishment project is completed and the House is prepared for reoccupation.

- (b) *Initiatives to reduce the use of disposable items in the Catering Services*

The Commission noted initiatives to reduce the use of disposable items in the Catering Services.

*(c) Independent Review of Services to Office Holders*

The Commission was advised that the Service had commissioned the Institute of Public Administration to undertake an independent review of services to office holders. The survey findings will be used to improve services and supports where this is required.

*(d) Sanction for the creation of new post of Head of the Office of the Parliamentary Legal Adviser*

The Commission noted that the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform had granted sanction for the creation of a new post of Head of the Office of the Parliamentary Legal Adviser, at Assistant Secretary level, to be filled through the Top Level Appointments Commission.

The creation of the post was recommended under the Capacity Review of the Office of the Parliamentary Legal Adviser (OPLA) to enhance the capacity of the OPLA in the areas of legal advices on policy for members of the Houses and drafting of Private Members' Bills. In line with that recommendation, at its meeting on 4 April 2017, the Commission granted approval for the creation of the post subject to the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform as required by section 12(3)(c) of the Commission Acts.

The meeting adjourned at 1.10 p.m.

SEÁN Ó FEARGHAÍL, T.D.

Ceann Comhairle and Chairperson of the Commission

Dated: