



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

*Minutes of Commission Meeting
Tuesday 11 December 2018*

1. The twelfth 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), Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy, 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 Martin Heydon.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

The minutes of the meetings of 13 November 2018, 27 November 2018 and 4 December 2018 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 briefed on the status and progress of the project. Works are proceeding in accordance with the contract and updated programme for the project. Additional works to improve structural integrity are underway and have been taken into consideration in the updated programme. Planning for a series of related projects to prepare the House for reoccupation following completion of the structural project is ongoing. Fit-out works will commence on a phased basis in early 2019. The construction project is scheduled for completion in April 2019.

At the invitation of OPW Commissioner John McMahon the Commission agreed to undertake a site visit in early 2019 to receive a briefing from OPW's on-site team and to view progress of the work to date.

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

5. FINANCIAL MATTERS: REPORTS FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

(i) Financial report for the reporting period January to October 2018.

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

It was noted that expenditure to the end October was €100.4 m against a budget of €110.3 m, showing an underspend of €9.8 m (9%), of which €2.2 m relates to pay and €7.6 m relates to non-pay.

The Commission noted the report.

(i) Sanction for Virement between subheads.

The Commission:

- (i) granted sanction to vire between subheads where savings are anticipated to meet excesses occurring, as set out in subheads 1(a), 3(b) and 4(b);
- (ii) noted that the excesses on the subheads in question, totalling €6.8 million, will be offset by projected net savings of €11.4 million;
- (iii) delegated authority to the Secretary General to vire additional funds between subheads in respect of expenditure incurred before 31 December 2018; and

agreed to formally note the final position in relation to virement as soon as may be following the closure of the 2018 Account.

6. ICT STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

Update on delivery of new ICT Services and Projects in 2018

The Commission was briefed on the status and progress of new ICT services and digital transformation projects. It noted that the migration to the new email system was completed as scheduled for members, their staff and staff of the Service and the final phase of the roll-out to remaining offices has commenced and is scheduled for completion in the first quarter of 2019. The pilot project for the migration to the new Windows system is ongoing. The phased migration to the new system will be coordinated with the replacement of ICT equipment in early 2019. The digital transformation projects are progressing within the specified timeframes.

A number of technical issues were highlighted arising from the upgrade to new systems that are impacting on the work of members. The Commission requested the Service to develop solutions to these issues as a priority. It noted that such technical issues must be proactively monitored and managed throughout implementation of the ICT portfolio of projects.

The Commission noted the ICT Projects Status Report.

7. IRISH SIGN LANGUAGE ACT 2017:

Report and Recommendations of the Working Group on Irish Sign Language (ISL) Strategy 2019 - 2021

The Commission was briefed on the report and recommendations presented by the Working Group established to develop a strategy for the provision of sign language interpretation services in the Houses of the Oireachtas to ensure compliance with the statutory obligations under the Irish Sign Language Act 2017.

The Commission adopted the report of the Working Group on Irish Sign Language (ISL) Strategy 2019 - 2021 and approved the recommendations set out in the report for implementation. It noted that the Strategy would be launched in the Houses in early 2019.

The Commission thanked the Working Group for undertaking this work.

8. GENERAL SCHEME OF CIVIL SERVICE REGULATION (AMENDMENT) BILL 2018:

Application to the Houses of the Oireachtas Service

The Commission approved proposals for the application of the Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Bill 2018 to the Houses of the Oireachtas Service, to the effect that—

- (i) the Appropriate Authority for disciplinary functions for staff of the Service would be the Secretary General, and
- (ii) the Appropriate Authority for disciplinary functions for Officers of the Houses of the Oireachtas would be the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission.

9. CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT FOR THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS

The Commission had before it for consideration:

- (i) a draft Child Safeguarding Statement for the Houses of the Oireachtas, and
- (ii) the e-Vetting Protocol in respect of positions in the Houses of the Oireachtas that require vetting in accordance with relevant legislation.

The Commission approved the Child Safeguarding Statement in principle noting that an Implementation Plan will be put in place to give effect to the Child Safeguarding Statement.

The Commission also approved the e-Vetting Protocol setting out the vetting process that applies in respect of positions in the Houses of the Oireachtas that require vetting.

10. DIGNITY AND RESPECT STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES AND POLICY:

Update on implementation of the Policy

The Commission was briefed on progress on actions taken to support implementation the Dignity and Respect Statement of Principles and Policy, as approved, in the parliamentary workplace. It noted that HR Services planned to launch the new policy in early 2019 and would organise a series of information seminars to communicate the new policy and related procedures to members and staff.

11. SCHEME FOR SECRETARIAL ASSISTANCE FOR MEMBERS:

Resources provided to members and parties under the Scheme

The Commission noted an update on the operation of the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members (the Scheme) and expenditure under the Scheme. The Commission also noted that the trade union representing staff employed under the Scheme had submitted a pay claim for staff to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The Commission agreed to receive a further update on developments with respect to the Scheme in early 2019.

12. UPDATE ON HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION (AMENDMENT) BILL 2018

The Commission received an update on progress on the drafting of the new Commission Bill for presentation to the Houses. It noted that the Bill would be published on 12 December and was scheduled to be considered by the Dáil on 13 December.

The Commission welcomed the planned publication of the Bill and expressed its appreciation that the funding and a number of amendments sought were included in the text.

There were a number of additional matters that the Commission wished to have addressed relating to the text and requested that appropriate amendments be prepared.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) Correspondence

The Commission noted the following:

- (a) Letter from Seanad Committee on Procedure and Privileges confirming the Committee's adoption of the report of the Working Group on Irish Sign Language (ISL) Strategy 2019 - 2021;

- (b) Letter from members of the Houses requesting mindfulness training for members and staff to support workplace wellbeing.

(ii) Future Meeting Schedule

The Commission approved an indicative schedule of meetings for the period January to July 2019.

The meeting adjourned at 12.50 p.m.

SEÁN Ó FEARGHAÍL, T.D.

Ceann Comhairle and Chairperson of the Commission

Dated: