



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

*Minutes of Commission Meeting
Tuesday 11 June 2019*

1. The seventh meeting of the Commission of 2019 took place at 11.30 a.m. in Room 160, Leinster House.

2. **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil, Ceann Comhairle (Chairperson), Senator Paudie Coffey, Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy, Senator Gerard P. Craughwell and Mr. Peter Finnegan, Secretary General.

Apologies were received from Senator Denis O'Donovan, Cathaoirleach of the Seanad (Deputy Chairperson), Deputy Timmy Dooley, Deputy Catherine Murphy and Senator Ned O'Sullivan.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of 14 May 2019 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 current status and progress of the project. Work is progressing in accordance with the updated programme for the project. The main construction project is in its final stage and is expected to be completed in July 2019. Fit out works have commenced on a phased basis to allow building occupancy to take place incrementally over the summer recess. The Georgian House will be reopened for the return of the Houses following the summer recess.

The Commission noted that a site visit was organised for 18 June during which Commission members will receive a briefing from OPW's on-site team and view progress of the work.

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

5. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

(i) Oireachtas Local Media Communications Plan

The Commission considered proposals to help raise awareness of the business of the Houses and the parliamentary work of members through local media and approved the following actions for implementation:

- (a) Provide access to Houses of the Oireachtas broadcast files (separate to archive files) on a trial basis;
- (b) Introduce a dedicated training package to facilitate local media in using parliamentary information resources;
- (c) Enhance the Houses of the Oireachtas Press Officer engagement with local media;
- (d) Implement a strategy to optimise social media engagement.

The Commission approved the estimated expenditure to implement the action plan of €45,000.

(ii) Oireachtas Education Programme

The Commission was briefed on the Oireachtas Education Programme, including the work undertaken across all strands of the programme.

The Commission was informed that information and educational resource packs, tailored for and accessible to young people, are available on the Oireachtas website. It requested that periodic reminders be sent to members on the availability of these resources.

(iii) Programme of public engagement events to mark the reopening of Georgian Leinster House

The Commission approved a proposal to mark the reopening of Georgian Leinster House in September 2019 through a programme of public engagements events. It also approved an outline programme of events for the period September – December 2019.

The Commission further approved expenditure, not exceeding the amount of €96,000, for the September 2019 programme of public engagement events.

6. HOSTING OF OSCE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY MEETING

The Commission considered a business case, with a budget requirement of €292,000, for the Houses of the Oireachtas to host the autumn meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE to be held in October 2021.

The Commission granted approval to host the 2021 autumn meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE, including the budget in the amount of €292,000.

7. PARLIAMENTARY BUDGET OFFICE WORK PROGRAMME

Delivery of a Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) Policy Costing Service

The Commission considered a proposal on the delivery of a policy costing service by the PBO in respect of policy proposals from members of the Houses and parliamentary groups. The proposed costing service would expand the PBO's *Quality Assurance Policy Costing Pilot Scheme* with the objective to provide a costing service that would:

- assist members to better scope their costing requests prior to submission to government departments;
- provide year-round quality assurance to members in respect of the costings carried out by government departments;
- make important budgetary information readily available, and in a more accessible and timely format for members, including through proactively publishing ready reckoners for certain areas of expenditure and tax;
- highlight critical data gaps, or provide methodological advice to departments on an approach to costing; and
- provide a limited costing service for proposals that are un-costed by government departments.

The Commission approved the proposed policy costing service, as presented. It noted that the PBO will report back to the Commission with details on the introduction of the new service, and consequential staffing implications, for further consideration.

The Commission requested the Director of the PBO to bring forward quarterly reports for consideration to include details of refusals by relevant bodies to provide access to information as requested by the Parliamentary Budget Office in the performance of its functions in accordance with section 5(7) of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2018.

8. LEGAL UPDATE FROM THE PARLIAMENTARY LEGAL ADVISER

The Commission was briefed by the Parliamentary Legal Adviser on legal proceedings involving the Houses of the Oireachtas. It was informed that a Working Group had been established to report to the Dáil Committee on Procedure and the Seanad Committee on Procedure and Privileges with recommended changes to the Standing Orders of both Houses, and related actions, in response to recent Supreme Court judgments relating to the Houses. The Commission agreed to consider the Working Group's report and recommendations when presented by the Group.

9. HOUSES OF THE OIREACTHAS COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2018

The Commission approved the draft annual report on its activities in 2018 to be laid before the Houses in accordance with section 6 of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Library and Research Service Information Skills Training Programme

The Commission noted that the Library and Research Service (L&RS) proposed to undertake a survey of members' staff to evaluate and, if necessary, enhance the current information skills training programme developed by the L&RS for political staff.

The meeting adjourned at 12.50 p.m.

MARCELLA CORCORAN KENNEDY, T.D.

Chairperson of the Commission

(Pursuant to section 7(3)(c)(ii) of the Commission Acts)

Dated: