



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

*Minutes of Commission Meeting  
Monday 19 October 2020*

The ninth meeting of the Commission of 2020 took place at 11.30 a.m. online in MS Teams due to Covid-19 pandemic precautions.

**1. MEMBERS PRESENT**

Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl, Ceann Comhairle (Chair); Senator Mark Daly, Cathaoirleach (Deputy Chair); Deputy Joe Carey; Deputy Francis Noel Duffy; Deputy Duncan Smith; Senator Seán Kyne; Deputy Jennifer Murnane O'Connor; Deputy Louise O'Reilly; Senator Ned O'Sullivan; Senator Mark Wall; and Mr. Peter Finnegan (Secretary General).

**2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of 28 September 2020 were agreed by the Commission.

**3. MEMBERS' HR SERVICES**

**2.1 DIGNITY AND RESPECT PRINCIPLES AND POLICY**

The Head of HR Members' Services presented an update to the Commission on the implementation of the *Oireachtas Dignity and Respect Statement of Principles and Policy*, which were introduced in March 2019. The Chair also briefed the Commission on a related matter currently under investigation by the Service.

The Commission noted the obligations on all in the parliamentary workplace to uphold the standards set out in the policy and reaffirmed the Commission's position that bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment will not be tolerated in any form in the parliamentary workplace and reaffirmed the entitlement of all persons working in Leinster House to a safe and secure workplace.

The Commission noted that each newly elected member of the Houses received a copy of the *Statement of Principles and Policy* and was asked to adopt the policy as an employer and to provide a copy to their employees.

The Commission noted that all political parties have opted to adopt the policy by voluntary agreement; noted the current position regarding the adoption of the policy

by individual members; noted that the political parties have nominated Complaint Recipients to manage complaints and put in place resolution procedures, and that HR Members' Services acts as Complaint Recipient for Independent members and for those smaller parties who have not nominated internal Complaint Recipients. The Commission noted that training is provided for Complaint Recipients to manage complaints and to put in place resolution procedures.

Following further discussion, the Commission agreed the following:

- that consideration be given to an earlier review of the Dignity and Respect Policy, originally scheduled for 2021;
- that a scoping paper for the review be brought to the next Commission meeting for consideration.

The Commission also discussed the putting in place of a Code of Conduct/Code of Behaviour/Process for former members who have access privileges to Leinster House and asked the Service to examine options in this regard and to report back to the Commission.

## **2.2 UPDATE ON PAY CLAIM UNDER SCHEME FOR SECRETARIAL ASSISTANCE**

The Head of HR Members' Services presented an update on progress on the pay claim made under the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance. The Commission also considered and discussed correspondence received from the SIPTU section representing political staff about the pay claim.

### **4. LEGAL BRIEFING FROM THE OFFICE OF PARLIAMENTARY LEGAL ADVISERS (OPLA)**

The Commission agreed to give sanction for OPLA to defend civil proceedings initiated against the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission.

### **5. BROADCASTING FACILITIES - PROJECT BOARD REPORT ON THE TELEVISED FACILITIES PROCUREMENT PROCESS**

On 18 June 2020, the Commission approved the business case for the procurement of a new broadcasting contract.

The Commission noted the Project Board report on the outcome of the procurement process and noted that the new Television Facilities contract would commence on 10 December 2020.

## **6. COVID-19 UPDATE**

The Commission was briefed by the Head of the Facilities Management Unit on the implementation of, and compliance with, Oireachtas's Covid-19 workplace guidelines.

Following discussion, the Commission agreed, in the interests of the safety and welfare of all in the parliamentary community, that former members be encouraged not to attend Leinster House at this time in order to minimise the risk to themselves, and to members and their staff and essential and designated staff and contractors who are required on site; and to help restrict the number of people attending Leinster House at any one time.

## **7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **Correspondence**

The Commission considered correspondence from the following:

(a) Correspondence from Senator Ivana Bacik, on behalf of the members of the newly re-established Oireachtas members cyclists' group, about the provision of facilities for cyclists at Leinster House.

The Commission agreed that OPW be invited to the next Commission meeting to present a plan to provide facilities for cyclists in response to the issues outlined by the cyclists group in its correspondence.

(b) Correspondence from Deputy Paul Gavan regarding a review of the terms and conditions of all workers who regularly work on site in Leinster House.

The Commission agreed that OPLA provide legal advice in this matter.

(c) Correspondence from Deputy Louise O'Reilly regarding an incident at the Kildare Street entrance to Leinster House and ensuring the security of all in Leinster House.

The Commission was briefed by the Superintendent on liaison with senior Gardaí about arrangements to ensure members, staff and all people with business in the Houses have unimpeded and a safe means of access to and egress from Leinster House.

**8. AOB**

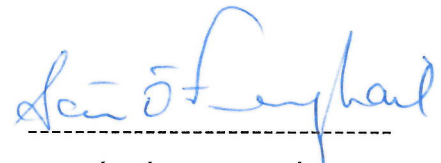
**(i) Electric Cars Charging Points**

A request was made for more charging points for electric cars in the Leinster House complex. The Commission agreed that OPW be invited to address this matter at the next Commission meeting.

**(ii) Protocol for Authorised Commission Reporting**

The Commission discussed the reporting of Commission meeting decisions and agreed that the Secretary General would present a proposal for a protocol in this regard to the Commission at its next meeting.

**9. Next Meeting:** Scheduled for Mon 30 November 2020 @11am in MS Teams



SEÁN Ó FEARGHAÍL, T.D.

Ceann Comhairle and Chairperson of the Commission

Dated: