



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

*Minutes of Commission Meeting
Monday 31 January 2022*

The first meeting of the Commission of 2022 took place at 11.00 a.m. via MS Teams.

1. MEMBERS PRESENT

Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl, Ceann Comhairle (Chairperson), Senator Mark Daly, Cathaoirleach of the Seanad (Deputy Chairperson), Deputy Joe Carey; Deputy Francis Noel Duffy; Senator Seán Kyne; Deputy Jennifer Murnane O'Connor Deputy Louise O'Reilly; Senator Ned O'Sullivan; Senator Lynn Ruane; Deputy Sean Sherlock and Mr. Peter Finnegan.

2. CHANGE IN MEMBERSHIP OF COMMISSION

The Ceann Comhairle welcomed new members, Senator Lynn Ruane and Deputy Seán Sherlock, who were attending the Commission meeting for the first time.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of 13 December 2021 were agreed by the Commission.

4. UPDATE FROM FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

(a) Update from the Office of Public Works on the Programme of Work for the Leinster House Precinct

Ms Rosemary Collier (Head of Heritage Services and Capital Works Delivery) and Mr. Ciarán O'Connor (State Architect) from the Office of Public Works (OPW), briefed the Commission on progress of work planned for the Leinster House campus.

The Commission agreed that a joint Working Group, comprising officials from the Houses of the Oireachtas Service and the OPW, be established to undertake an update of the Master Plan for Leinster House to incorporate current parliamentary requirements and to establish a structured framework for the delivery of the programme of projects for the campus. The updated Master Plan will be presented to the Commission for approval.

It was also agreed that the OPW would present options to the Commission at the next meeting for the restoration of the surface covering on the Kildare Street side of Leinster House.

(b) Covid 19 and Facilities Update

The Commission received a verbal update from the Head of Facilities Management.

5. OIREACHTAS LOCAL MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

The Commission approved a proposal to establish a position of Regional Media Officer in the Oireachtas Communications Unit to have responsibility for promoting and facilitating coverage of the parliamentary work of members in local and regional media

6. REPORT OF THE FORUM ON A FAMILY FRIENDLY AND INCLUSIVE PARLIAMENT

Proposal on implementation of the recommendations of the Forum

The Commission approved a proposal on implementation of the recommendations of the *Forum on a Family Friendly and Inclusive Parliament* as follows:

- that a Steering Group, supported by three subcommittees, be established to evaluate the Forum's recommendations under three broad headings: *Procedural, Human Resources and Facilities*, and to develop a plan to take forward the recommendations in line with the timelines set out in the proposal;
- that political input and ownership of the process be achieved through regular reports to the Committee for Dáil Reform, the Seanad Committee on Parliamentary Privileges and Oversight, the Dáil Business Committee and the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission;
- that the Steering Group will present progress reports to the Commission on a quarterly basis;
- that the Steering Group be chaired by the Assistant Secretary, Corporate and Members' Services, and the three sub-committees reporting to the Steering Group be chaired at Principal Officer level.

7. SCHEME FOR SECRETARIAL ASSISTANCE FOR MEMBERS

Update on SIPTU pay claim submitted for staff employed under the Scheme

The Commission received an update on the SIPTU pay claim submitted for staff employed under the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members.

8. MEMBERS' PUBLIC REPRESENTATION ALLOWANCE

Public Tender for the Provision of Professional Auditing Services

The Commission granted approval to initiate a public procurement process for the provision of professional audit services for the independent audit of expenditure under the Public Representation Allowance. It also agreed that the award of a contract resulting from the procurement process will be for a term of two years with an option to extend the contract term for a further two years.

9. LEGAL MATTERS

The Commission received a legal briefing from the Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers.

The Commission, pursuant to section of the Commission Acts 2003 to 2021, agreed to table a motion in the Dáil to seek authorisation to conduct the defence of workplace relations proceedings ADJ-00035219.

10. OUTLINE COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME AND MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2022

The Commission noted an outline work programme and meeting schedule for 2022.

11. FINANCE COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Commission appointed Deputy Seán Sherlock to serve on the Commission's Finance Committee to fill the vacancy arising as a consequence of the resignation of Senator Mark Wall from the Commission.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) Information items

The Commission noted the following:

- (a) Actions taken in the operations of the Print Facility to contribute to environmental sustainability;
- (b) Proposal from the Training and Development Unit on *Bystander Intervention Training*.

(ii) Correspondence

The Commission noted the following:

- (a) email from Deputy Paul Murphy regarding the use of recycled paper in the Print Facility;
- (b) email from Deputy Louise O'Reilly regarding Bystander Intervention Training;
- (c) letter from the Dáil Business Committee submitting the nomination of Deputy Denise Mitchell to serve on the *Dignity and Respect Policy Steering Group*.

(iii) Briefings on personal safety and security

The Commission noted that briefings for members of the Houses on personal safety and security were scheduled to take place in February.

(iv) Social media communications

The Head of Communications briefed the Commission on the outcome of his engagement with Facebook and Twitter on online safety for members including the effectiveness of the companies' responses when threatening content is posted online.

The Commission noted that a series of workshops and briefing sessions will be arranged for members and their staff on accessing the supports available to users of the social media platforms.

(v) Access to Leinster House

The Commission noted that members could access Leinster House through the Merrion Street door using the automated access control and requested that this access be also available to staff.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 28 February 2022.

SEÁN Ó FEARGHAÍL T.D.

Ceann Comhairle and Chairperson of the Commission

Dated: