



Houses of the
Oireachtas Commission
Coimisiún Thithe
an Oireachtais

*Minutes of Commission Meeting
Wednesday 29 April 2015*

1. The third meeting of the Commission of 2015 took place at 12.30 p.m. in Room 2, Leinster House.

2. **MEMBERS PRESENT**

Deputy Seán Barrett, Ceann Comhairle (Chairperson), Senator Paddy Burke, Cathaoirleach of the Seanad (Deputy Chairperson), Deputy Bernard Durkan, Deputy Olivia Mitchell, Deputy Dan Neville, Senator Tom Sheahan, Deputy Jack Wall and Senator John Whelan.

Apologies were received from Deputy John Browne and Senator Marc MacSharry.

3. **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the meeting of 24 March 2015 were agreed by the Commission.

4. **MATTERS ARISING FROM LAST MEETING**

Arising from the decision at its last meeting, the Commission agreed that the Commission for Communications Regulation would be invited to a meeting of the sub-Committee on Communications in the near future to discuss matters relating to broadcasting of the Oireachtas Channel.

5. **REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE**

- (i) **Financial Report for the reporting period January to March 2015**

Senator Paddy Burke, Cathaoirleach and Chair of the Finance Committee, presented a report from the Finance Committee on expenditure for the period January to March 2015.

It was noted that total estimated expenditure for the current year was €112m with actual expenditure incurred to end of March being €23.84m.

Finance Committee Recommendation to the Commission

The Finance Committee made the following recommendation to the Commission:

“The Finance Committee recommends that a pin to commemorate the hundredth year of the 1916 rising be issued to each Member of the Houses.”

The Commission agreed with the recommendation.

The Commission noted the report.

(ii) Commission’s Annual Accounts 2014

The Commission noted the 2014 Annual Accounts which were signed by the Accounting Officer and submitted to the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) in March 2015 pursuant to the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts.

6. ANNUAL RESOURCE PLAN 2015

The Commission had before it the Annual Resource Plan for the Service for 2015 setting out the anticipated resource requirements for the next 12 months.

It was noted that a moderate increase in staffing numbers was required to support a number of reform measures introduced by the Houses and to support the Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis, the Oireachtas TV Channel, and in specialist areas such as information technology, legal services, policy analysis and enhanced security arrangements.

The Commission noted the internal controls, sanctioning arrangements, the numbers in place at end of February 2015, and the progress in implementation of the provisions of the “Haddington Road” Agreement.

The Commission approved, subject to normal governance procedures, additional resources of:

- (i) 24.5 posts to core staffing numbers to deal with increased service demands and to support new services;
- (ii) 2 investigator posts for the banking inquiry to be assigned for drawdown as the Committee of Inquiry progresses.

The Commission also underlined the importance of ensuring the availability of adequate and appropriate resources to support the effective operation of the Committee system in the Houses.

7. JOINT COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY INTO THE BANKING CRISIS

(i) Request for consent for engagement of specialist expertise to support the Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis

The Commission considered a letter from the Chairman of the Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis, Deputy Ciarán Lynch, requesting the consent, in writing, of the Commission for the Joint Committee to engage the services of persons with technical knowledge or expertise in accordance with section 67(2) of the Houses of the Oireachtas (Inquiries, Privileges and Procedures) Act 2013.

Pursuant to the said section 67(2), the Commission agreed to grant its consent for the Joint Committee to engage the services of persons as set out in the Annex to these minutes.

The Commission noted that the Committee would submit further requests, as appropriate, in due course in accordance with section 67(2) of the Act.

(ii) Report on Banking Inquiry costs and project update

The Commission noted a report on the Banking Inquiry Costs and project update for the period June 2014 to March 2015. The report also included information on staff resources for the Inquiry and budgetary commitments.

The Commission also noted that further reports on inquiry costs will be published in July, October and at the conclusion of the Inquiry.

8. REPORTING AND PRESENTATION OF INFORMATION RELATING TO MEMBERS OF THE HOUSES:

The Commission was briefed on proposals to improve the quality and timeliness of information on the activities of Members on the Oireachtas website in order to allow greater access to information and thereby reduce the requirements for interested persons to request information under the Freedom of Information Act.

The Commission agreed the outline proposals.

9. PROPOSALS ON MARKETING THE OIREACHTAS CHANNEL

The Commission was briefed on proposals on marketing the Oireachtas Channel to improve public information on and engagement with the parliamentary process.

The Commission agreed the proposals.

10. NECESSARY MAINTENANCE WORKS IN LEINSTER HOUSE

The Commission noted the progress in relation to necessary maintenance works in Leinster House.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- (i) *Draft Statutory Instrument under the Oireachtas (Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices) (Amendment) Act 2014*

The Commission approved the Draft Statutory Instrument to give effect to its decision on the provision of a secretarial assistant to the Anti-Austerity Alliance Party in accordance with the Oireachtas (Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices) (Amendment) Act 2014.

- (ii) *Correspondence from Public Relations Institute of Ireland*

The Commission noted correspondence from the Public Relations Institute of Ireland.

It was agreed that the Secretariat would respond to the correspondence.

- (iii) *The Commission requested that papers be prepared on the following matters for upcoming meetings:*

- (a) The operation of the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members;
- (b) The conversion of the premises of the former Siopa in Leinster House;
- (c) Accommodation in Leinster House with particular reference to measures which would better serve the needs of Members, staff and visitors to the House.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 2.45 p.m.

SEÁN BARRETT, T.D.

Ceann Comhairle and Chairperson of the Commission

Dated:

ANNEX I

GRANT OF CONSENT PURSUANT TO SECTION 67(2) OF THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS (INQUIRIES, PRIVILEGES AND PROCEDURES) ACT 2013

Pursuant to section 67(2) of the Houses of the Oireachtas (Inquiries, Privileges and Procedures) Act 2013, the Commission grants its consent, in writing, to the Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis to engage the services of persons with technical knowledge or expertise, as set out hereunder, being technical knowledge or expertise that is relevant to the functions required to be performed by the Committee, to assist it in performing those functions:

- **Services relating to the investigation of matters pertaining to the “Nexus Phase” of the Inquiry covering Banking Systems and Practices, Regulatory Systems and Practices and Crisis Management Systems and Policy Responses:**
St. John Cooke;
- **Legal services relating to the Inquiry:** Sarah Reid, Vivian Meacham, Kellie Butler, Donal Fallon.