

# HOUSES OF THE OIREACTHAS COMMISSION ANNUAL REPORT 2010



Coimisiún Thithe  
an Oireachtais  
Houses of the  
Oireachtas Commission



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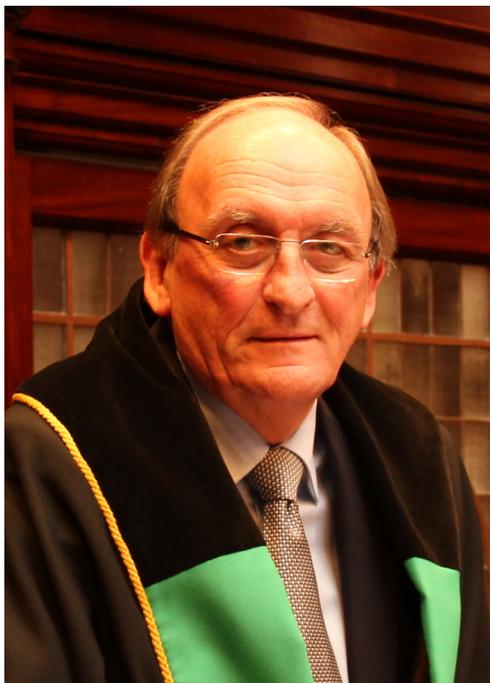
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## INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIRMEN OF BOTH HOUSES



We are pleased to present the seventh Annual Report of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission.

The report is primarily in respect of 2010 but also covers the pre and post-election period in early 2011. Therefore, it goes without saying that the Report covers a turbulent and tense period, both economically and politically, in our parliament and our country.

As well as providing details of parliamentary activity during this period, the report also accounts for the public money spent in running the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2010.

We would like to acknowledge the work of the outgoing Commission, who, when faced with difficult decisions about budget cuts and expenditure cutbacks, rose to the challenge of implementing these cutbacks in a fair and impartial manner. The outgoing Chairperson, Deputy Séamus Kirk, and his fellow Commission members, operated on the general principle that it sought to support Parliament and all members equally in carrying out their role as elected representatives, whilst at the same time recognising the reality that the Houses of the Oireachtas are not immune from the necessity to implement cuts in all areas of its expenditure.

Throughout this period, the Houses of the Oireachtas Service's senior management team, headed by the Secretary General, Mr. Kieran Coughlan, together with all staff, worked extremely hard to rise to the challenges of maintaining and improving services to members, in the face of reduced budgets and staff.

Since its establishment in 2004, the Commission has made significant progress towards making the Houses of the Oireachtas a world-class parliament, including through providing new and enhanced services to members to assist them in the performance of their duties. Instances of these new and enhanced services include the establishment of a new parliamentary library and research service, a centralised print facility for all members, increased members' staff resources, the establishment of a One-Stop-Shop for members, etc. Nevertheless, during this period, the Commission has, through prudent financial management, consistently managed its budgets to return a significant surplus in each of its three-year financial cycles to date.

Following the General Elections, 44% of the members returned to this Dáil and Seanad are new members and we congratulate them on their election and wish them well in carrying out their constitutional duties as Deputies and Senators. We must now all work together to deliver the reforms necessary to restore confidence in politics and in this country, both at home and abroad.



## INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIRMEN OF BOTH HOUSES

It is however with regret that on the occasion of this report we must record the sad passing of our colleague, Deputy Brian Lenihan. His passing was deeply regretted by members on both sides of the Houses. Brian served energetically as a member of the first Commission and took a keen interest in the work of the Commission in his subsequent Cabinet roles. May he rest in peace.

The past year has been a difficult one but we face into the future with optimism and a renewed sense of commitment to improve matters for our society and to improve the working of Parliament for the betterment of the people whom we are honoured to serve.

We, the new Commission, are committed to sustaining and building on the progress made by the two previous Commissions in relation to the delivery of parliamentary services to the Houses and their members. We are committed to providing a parliament fit for purpose in dealing with and overcoming the challenges we, the people of this country face, at this point in time. We must restore the relevance of politics in providing solutions to our problems by proceeding with Dáil reform measures which will enhance parliamentary oversight of the Executive. In these difficult times, parliamentary oversight and scrutiny are now more important than ever.



Seán Barrett, T.D.,  
Ceann Comhairle,  
Chairperson.



Senator Paddy Burke,  
Cathaoirleach,  
Deputy Chairperson.

Houses of the Oireachtas Commission.  
July 2011.

# THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACTHAS GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

## THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACTHAS COMMISSION (the Commission)

**THE COMMISSION** is the governing board which oversees the provision of services to the Houses and their members by the Houses of the Oireachtas Service (the parliamentary administration) in accordance with the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2009. It is comprised of 11 members and is chaired by the Ceann Comhairle. First established in 2004, it is a statutory corporate body and is independent in the performance of its functions. It is accountable to the Houses of the Oireachtas in the performance of its functions and has responsibility for ensuring value for money. The Commission has no role in relation to parliamentary business or procedure.

The 2003 Act provided the inaugural Commission with its funding for the period 2004 to 2006 as well as providing for the establishment of the Commission. Since then, the Commission has overseen the smooth running of services to both Houses and has introduced a number of significant improvements in the services provided to members and to the wider public. Amending legislation was enacted in 2006 and 2009, the primary purpose of which was to make

funding available for the running of the Houses of the Oireachtas and the parliamentary administration for the following three-year periods. The requirement to provide by statute for a new Commission budget every three years is useful not just in facilitating financial planning but in also affording an opportunity to assess the adequacy of the legislation thereby allowing it to be updated as required. Technical amendments were also made to the primary 2003 Act in the follow-up amending legislation.

Commission members serve in a corporate capacity and do not represent their parties, or groups, or their own interests, at this forum. The Commission operates on the general principle that it seeks to support Parliament and all members equally in carrying out their role as elected representatives. Commission members do however carry out a valuable role in communicating information about Commission activity and decisions through the parliamentary party mechanism.

See page 9 for further details on the role of the Commission.

## THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACTHAS SERVICE (the Service)

**THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACTHAS SERVICE** (formerly called the Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas) is the public service body which provides administrative services to the Houses of the Oireachtas and their members. The Service is headed by the Secretary General and Clerk of the Dáil. The functions of the Service are to provide advice and support services to the Commission, to the Houses of the Oireachtas and their Committees, and to members of the

Houses. The Service is staffed by approximately 435 civil servants of the State (currently 387 full-time equivalents in place) and 54 State industrial staff who are employed by the Commission. There are also approximately 360 (full-time equivalents) political staff working in either Leinster House or in members' constituency offices who are employed directly by the members or the party for whom they work and who are paid by the Commission.

# THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACTHAS GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

## THE SECRETARY GENERAL

**THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACTHAS SERVICE** is the Chief Executive of the Commission and Clerk of Dáil Éireann. He has responsibility for managing the Service on a day-to-day basis and for implementing Commission policies (in the

same way as the Secretary General of a Government Department vis-à-vis the Minister of that Department). He is a member of the Commission, while also being accountable to it and subject to its direction. He is also the Accounting Officer in respect of Commission expenditure.

## THE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (the MAC)

The Secretary General is assisted by the Service's **Management Advisory Committee (the MAC)**, which, following the recent establishment and filling of the Service's second Assistant Secretary post, now includes the five most senior managers in the Service. The appointment of the second Assistant Secretary post completes the top level management structure apex of two Assistant Secretaries reporting to the Secretary General as agreed by the Commission in 2006.

The MAC comprises the Secretary General, the Assistant Secretary Corporate and Members' Services Division, the Assistant Secretary Parliamentary Services Division, and the chairs of three MAC sub-Committees, namely, the Clerk-Assistant of the Dáil, the Clerk of the Seanad, and an officer at Principal Officer 1 grade.

The MAC decides on issues of strategic, operational and financial importance which may then be referred on to the Commission for decision as appropriate. Its Agenda is driven to a large extent by the policies adopted by the Commission, as well as by the strategies and programmes

as set out in the Strategic and Corporate Business Plans of the Service. MAC members and other senior managers of the Service also attend Commission meetings as required.

To further enhance the effectiveness of the MAC, an external 'non executive' member (a former secretary general of a government department) was appointed by the Secretary General to the Committee in October 2010. The membership of the MAC was further extended in early 2011 by the appointment of two Principal Officers (POs) from the Service nominated in rotation by the Secretary General. This PO representation, which will run to end-2011, has now been subsumed into a new MAC sub-Committee structure involving all POs.

See page 70, for further details on the activities of the MAC during 2010.

See Appendix 2, pages 76 and 77, for the revised composition of the MAC and the new Organisation Chart of the Service since June 2011.

## THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACTHAS GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



**Members of the Commission** (back row from left): Frank Feighan, T.D.; Catherine Byrne, T.D.; Senator Tom Sheahan; Dan Neville, T.D.; Senator Marc MacSharry; Senator John Whelan; John Browne, T.D.; Jack Wall, T.D.; (front row from left): Kieran Coughlan, Secretary General and Clerk of the Dáil; Seán Barrett, T.D., Ceann Comhairle [Chairperson]; Senator Paddy Burke, Cathaoirleach, Seanad Éireann [Deputy Chairperson].



**Members of the MAC** (back row from left): Richard Caffrey, Clerk-Assistant of the Dáil; Deirdre Lane, Clerk of the Seanad; Art O'Leary, Principal Officer 1; Eddie Sullivan, External Member; (front row from left): Peter Finnegan, Assistant Secretary, Parliamentary Services Division; Kieran Coughlan, Secretary General and Clerk of the Dáil [Chair]; Conan McKenna, Assistant Secretary, Corporate & Members' Services Division.

# ROLE OF THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACTHAS COMMISSION

## CONTEXT OF THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACTHAS COMMISSION

The role of the Commission under the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2009 is "to provide for the running of the Houses of the Oireachtas, to act as governing body of the Service, to consider and determine policy in relation to the Service, and to oversee the implementation of that policy by the Secretary General". The Commission came into existence on 1 January 2004 and is comprised of 11 members as follow:

- ◆ the Chairman of Dáil Éireann (*ex-officio* member) (*Chairperson of the Commission*).
- ◆ the Chairman of Seanad Éireann (*ex-officio* member) (*Deputy Chairperson*).
- ◆ the Secretary General of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service (*ex-officio* member).
- ◆ a member of one of the Houses of the Oireachtas appointed by the Minister for Finance [the "representative of the Minister for Finance"].
- ◆ 4 ordinary members appointed by Dáil Éireann.
- ◆ 3 ordinary members appointed by Seanad Éireann.

The Commission operates on the general principle that it seeks to support the Houses and all members equally in carrying out their role as elected representatives. The Commission has no role in relation to parliamentary business or procedure. Members of the Commission (excluding *ex-officio* members) qualify for an annual allowance.

The Commission provides services to the 226 Members of both Houses of the Oireachtas and the staff in their employment. It also provides services for Departmental officials, party staff and advisors, media, and service personnel for whom Leinster House is a place of work. The Service consists of 435 civil servants of the State (at present just over 387 in post due to the Government moratorium on the filling of vacancies), whose terms and conditions of employment are set down in the general civil service statutory code, in the Staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Act, 1959, and in the Commission legislation. Finally, there are over 100,000 visitors to Leinster House each year in recent years, all of whom use the services provided under the remit of the Commission.

In addition to its general role, the legislation sets out certain specific functions of the Commission as follows:

- ◆ Overseeing ongoing expenditure.
- ◆ Paying salaries and expenses of members, and their staff, and the Service (the total number on the payroll is approximately 1200 at present).
- ◆ Keeping annual accounts.
- ◆ Performing functions in relation to civil service staff of the Commission.
- ◆ Producing and publishing strategic plans, annual reports, annual estimates and handbooks and information about the business of the Houses for members.
- ◆ Providing translation services from one official language into the other in respect of Acts of the Oireachtas.
- ◆ Preparing and publishing guidelines for members on the use by them of publicly funded services and facilities and specifying a charge for same following a dissolution of the Dáil.
- ◆ Exercising certain functions previously exercised by the Minister for Finance regarding secretarial facilities for Members and qualifying parties.
- ◆ Exercising certain legal functions (including participation in proceedings where necessary and arranging for legal advice).

## Matters outside the remit of the Commission

The Commission **cannot**:

- ◆ Set members' salaries or allowances.
- ◆ Set staff pay, conditions, pensions.
- ◆ Appoint staff at specified senior management grades, namely, at or above Principal Officer 1, without the consent of the Minister for Finance.

Capital expenditure - the Commission does not control or manage any building works - this function is carried out by the OPW for all Government Departments and Offices.

Strategic vs operational functions – day-to-day management is a matter for the Secretary General and the MAC.

# ROLE OF THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACTHAS COMMISSION

## Commission Accountability

The Commission is accountable to the Houses for the performance of its functions. The Commission is therefore in effect the "Minister" for the Houses of the Oireachtas Service.

The effective operation of the Houses of the Oireachtas is of enormous constitutional and public importance and the quality and management of parliamentary services is a critical factor in this effectiveness. The taxpayer expects parliamentary business to be conducted to the highest of standards; Government to be held to account; constituents to be represented and their issues and problems pursued; and traditional parliamentary functions and working methods to be modernised and adapted to changes in the wider world.

## Code of Conduct for Commission members

The Commission has adopted a Code of Conduct for Commission members as required under section 4A of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2009. The Commission, in accordance with the Acts, consulted with the Standards in Public Office Commission on the draft Code. Members of the Commission are bound by the requirements of this Code in the performance of their duties as members of the Commission. The Code sets out the agreed ethical standards that inform the conduct of members of the Commission, both collectively and individually, in performing their functions and duties. It reflects and enhances the Operating Principles observed by the Commission since its inception in 2004.

Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann have adopted Codes of Conduct for their members as required under the Ethics Acts 1995 and 2001. Commission members are bound by the requirements of these Codes in their capacity as Deputies and Senators.

## Disclosure of Interests by Commission members

Under the Code of Conduct and in addition to compliance with the general requirements of the Ethics in Public Office Acts 1995 and 2001,

- ◆ A Commission member must disclose any material interest that he or she or any connected person may have in any matter under consideration at a meeting or

## Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission of 31<sup>st</sup> Dáil/24<sup>th</sup> Seanad

### Ex-officio members:

Seán Barrett, T.D., Ceann Comhairle [Chairperson]  
 Senator Paddy Burke, Cathaoirleach, Seanad Éireann [Deputy Chairperson]  
 Kieran Coughlan, Secretary General of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service

### Member appointed by the Minister for Finance:

[appointed on 28/06/11]

Jack Wall, TD.

### Members appointed by Dáil Éireann:

[appointed on 30/06/11]

John Browne, T.D.

Catherine Byrne, T.D.

Frank Feighan, T.D.

Dan Neville, T.D.

### Members appointed by Seanad Éireann:

[appointed on 30/06/11]

Senator Marc MacSherry

Senator Tom Sheahan

Senator John Whelan

## Commission meeting activity

Meetings	2008	2009	2010
Commission	8	10	8
Finance Committee	5	4	4
Audit Committee	4	2	3
Other	6	7	2
<b>Totals</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>17</b>

## Commission Regulations 2010

### SI Number 87 of 2010

Oireachtas (Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices) (Secretarial Facilities) (Amendment) Regulations 2010

To provide for the removal of the option previously available to members to engage a higher parliamentary assistant on a shared basis [amends SI 36 of 2008]

# ROLE OF THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACTHAS COMMISSION

otherwise in matters concerning the functions of the Commission.

- ◆ A material interest arises if the consequence or effect of any decision on the matter may confer on or withhold from the member concerned a significant benefit without also conferring it on or withholding it from persons in general or a class of persons which is of a significant size having regard to all the circumstances and to which the member belongs.
- ◆ Where such an interest has been disclosed, the member concerned shall take no further part in the proceedings and shall not participate in any decision or vote in connection with such matter.
- ◆ If a member is in doubt as to whether an interest should be disclosed, advice should be sought from the Chairperson of the Commission and, if required, the disclosure should be made as soon as possible after the receipt of the advice.
- ◆ All disclosures of interest are recorded in the Commission minutes.

## Interaction between Commission members and other members of the Houses

- ◆ The formal mechanism for interaction/communication between the Commission and members of the Houses is via the Joint Administration Committee (JAC) which communicates the views of members on matters of policy to be decided by the Commission and makes recommendations on such matters as appropriate.
- ◆ In addition, in certain circumstances, as an input to decision making, Commission members may collectively decide to consult informally with their parliamentary party colleagues on an issue under consideration - for instance, in 2010 Commission members consulted with their parliamentary colleagues prior to recommending to the Minister for Finance the introduction of attendance recording for members and the all-in standardised parliamentary allowance.
- ◆ To assist members discuss and explain the rationale for Commission decisions to colleagues, the draft minutes of Commission meetings are circulated to Commission members as soon as practicable after the meeting taking place.

## Transparency

The Commission operates in a transparent manner – the minutes of the meetings, once adopted, are published to the Oireachtas website and Commission documents are subject to the Freedom of Information Acts. The Commission’s annual report, which details the work carried out by Parliament and the support services provided by the parliamentary administration as well as accounting for the public money spent in running Parliament in a given year, is also published to the Oireachtas website.

## Commission Committees

The Commission has two key standing advisory Committees – namely the Finance Committee, which considers quarterly financial reports in detail and submits them to the Commission for approval, and the Audit Committee, which oversees and advises on risk management, internal controls (including the internal audit function and issues identified by external audit) and value for money issues. The Audit Committee has now been established on a statutory basis pursuant to section 10 of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2009. It reports annually to the Commission and its report is published on the Oireachtas website. The Commission's Finance and Audit Committees meet on a quarterly basis.

The Commission also sets up ad-hoc sub-Committees as required. For instance, on the review of the Members’ Allowances a sub-Committee of the Commission was established to consult with the Minister for Finance and his officials. A sub-Committee on Accommodation Strategy was established in 2010 to consider the works to be commenced during recess periods and also to consider the overall long-term accommodation strategy for the Leinster House precinct.

## Commission meeting activity

The Commission met eight times during 2010 and the minutes of these meetings are available on [www.oireachtas.ie](http://www.oireachtas.ie).

During the year, the Commission:

- ◆ Responded to the recommendations of the Special Group on Public Service Numbers and Expenditure

# ROLE OF THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACTHAS COMMISSION

Programmes (An Bord Snip Nua) applicable to the Houses of the Oireachtas.

- ◆ Considered savings in the context of the Croke Park Agreement.
- ◆ Agreed annual estimates, reviewed quarterly reports from the Finance Committee, and noted the 2009 Annual Accounts.
- ◆ Continued its ongoing discussion with the OPW on the long-term development plan for the Leinster House precinct, including the Agriculture House accommodation strategy.
- ◆ Approved a request from the OPW for the use of a section of Leinster Lawn adjacent to the National Gallery for the duration of the roof repair works to the National Gallery [on condition that replacement car parking spaces would be sourced by the OPW].
- ◆ Approved the Commission's Strategic Plan 2010-2012.
- ◆ Approved the Commission's Communications Strategy 2010-2012.
- ◆ Continued with its review of the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance.
- ◆ Approved a programme of encryption of all laptops.
- ◆ Engaged in detailed discussions with the Minister for Finance on the review of members' allowances – new system introduced by the Minister in March 2010.
- ◆ Approved the monthly web publication of members' expenses and attendance recording details.
- ◆ Sanctioned the legal fees for the conduct of the defence of legal proceedings on behalf of named members of the Oireachtas on the authorisation of the relevant House.
- ◆ Approved and published guidelines for outgoing Deputies and Senator candidates on the use by them for election purposes of services and facilities following the dissolution of Dáil Éireann.
- ◆ Approved a travel policy for foreign and domestic travel undertaken by members and staff.

## STRATEGIC VISION

Our role in serving the Irish parliament is expressed in the following statements of our mission and vision.

These statements in turn inform our strategies and the specific actions we propose to deliver them.

## OUR MISSION

We serve the democratic interests of our main stakeholders, the Irish people, by serving parliament through:

- ◆ enabling the Houses, their Committees and their members to do their parliamentary business, and
- ◆ meeting members' needs as public representatives in the context of parliamentary business.

## OUR VISION

"A World-Class Parliamentary Service".

## OUR STRATEGIES

We identify the following three strategies for our work on behalf of the Commission under this plan:

### Improving Services to Parliament

The Chairpersons and members of the Houses and the Committees can be assured of continuous, high quality parliamentary support services.

### Improving Services to Members

Members will receive the services they need to fulfil their roles as public representatives through their parliamentary work.

### Enhancing Service Capability

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service will achieve the highest standards in public service and parliamentary administration.

## INTRODUCTION

I am pleased to present my 2010 progress report on the delivery of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service's commitments set out under the Commission's Strategic Plan 2010-2012.

The strategies we have set out in our Strategic Plan reflect the current need to focus in on what is key to delivering quality public service in this challenging economic environment. Against this backdrop of severe economic constraints, it is crucial that parliament and its members have the back-up services necessary to fulfil their constitutional mandates. In respect of both financial and staffing resources, we must regard the need to "do better with less" as both a challenge and an opportunity for a leaner, more efficient working organisation. Our response to this challenge is clearly reflected in our strategies, firstly in our commitment to investing more in our people who are our key resource and secondly in our commitment to transform the way we work.

Overall I can report good progress on the delivery of our actions to implement the Strategic Plan, notwithstanding the earlier than anticipated dissolution of the Dáil and the necessity for the Service to refocus its plans to prepare for that. Services to members and to the Houses have been maintained or increased, despite decreases in Service staff numbers and budgets. In supporting the sittings and business of the Houses and their Committees, we continue to deliver procedural supports and advice of the highest standard and, through our Procedural Excellence Programme, we are continuing to build on and enhance our procedural capacity, capability and service delivery.

The Legislative Analysis service provided by the Library and Research Service (L&RS) is just one example of where we have increased our level of service to members. These research papers produced are of the highest standard and provide relevant, authoritative and balanced information on the legislation before the Houses in time for Second Stage debates. The feedback from members has been very positive and the research papers provided have now become standard feature for members in preparing for parliamentary debates.



Generally, a survey of Oireachtas members in December 2010, just prior to the General Elections, found that members continue to express high levels of satisfaction (85%+ ratings) with the services provided to them and with the staff providing them. We are committed to responding to the improvement feedback this survey has also highlighted.

The key areas of focus for the Service during 2010 and early 2011 have been as follows:

### **The Croke Park Agreement and the Transforming Public Services Agenda**

The Oireachtas Service is not immune from the requirement to make cuts in its expenditure as the Croke Park Agreement requires all public bodies, including the Commission, to reduce expenditure, reduce staff and work more efficiently in line with the objectives of the Transforming Public Services Agenda.

As already mentioned, we are mindful too of the need to balance the obligation to meet savings and reduced staffing targets against the important priority of supporting the role of Parliament.

Since 2009 the cost of staff salaries has decreased by €2.2 million or 8.5%, members' pay has decreased by €2.3m or 10%, and members' allowances have been reduced by €1.2m or 8.7%. We have also reduced IT, communications and printing spend by about €4.1m (30%) in total. Our 2011 spend is now comparable to 2002/2003 levels in real terms and civil service staff numbers have decreased from 435 to 387 - more than a 10% decrease.

Our Croke Park Action Plan submitted to the Croke Park Implementation Body targets savings of €7.5 million to be achieved in 2011/2012. These savings are at both administrative and political levels and include significant cost reductions in parliamentary printing, moving to paperless Committees, flexible working arrangements where some staff are now engaged for sitting days only, more efficient scheduling and televising of Committee meetings, and rationalisation of accommodation.

A rigorous implementation process is now underway to deliver the savings and efficiencies identified to the Implementation Body and we have an ongoing process in place to review these and other potential savings.

## Government Moratorium

The principles of the 2009 Government moratorium on public sector numbers was applied by the Commission to the civil service staff of the Service. The Commission agreed that vacancies should be filled on an exceptional basis only, on the recommendation of the Secretary General. The filling of 8 out of 47 vacancies has since been approved by the Commission. Therefore, I anticipate that out of a total civil service sanctioned staffing complement of 435, through retirements and incentivised schemes, the Service could be carrying a significant number of vacancies by the end of 2012. As outlined above to date our staffing numbers have already decreased by more than 10% to 387. Our ongoing commitment to increase our service agility by continuously reviewing our structures, systems and policies should ensure that we are in a position to meet this challenge.

To assist us in managing these changes, we have developed specific approaches in the areas of knowledge management, VFM and process reviews to meet the challenges of the anticipated loss of institutional

knowledge, through retirements of senior staff, etc, over the coming years. We have also put procedures in place to develop our management and leadership capability for staff at Principal Officer (PO) and Assistant Principal (AP) management levels.

I believe that strong leadership in the public sector is now more important than ever so that we are in a position to change and transform our public service delivery in line with the objectives of the Transforming Public Services Agenda and the Croke Park Agreement, and to meet the institutional reform agenda proposed in the new Programme for Government.

## General Elections

Once we knew the General Elections were imminent, pre and post-election plans were put in place to give support and advice to outgoing, retiring, and non-retained members and their staff. We also put plans in place for the predicted large number of new members whose age profiles and expectations of the services we provide may be different to those of the previous membership.

The anticipated high level of turnover of members materialised in practice with 76 new members elected to the Dáil and 23 new members elected to the Seanad. Our post-election induction programme for new members has had very positive feedback from these newly elected members. 43 liaison officers, in addition to the staff of the One-Stop-Shop and the HR Unit for members, were trained to meet and help new members "find their feet" following their election to either of the Houses. In-house information seminars and focussed training were also rolled out for new members and their staff.

## Commission Budgets

Our overall budget for the three-year period of this Strategic Plan is €360 million (see Appendix 3, page 78). This is down from an allocation of €393 million in the preceding three year allocation. Our running costs are continuing to fall due to administrative efficiency measures, cuts in salaries, allowances and pensions of members, and cuts in salaries and numbers of civil service staff.

Our Estimate for 2010 was €118 million and, through stringent budget management and savings initiatives, our actual outturn was just over €107 million.

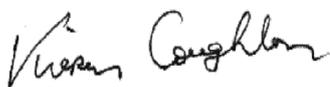
Our Estimate for 2011 is €113 million. This did not include election costs as an election was not anticipated in 2011 at the time of the framing of the Estimate in October 2010. Overall, between payroll, members' allowances and essential running costs, including key contracts such as ICT, broadcasting and cleaning, 94% of our 2011 budget is committed and non-discretionary and the balance, approximately €7 million (6%), can be considered to be discretionary expenditure.

A list of further key activities of the Service during 2010 is set out at pages 16 to 18.

### In conclusion

The Service has displayed great resilience in face of the challenges presented to us during 2010. I would therefore like to thank our staff, including those who have left the Service during 2010 after many years of dedicated service, for their commitment, ability, dedication and flexibility in meeting the increased demands in these straitened financial times. Their enthusiasm augurs well for the future and I am confident that we are well placed to meet the challenges ahead and we will continue to meet and exceed the targets of the strategies we have set. I would also like to pay tribute to the Commission for their dedication and support.

Ireland needs a strong autonomous parliament fit for purpose for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to meet the challenges facing all parts of our society and the economy. The Service, acting under the auspices of the Commission, will continue to deliver the back-up services required by the Houses and their members to assist them in carrying out their constitutional role as parliamentarians and public representatives.



Kieran Coughlan  
Secretary General and Clerk of Dáil Éireann  
June 2011

# 2010 – KEY ACTIVITIES

## Sittings of the Houses and Committees

- ◆ 100 Dáil sittings (843 sitting hours).
- ◆ 97 Seanad sittings (613 sitting hours).
- ◆ 623 Committee meetings (1,065 sitting hours).

## Business of the Houses and Committees

- ◆ 82 Committee Reports.
- ◆ 61 Bills published as initiated.
- ◆ 4,782 amendments tabled to Bills.
- ◆ 44,943 Parliamentary Questions processed (90% of which were submitted electronically).

## Procedural knowledge management

- ◆ Monthly meetings of the Panel of Temporary Chairpersons to discuss procedural issues as they arise in the Chamber.
- ◆ Monthly meetings of the Panel of Temporary Clerks and fortnightly meetings of the Committee Clerks to share procedural knowledge and clerking experience.  
  
(see pages 21 and 22).

## Parliamentary Library and Research Services (L&RS)

- ◆ 20 Bills Digests and 14 Debate Packs were circulated to all members during 2010 in time for Second Stage debate. An information portal for the Finance Bill was also developed by the L&RS (see page 36).
- ◆ The L&RS Committees team researched and wrote major research papers for the Committees and the Secretariat.
- ◆ 1,784 Documents Laid processed by the L&RS during 2010. In order to facilitate the planned electronic laying of documents in 2011, the regulatory framework for documents laid was reviewed, the relevant Standing Orders were amended, procedures were streamlined and newly developed software was piloted.
- ◆ 2,550 on-demand information and research queries from individual members and other users were responded to by the L&RS during 2010 (see page 55).
- ◆ Eight Economic Indicators and seven Spotlights were published during 2010.

## Role of the Houses of the Oireachtas under the Lisbon Treaty

- ◆ The Joint Committees on European Affairs and European Scrutiny jointly examined in detail (including the holding of public hearings) and prepared a report on how the Oireachtas can further enhance its role in EU Affairs in light of the Lisbon Treaty.
- ◆ New Standing Orders introduced to provide transitional arrangements for the role of both Houses in the event of a dissolution of the Dáil (see page 39).

## Establishment of North-South Parliamentary Forum

- ◆ Two all-Party Working Groups (one in the Houses of the Oireachtas chaired by the Ceann Comhairle, and the other in the Northern Ireland Assembly chaired by the Speaker) continued to take forward discussion on the establishment of a North-South Parliamentary Forum, as envisaged under the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 and the St. Andrew's Agreement of 2006. A North-South Parliamentary Forum Conference was held in Newcastle, Co. Down, in October 2010. The Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, Mr. William Hay, and the then Ceann Comhairle, Mr. Seámus Kirk, co-chaired the Conference (see page 39).

## Communications

- ◆ A new Communications Strategy was approved by the Commission in 2010 (see page 32).
- ◆ 45 Education Programme workshops held from September 2010 to Easter 2011 – 27 on-site in Leinster House and 18 in the constituencies.
- ◆ 87,575 people visited Leinster House in 2010 (the fifth highest number of visitors to parliament per head of population).
- ◆ The Houses of the Oireachtas participated in both Culture Night and Open House Architecture Day in 2010, attracting over 2,000 visitors to Leinster House.

## New Policies

- ◆ Travel Policy - a new travel policy for foreign and domestic travel undertaken by members and staff was approved by the Commission in 2010 (see page 40).
- ◆ HR Plan - a new HR Plan covering the period 2010-2012 was approved by the Management Advisory Committee (MAC) in 2010. Progress on implementation of the HR Plan is reported on a quarterly basis to the MAC (see page 59).
- ◆ Procurement Strategy - a new Procurement Strategy covering the period 2010-2010 was approved by the MAC in 2010. A review of the Corporate Procurement Plan 2007-2009 demonstrated that a high level of technical procurement advice is available within the Service with two advisors who have attained a Certificate in Public Procurement. The Procurement Unit, in conjunction with the Parliamentary Legal Advisor, have also developed template Requests for Tender (RFT) and contract documents which assist sections in completing procurement processes (see page 69).
- ◆ Risk Management Policy - the Service conducted a review of its risk management system with the aim of strengthening its risk management policy framework. A new risk management policy will be implemented during 2011 with specific roles and responsibilities being set out under the new policy (see page 70).

## Major Retendering

- ◆ Broadcasting Contract - a tendering process for a new broadcasting contract was completed during 2010. The successful tenderer (Pi Communications) took over the running of the Oireachtas broadcasting service from 1 January, 2011, and substantial annual cost savings have been achieved under the new contract (see page 41).
- ◆ ICT Contract - a tendering process for ongoing ICT support was finalised at the end of 2010 and the new contract, which has delivered substantial annual cost savings, will be in place until March 2014. The contractor, Fujitsu, will provide ICT services for members and their staff both in Leinster House and countrywide in their constituency offices (see page 53).

## Election 2011 – Accommodation, Staff and Guidance for members

- ◆ Accommodation - in line with the Commission's policy for the allocation of accommodation to members after the General Elections, all members were assigned offices prior to the first sitting of the new Dáil and Seanad. Deadlines for vacation of offices by retiring and non-retired members were approved by the Commission in 2009 (see page 43).
- ◆ HR – the work of HR staff in supporting the 2011 General Elections involved the calculation and payment of redundancy settlements and providing template contracts to members and parties for the staff employed for the 31<sup>st</sup> Dáil and 24<sup>th</sup> Seanad (see page 49).
- ◆ Dissolution Guidelines for members - an Election Handbook was issued to all members prior to the dissolution of the 30<sup>th</sup> Dáil detailing the arrangements to be applied, in the dissolution period, in relation to allowances and facilities (see page 52).
- ◆ Post-Election Induction plans for new members - 43 Liaison officers, in addition to the staff of the One-Stop-Shop and the HR Unit for Members, were trained to meet and help new members "find their feet" following their election to either House (see page 65).
- ◆ Information Handbook for new members - an Information Handbook was prepared and circulated to all members of the 31<sup>st</sup> Dáil and 24<sup>th</sup> Seanad providing them with a practical guide on the procedural and administrative supports available to them to assist them in their parliamentary duties (see page 65).

## Managing Resources

- ◆ In the current economic climate, managing expenditure and achieving savings where possible is a critical focus for the Service. This was the first year of the three-year 2010-2012 budget and actual expenditure for 2010 was €107.2 million, down from the estimate of €117.8 million. This was a €10.6 million saving or 9% reduction on budget. Reductions in numbers, budget reductions in pay and allowances, improved reporting and targeted approaches to achieving savings were primarily responsible for this saving (see page 63).

# 2010 – KEY ACTIVITIES

## New system of Members' Allowances

- ◆ The new system for members' allowances, introduced by the Minister for Finance in March 2010, replaced the then existing array of allowances and entitlements with a single monthly automatic payment comprising two elements – a travel and accommodation allowance and a public representation allowance.
- ◆ Given the significant level of change introduced by this new system it was considered appropriate at the time of its introduction to review the system after its first year of operation. This review will be conducted by the Department of Finance, the statutory authority, in conjunction with the Houses of the Oireachtas Service, the service provider. The review will take place during 2011 and will take into account any issues which arose from the implementation of the scheme as well as any changes proposed by the new Government in relation to the vouching aspect of members' expenses (see page 50).

## Members' Survey 2010

- ◆ The survey of members undertaken in December 2010 indicated that members continue to display high levels of satisfaction with the services provided to them and with the staff providing them – see page 66 and Appendix 11, page 110.

## Freedom of Information

- ◆ There was a marginal increase in the number of FOI requests received in 2010 over that received in 2009, increasing from 82 to 96 requests. This continues the upward trend in the numbers of FOI requests dealt with by the Service annually. The majority of requests come from the media, and this category of requestor represents 88% of the requests received (see page 71).

## Electoral support functions

- ◆ Writs issued to 43 constituencies for the Dáil General Election.
- ◆ Receipt and scanning of marked register of electors (see page 24).
- ◆ Administration of Seanad General Election for 43 panel members, including preparation of Electoral Roll, preparation of the List of Candidates, issuing of ballot papers, and conduct of Seanad Election count which took place over a four day period in Leinster House (see page 25).
- ◆ Implementation of the statutory replacement process for two MEPs following their election to the Dáil.

## Increased use of the Irish language by members

- ◆ An analysis of contributions in the 30<sup>th</sup> Dáil and to date in the 31<sup>st</sup> Dáil has shown a substantial increase in the use of the Irish language by members and Party Leaders – from 12% in the last Dáil to 20% in the new one (see page 42).

## COMPARATIVE BENCHMARKING OF PARLIAMENTS — KEY FINDINGS

We compiled an internal Report on Comparative Benchmarking of Parliaments, using international key statistics collected from a variety of sources through desk-based research and surveys of parliamentary contacts in a selected number of other jurisdictions<sup>1</sup>. While every effort is made in our methodology to compare like with like, all inter-parliamentary comparisons are subject to the caveat that different parliaments may have different accounting systems, some different functions and election cycles, and different systems of operation and even sitting rhythms. Nevertheless the benchmarking showed that, compared to those parliaments surveyed, the Irish Parliament has –

- ◆ more sitting days per year than the Netherlands, Denmark, New Zealand, Northern Ireland Assembly, Scotland, Wales, South Africa and Australia;
- ◆ more sitting hours per year than Australia, New Zealand, Scotland, Austria and the Netherlands;
- ◆ the highest number of parliamentary questions tabled annually across eleven parliaments and the highest number of parliamentary questions per member;
- ◆ the fifth highest number of visitors to parliament per head of population - with a total of 87,575 visitors in 2010;
- ◆ the fourth lowest number of citizens per TD at 27,849;
- ◆ less overall staff (including political and administrative staff) per member than the average;
- ◆ the second lowest overall cost per member of Parliament.

Further specific findings of the benchmarking initiative are reflected throughout this report.

<sup>1</sup> Comparator parliaments (Australia (BC), Austria (BC), Belgium (BC), Canada (BC), Denmark (UC), Finland (UC), India (BC), Netherlands (BC), New Zealand (UC), Northern Ireland (UC), Scotland (UC), South Africa (BC), Sweden (UC), Wales (UC), United Kingdom (House of Commons & House of Lords) (BC) were surveyed on the topics of political representation, sittings and business of parliament, value for money, staff and resources, and contact with the public. Different subsets of these countries are included in each comparison according to the available data and their comparability with the Oireachtas in each case. Calendar year 2010 and parliamentary year 2009-2010 were the data reference years.

BC refers to bicameral parliaments and UC refers to unicameral parliaments.

# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 1: IMPROVING SERVICES TO PARLIAMENT



# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 1: IMPROVING SERVICES TO PARLIAMENT

### STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 1 - IMPROVING SERVICES TO PARLIAMENT

This Strategy is about ensuring that the Chairpersons and members of the Houses of the Oireachtas and their Committees can be assured of continuous, high quality parliamentary support services.

#### HOUSES AND COMMITTEE BUSINESS

##### Sittings and Business of Parliament

An internally compiled International Benchmarking between Parliaments Report, covering the 2009/2010 Parliamentary session, found that the Houses of the Oireachtas performs well when benchmarked against the other national parliaments surveyed in terms of total sitting days and sitting hours, recording third place with a total of 197 sitting days and second place with a total of 1,456 sitting hours for both Houses.

Compared to the unicameral parliaments surveyed, the Dáil comes first in terms of total sitting hours, ahead of Denmark, New Zealand, Finland and Scotland and third in terms of total sitting days, ahead of New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

##### Procedural Excellence Programme

We continued with our Procedural Excellence initiative to enhance and build on our overall procedural capacity, capability and service delivery.

##### Panel of Temporary Chairpersons

Meetings of the Panel of Temporary Chairpersons, presided over by the Leas-Cheann Comhairle or a senior member of the panel, are held on a monthly basis (or more regularly, if required). At those meetings-

- ◆ presentations on procedure, both generally and in relation to areas causing particular challenges to the Chair, are made by members of staff;
- ◆ members of the panel report and discuss their experiences while presiding in the Chamber;
- ◆ existing and developing standards are outlined and discussed.

Chamber orientation sessions have also been offered to panel members to enable them to become familiar with the operation of the microphones and other controls available to the Chair, ICT systems available to them in the Chamber

and how they are used and how communication between the Chair, the Clerks and ushers on duty in the Chamber is managed in practice.

Members of the panel are also given one-to-one briefings on request.

##### The Daily routine of business

All members of the panel receive notice of and have access to briefing on the Chair's daily schedule and briefing for the Chair on individual items of business.

One-to-one briefing on particular items of business is offered to the Chairs, Deputy Chairs and members of the panel of Temporary Chairmen.

##### Panel of Temporary Clerks

Meetings of the panel of Temporary Clerks (who assist with Dáil Chamber duty) are held on a monthly basis. As well as mirroring meetings of the Panel of Temporary Chairpersons as regards content, the meetings are used to provide feedback from meetings of that Panel. Events in the Chamber are reviewed in greater detail, using webcast recordings of proceedings and other on-line resources such as the Standing Orders, rulings and debates.



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Regular Chamber orientation visits are also arranged so that temporary Clerks can remain familiar with the electronic resources and facilities available at the Clerks' Desk in the Chamber. Temporary Clerks also periodically review the steps involved in setting up an electronic vote in the Chamber.

In order to demonstrate and reinforce learning, members of the panel of Temporary Clerks will periodically:

- ◆ review interventions by the Chair over a period of weeks and present to the panel interventions that were of particular significance or interest; and

### Supporting the sittings of the Houses and their Committees during 2010 encompassed:

- ◆ 100 Dáil sittings (843 sitting hours)
- ◆ 97 Seanad sittings (613 sitting hours)
- ◆ 623 Committee meetings (1,065 sitting hours)
- ◆ 82 Committee Reports
- ◆ 61 Bills published as initiated
- ◆ 4,782 amendments tabled to Bills
- ◆ 75 Bill reprints as a result of amendment or passage by both Houses
- ◆ 44,943 Parliamentary Questions processed

- ◆ provide Chamber orientation to other members of the panel.

### Procedural Knowledge Management initiatives in the Committee Secretariat

Regular Committee Clerks meetings are held to share procedural knowledge and clerking experience. These meetings are also used to discuss and review the comprehensive Clerks' Guide manual, which is expected to be fully reviewed and updated during 2011. The Guide will be uploaded on to a specially designed database, which will allow for dynamic updating, knowledge capture and communication of changes to the Guide to all Clerks. Seminars on the role of the Oireachtas in EU Affairs were held in April 2011 for new members of the 31<sup>st</sup> Dáil and for relevant staff.

An eHandbook on Procedure for Committee members (similar to the Dáil eHandbook) together with general information leaflets on the role of Committees are under development and will form part of induction materials and tools for new members of the Committee system of the 31<sup>st</sup> Dáil/24th Seanad. A team is completing work on a response to the enactment of the Defamation Act 2009, which conferred absolute privilege on witnesses before Oireachtas Committees with effect from 2010. The response will include the publication of comprehensive guidance for members, Committee staff and witnesses

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appearing before Committees.

### Parliamentary Questions

44,943 Parliamentary Questions (PQs) were processed by the Questions Office during 2010. This is 1,807 (4%) less than 2009. Of those processed, 11,782 (26%) were withdrawn and 1,255 (2.8%) were disallowed.

The number of oral PQs replied to in the Dáil Chamber was 1,393 (3.1% of those tabled).

Approximately 90% of PQs are submitted electronically to the Questions Office. Ministerial replies to PQs are emailed by the Questions Office to the relevant member each sitting day.

An internally compiled International Benchmarking between Parliaments Report, covering the 2009/2010 Parliamentary session, found that Dáil Éireann had the highest number of PQs per member with 271 PQs tabled per member, over three times the average of 72 PQs per member of the parliaments surveyed and the highest number of PQs tabled annually across 11 of the 12 parliaments surveyed.

Early trends since the General Election in 2011 suggest that the number of PQs being submitted is reducing. This may be attributed to the fact that the Government parties comprise 112 members (out of a total 165, excluding the Ceann Comhairle) and that the size of the opposition

Parliamentary Questions – 2009 & 2010			
	2009	2010	Increase/ decrease
PQs Processed	46,750	44,943	3.9% decrease
Oral Replies	1,466	1,393	5% decrease
Written Replies	32,641	30,513	9.2% decrease
PQs Withdrawn	11,351	11,782	3.8% increase
PQs Disallowed	1,292	1,255	2.8% decrease
% PQs disallowed	2.9%	2.8%	1.7% decrease

asking PQs is smaller. Generally opposition members submit PQs to members of the Government.

### Processing of Legislation

The Bills Office is responsible for the printing and circulation of all Bills and amendments tabled by Ministers and members. It examines the texts of all Bills to ensure they comply with Standing Orders and it examines amendments for financial implications and other matters of order. At Committee and Report Stages it provides briefing material for the Clerks of the Houses, the Chairpersons of the Houses and Chairpersons of Select Committees. The Bills Office also advises on groupings of amendments.



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The Bills Office also carries out tasks on behalf of the Clerk of the Dáil in relation to Dáil General Elections. Once the Dáil dissolved in early 2011, the Bills Office issued the Writs to the Returning Officers of 43 constituencies. Following the election, it arranged for the receipt and storage of election documents (including ballot papers), and for the scanning and making available of the marked registers of electors. Later on in the year it will arrange for their ultimate destruction in line with electoral legislation, but before that, every marked electoral register in the country (that is, the copy of the register on which the voter's name is crossed off in the polling station when they

receive their ballot paper) will be scanned electronically by the Bills Office, and copies of these marked electoral registers will be furnished to whoever requests them (on payment of a fee).

### Journal Office

The Journal Office prepares the Dáil Order Paper, Supplementary Order Papers, Journal of Proceedings and Standing Orders. Motions for the Order Paper are submitted to this office and examined for compliance with

### Bills Office Statistics

- ◆ 61 Bills were published during 2010 (down from 79 in 2009). 39 were Government Bills and 22 were Private Members' Bills. Although fewer Bills were initiated in 2010, the total volume of these increased to 1,914 pages, from 1,875 in 2009.
- ◆ 4,782 amendments were processed during 2010, up from 4,610 in 2009. The total volume of these amendments increased to 1,264 pages, from 1,075 in 2009.
- ◆ There were 75 instances of Bills being reprinted after amendment in 2010, up from 68 in 2009. The total page volume of these increased to 4,745 pages, from 2,652 in 2009.
- ◆ 40 Bills were enacted by the Houses during 2010 (down from 46 in 2009). Although fewer Bills were enacted in 2010, the total page volume of these increased to 2,040 pages, from 1,694 in 2009.



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Standing Orders. It also provides advice to members of the Dáil on parliamentary procedure and, in particular, to the Government Chief Whip's Office on procedural aspects of proposals for Government business and assists with the drafting of technical motions. It also provides secretariat support and advice to the Committee on Procedure and Privileges of Dáil Éireann and to its sub-Committees, including the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform. The Journal Office provides support to the Seanad Returning Officer in the administration of Seanad General and Bye-Elections. It also assists with the management of the electronic voting system in the Dáil.

### Journal Office Statistics

The following statistics indicate production volumes for some activities in the Journal Office in 2010 consequent on sittings of the Dáil:

- ◆ 100 Dáil Order Papers were produced.
- ◆ 48 Supplementary Order Papers were produced.
- ◆ Secretariat support and advice for 8 meetings of the Committee on Procedure and Privileges.
- ◆ Secretariat support and advice for 1 meeting of the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform.
- ◆ Administrative back-up for 180 Dáil divisions.

### Seanad Office

The Seanad Office is responsible for the production of the Seanad Order Paper, Supplementary Order Papers, Journal of Proceedings and Standing Orders. Government and Private Members' motions for the Order Paper are submitted to this office and examined to ensure they comply with Standing Orders. The office provides procedural advice for the Cathaoirleach and the panel of Temporary Chairpersons, and also provides secretariat support and advice to the Committee on Procedure and Privileges of Seanad Éireann and to the Seanad Select Committee on Members Interests.

### Seanad Electoral support function

The Clerk of the Seanad is the Seanad Returning Officer for Seanad General Elections for the 43 Panel Members. She is responsible for the Annual Review of the Register of Nominating Bodies under the Seanad Electoral (Panel Members) Act 1947, and for the detailed planning and conduct of the Seanad General Election (and Bye-Elections). She is assisted in this role by the staff of the Seanad Office and the Journal Office.

Under Article 18.8 of the Constitution, a General Election for the Seanad must take place not later than 90 days after dissolution of the Dáil. The Seanad is comprised of 60 members, 11 of which are nominated by An Taoiseach. The remaining 49 seats are contested in a general election – 43 seats by way of an election for panel members with members of the Dáil, the outgoing Seanad, and members of city and county councils qualified to vote



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and 3 seats by way of an election for university members from the National University of Ireland and 3 seats by way of an election for university members from the University of Dublin (Trinity College).

The Oireachtas Seanad Returning Officer had responsibility for the administration of the General Election for the 43 panel members to the five vocational panels in early 2011. A List of Candidates was prepared which involved liaising with the 101 nominating bodies as well as the members of the Dáil and outgoing Seanad. 120 candidates were seeking election to the five panels. The Electoral Roll comprising 1,092 voters was compiled by the Journal Office.

### Seanad Office Statistics

Activities in the Seanad Office in 2010 generated by sittings of the Seanad and its Committees:

- ◆ 97 Seanad sitting days.
- ◆ 613 Seanad sitting hours.
- ◆ 97 Seanad Order Papers were produced.
- ◆ 11 Supplementary Order Papers were produced.
- ◆ 70 Journal of Proceedings were prepared.
- ◆ 121 motions were processed.
- ◆ Administrative back-up for 171 Seanad divisions.
- ◆ Compilation of Register of Interests of Members of Seanad Éireann.
- ◆ Secretariat support and advice to 9 meetings of the Committee on Procedure and Privileges.
- ◆ Secretariat support for 28 meetings of the Members' Interest Committee which was conducting investigations pursuant to complaints received under the Ethics in Public Office Acts.

The Seanad Office also prepared and arranged for the issuing of the Ballot Papers.

Administrative arrangements for the count centre were



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put in place by the Seanad and Journal Offices and the count took place over a period of four days in Leinster House in April.

### Committee related activities and developments during 2010

There were 565 meetings of the Committees for which the Committee Secretariat has responsibility, involving some 1,435 speaking witnesses, 967 sitting hours with 40 policy reports published. From 1 January 2011 up to the dissolution of Dáil Éireann on 1 February, there were a further 32 committee meetings involving 81 speaking witnesses, 48 sitting hours and 10 policy reports were published.

Apart from the ongoing consideration throughout the year by Select Committees of Bills, Estimates and motions referred, a wide range of policy matters were considered in some detail at Joint Committee level as follows:

#### Financial Committees

- ◆ Irish Banking Crisis Regulatory and Financial Stability Policy 2003-2008;
- ◆ preliminary Report on the Sources of Ireland's Banking Crisis (Regling and Watson Report);
- ◆ terms of reference of the Commission of Investigation into the banking crisis and related matters;
- ◆ nationalisation of Anglo-Irish Bank;
- ◆ changes in fiscal, budgeting and taxation policy (report published November 2010);
- ◆ the future development of the financial regulatory framework in Ireland and the stability of the Irish economy;
- ◆ the impact of financial regulation on the credit union sector in Ireland;
- ◆ the cost of regulation to business (in particular SME's and proposals for reducing the costs);
- ◆ the operational efficiency of the Commission for Aviation Regulation and the Commission for Taxi Regulation;
- ◆ supplier-retailer relationship in the Irish grocery market (report published March 2010);

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- ◆ matters concerning the retail trade in Ireland (report published February 2011);
- ◆ potential for job creation and job retention through the development of the smart economy (specifically in the bio-sciences, surgical and medical devices sectors);
- ◆ potential for establishment of local enterprises and employment generation through the use of local renewable energy resources (report published December 2010);
- ◆ mechanisms for resolving industrial relations disputes and the safeguards required to protect migrant workers from labour exploitation;
- ◆ supporting greater use of the Irish language on a daily basis;
- ◆ widening tourism in Ireland parameters and appeal on an All-Ireland basis and targeting the Irish diaspora market;
- ◆ promoting investment and jobs in the Irish film industry;
- ◆ dispute resolution procedures in Irish sport and how these can be best administered without recourse to legal action;
- ◆ 20 year strategy on the Irish language 2010-2030 (report published July 2010 with a debate in the Seanad on 2 November 2010 and in the Dáil on 18 November 2010).

The Committee of Public Accounts examined a broad number of public bodies which had been the subject of a report from the Comptroller and Auditor General. The main areas of examination related to the bank stabilisation measures and, in addition to the Department of Finance, the Committee examined the processes and systems in place in both NAMA and at the Office of the Financial Regulator. Other high priority areas included an examination of the performance of our third-level sector where there were issues about unauthorised allowances and the fulfilment of contracts by academics as well as scrutiny of FÁS, with particular reference to its new corporate governance structures and controls. Two interim reports were published during 2010, the first on the Loss of Fiduciary Taxes arising from the abuse of Limited Liability and the second on Procurement in the Prison Service and Public Procurement matters generally. A third interim

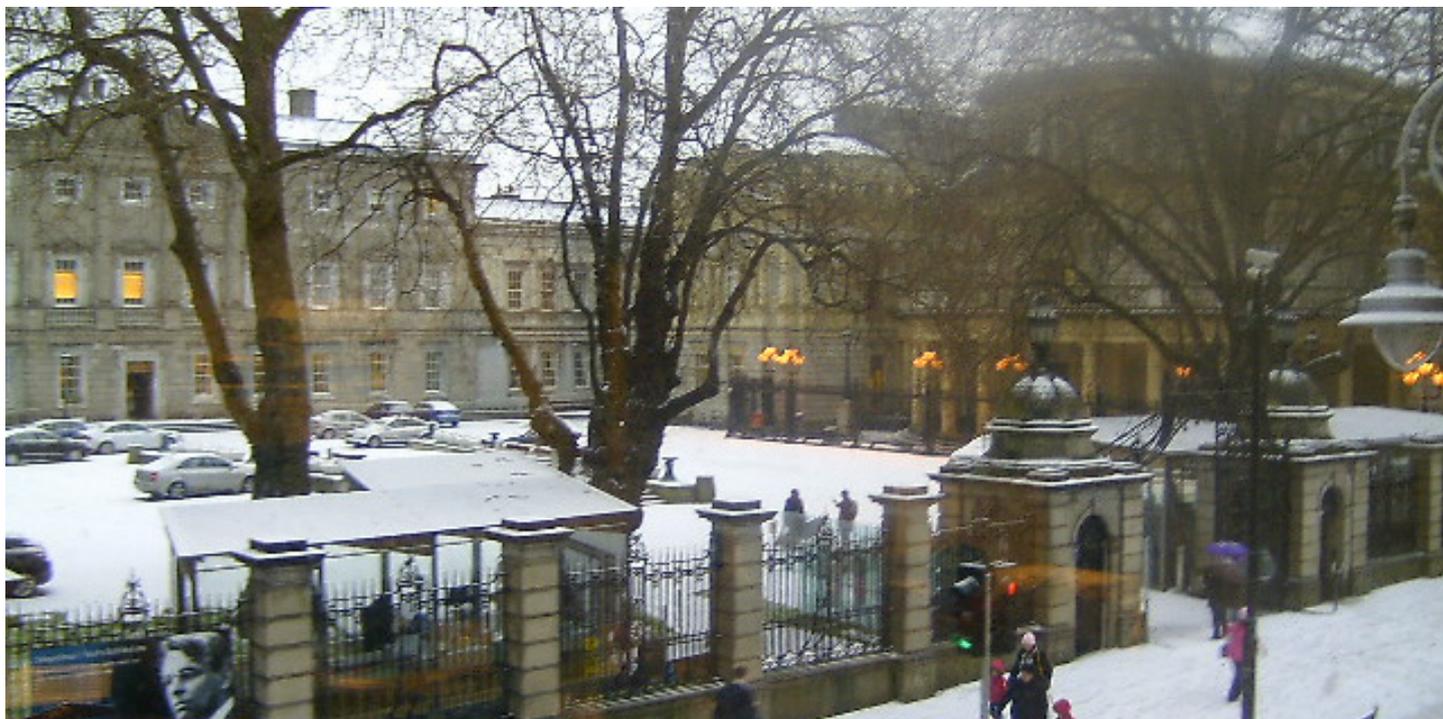
report on the Procurement of Legal Services by Public Bodies was published in early 2011.

### Infrastructural Committees

- ◆ climate change law (report published October 2010 with debate in the Seanad on 4 November 2010 and in the Dáil on 11 November 2010);
- ◆ visions for the application of IT in the area of sustainable and renewable energy and energy efficiency;
- ◆ biogas energy in Ireland (report published January 2011);
- ◆ sustainable forestry and forest carbon sequestration (report published January 2011);
- ◆ National Renewable Energy Action Plan (report published January 2011);
- ◆ recommendations to the Minister for nomination to the Boards of TG4 and Inland Fisheries Ireland;
- ◆ North-South electricity grid interconnector;
- ◆ broadcasting levy;
- ◆ allocation and uptake of "116" telephone numbers for "Services of Social Value";
- ◆ postal liberalisation;
- ◆ waste management;
- ◆ commercial rates payable by Irish hotels;
- ◆ guidelines for planning authorities on the National Spatial Strategy;
- ◆ Nitrates Action Plan;
- ◆ taxi industry;
- ◆ operations at the National Transport Authority;
- ◆ administration of the Irish Aviation Authority;
- ◆ collapse of the Malahide viaduct;
- ◆ reform of the Common Agricultural Policy post 2013 (report published November 2010);
- ◆ review of the Common Fisheries Policy;
- ◆ protecting Europe's forests against climate change (report published July 2010);

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*Photograph provided by Jill Gray, member of staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service*

- ◆ horse welfare and health and safety on Irish farms.

### International Committees

- ◆ Ireland's foreign trade promotion policy (report published March 2010);
- ◆ the undocumented Irish in the United States;
- ◆ Ireland's Development Aid Programme and progress in achieving the millennium development goals;
- ◆ Bloody Sunday Inquiry (Saville Report);
- ◆ cross-border co-operation in matters relating to policing and devolution of justice powers to Northern Ireland, health, education and transport;
- ◆ Ireland-US relations;
- ◆ EU's response to the financial crisis, including the implications of the euro-zone stabilisation mechanism and proposals for reinforcing economic policy coordination (reports published in July 2010 and January 2011);
- ◆ EU 2020 Strategy (report published February 2010);
- ◆ European Commission's Annual Work Programme 2010 and Strategy for 2011, the Citizens' Initiative (report

published February 2010), the Single Market Act, the Working Time Directive and the EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Agreement;

- ◆ ongoing engagement with the Minister for Foreign Affairs in advance of his attendance at General Affairs and Foreign Affairs Council meetings;
- ◆ role of the EU in the Middle East peace process, the situation in Gaza and the EU/Israel Euro Mediterranean Association Agreement 1995 (in particular Article 2 concerning the parties' human rights obligations.)

The Joint Committee on European Scrutiny considered 441 legislative documents of which 382 were legislative proposals, covering a wide range of policy areas including finance and justice matters. It scrutinised 8 of these proposals in detail which involved public meetings with relevant stakeholders. 5 scrutiny reports on proposed EU legislation were published during 2010. The Joint Committee agreed 2 special reports on new EU legislation for the periods July to December 2009 and January to June 2010. EU Scrutiny Report No 29 on the Draft Legislative Package on Reforming the EU Financial Supervisory and Regulatory Framework was debated in Dáil Éireann on 28 January 2010.

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### Social Committees

- ◆ primary medical care in the community (report published February 2010);
- ◆ centralisation of medical card services (report published February 2010);
- ◆ national cancer screening services;
- ◆ review of the electoral system for the election of members to Dáil Éireann (report published July 2010);
- ◆ formal sitting of the Joint Committee on the Constitution in Trinity College Dublin in February 2010 to consult with and hear the views and perspectives of third-level students on the Irish electoral system;
- ◆ issues relating to the Twenty-eight Amendment of the Constitution Bill 2007, including the publication of a Joint Committee on the Constitutional Amendment on Children report in February 2010, on a proposal for a constitutional amendment to strengthen children's rights (on which statements took place in the Seanad on 24 February 2010 and in the Dáil on 11 March 2010);

- ◆ review of the parliamentary power of inquiry (report published January 2011);
- ◆ the impact of budget cuts on Department of Social Protection customers;
- ◆ pension related matters;
- ◆ financial disincentives to cohabitation and marriage (report published October 2010);
- ◆ transfers from the Rent Supplement Scheme to the Rental Accommodation Scheme;
- ◆ curricular reform (First, Second and Third-Levels);
- ◆ budget cuts in education and the withdrawal of supports for children;
- ◆ Irish language education;
- ◆ tobacco smuggling;
- ◆ rights of homeowners to protect themselves;
- ◆ role of the Defence Forces in promoting physical fitness (report published December 2010).

### Review of the Committee system of the 30th Dáil and planning for the 31<sup>st</sup> Dáil

The outgoing Working Group of Committee Chairmen (WGCC) of the 30<sup>th</sup> Dáil approved a high-level framework for the new Committee system of the 31<sup>st</sup> Dáil encompassing the following features:

- ◆ a reduced number of Committees,
- ◆ structured work programmes for each Committee with formal oversight of departmental activities,
- ◆ formal reporting to the Dáil and Seanad,
- ◆ enhanced administrative and support services,
- ◆ greater use of technology for public consultation and engagement,
- ◆ improved media and information programmes, and
- ◆ paperless Committees.

Building on the WGCC framework, the Committee secretariat submitted a discussion paper to the MAC in early 2011 containing proposals to enable a more effective Committee system such as:

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- ◆ a policy of one member one Committee to increase the capacity of individual members to contribute more fully to Committee business and to focus their attention on areas of specialist expertise,
- ◆ greater interaction with the plenary sessions of the Dáil and Seanad,
- ◆ enhanced EU scrutiny through mainstreaming of EU legislation across sectoral Committees,
- ◆ more effective financial scrutiny,
- ◆ clarification of the investigative powers of Committees,
- ◆ greater accountability of the Executive, public servants and State Bodies,
- ◆ increased pre- and post-legislative analysis.

The Programme for Government published in March 2011 contained a number of reform proposals impacting directly on the operation of Committees which, taken together with the afore-mentioned papers, will form the blueprint for the initial establishment of the Committees of the 31<sup>st</sup> Dáil in the first half of 2011 and changes on an ongoing basis thereafter.

### USING TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT SITTINGS

Significant progress in 2010 in relation to eDemocracy initiatives can be reported under the following headings:

#### Combined Parliamentary Debates website 1919 - 2010

The Historical Committee Debates were integrated with the Historical Dáil and Seanad Debates and the Current Debates websites into a single combined parliamentary debates website. This website is updated on a daily basis.

The full text of all Parliamentary Committee debates on Bills and Estimates since 1924, and all Committee debates since 2002, are now available on-line.

The Combined Debates website includes links to the updated Members' Chronology, which contains details of all members since 1919. The debates can be browsed by date, by Bill, by member, or by index and RSS feeds are available. Links are also provided to Webcast recordings of each day's debate.

#### Debates authoring system

A new Debates Authoring System was implemented during 2010 which enables the Debates Office to author Dáil, Seanad and parliamentary Committee debates in XML and gain greater control over its own documents and ultimately reduce printing costs. See further details of debates office developments on page 41.

#### Historical Committee Reports 1922 - 2007

Selected Committee reports from 1922 - 2007 were published on the Oireachtas Intranet during 2010 using a prototype website.

Prior to publication of the Committee Reports website on the Internet during 2011, it is intended to develop a user friendly interface including a dedicated search engine. It is also intended to publish a complete list of all Committee reports laid before the Houses since 1922.

#### Acts of the Oireachtas 1922 - 2010 (English and Irish language versions)

Although the body of official translations of Acts of the Oireachtas published on the Oireachtas Bilingual Acts website in HTML is not yet complete, further progress was



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made during 2010 when 44 Acts (2009 - 2010) were processed for publishing in both official languages. This site will be further updated during 2011.

### Oireachtas Webcasting

The Oireachtas Webcasting archive service was extended to include Parliamentary Committees during 2010.

Four Committees are now Webcast live, in addition to the Dáil and Seanad, and recordings of all channels are also now available on-line.

### eLegislation

Following agreement with the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel to the Government on a revised format for legislation, work continued during 2010 on preparations for upgrading the eLegislation system in use in the Bills Office and Rannóg an Aistriúcháin in order to facilitate the introduction of the new format.

This is intended to streamline the drafting and amendment processes, and following best international practice, to facilitate the technical publication of electronic texts which will result in printing and electronic publishing cost savings.

### eChamber

The eChamber website continues to be updated on a daily basis to include parliamentary documents relating to that day's sitting.

## PARLIAMENTARY PRINTING AND PUBLISHING

A new printing and publishing contract entered into in 2010 following competitive tender has resulted in an estimated net saving of 20% in annual printing costs. This reflects, in part at least, the progress we have made in achieving capacity to produce print-ready documents.

A framework agreement covering support, maintenance and development of open source systems used in the document production process has also been entered into following competitive tender and has resulted in savings in the order of 30% in support and maintenance costs.

Building on these achievements, a policy on dissemination of Parliamentary documents is being

developed that is intended to achieve the following outcomes —

- ◆ Capacity to produce the full range of parliamentary documents will be maintained.
- ◆ The full range of parliamentary documents will continue to be produced and will be accessible more widely and more easily, although not necessarily in printed form.
- ◆ The Service's technical dependence on a single contractor will be reduced.

Cost savings will be achieved to the extent that this does not place the production and publication of parliamentary documents at risk.

A discussion document and draft policy has been submitted to the MAC and discussions are taking place with the Office of Public Works (which procures printing and publishing services on our behalf) to ensure that a successor contract (scheduled to be put in place in 2012) will allow us to maximise savings achievable at that point. Systems development proposals to provide us with technical capacity to achieve these aims are in development. The intention is that the Service's parliamentary printing costs will be significantly reduced from 2012 onwards.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

### Communications Plan 2010-2012

Our new Communications Plan was published in 2010 following extensive consultation with members, and a detailed review by the Joint Administration Committee before final approval by the Commission.

Some of the concerns highlighted by members were as follows:

- ◆ The lack of unity among members when speaking about the Houses and their profession as TDs and Senators.
- ◆ The need to change the way the Dáil does its business to make it more relevant to the general public.
- ◆ The lack of connection between the Houses of the Oireachtas and young people.
- ◆ The need for greater openness and transparency in relation to cost issues.

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- ◆ The need for a more open Leinster House for media and the visiting public.
- ◆ The need for better use of technology to engage with people.
- ◆ The need to exploit new and social media to reach younger audiences who have no existing connection with the Houses.

The objectives of the new Communications Plan over the next three years are as follows:

- ◆ The functions of the Houses and the role and responsibilities of members will be communicated using clear and easy to understand language.
- ◆ Every member of the public will have opportunities to engage with the Houses of the Oireachtas.
- ◆ Unfair and ill-informed media coverage of the Houses and their members will be robustly challenged.
- ◆ Information will be provided in an open and transparent fashion.
- ◆ The public experience of Leinster House through its guided tours will be engaging and targeted.
- ◆ The public and members will have ongoing two-way communication through social media, etc.

In summary, prioritising local media, delivering a web presence that is accessible, relevant and user friendly, explaining the role and relevance of the Oireachtas to the next generation of voters and adding value to the Leinster House visitor experience are the cornerstones of this current Plan.

Progress to date in the implementation of the Plan:

### Media Relations

Media monitoring is an ongoing activity and corrections and clarifications are issued to unbalanced and inaccurate coverage of the Oireachtas. A total of 401 requests for information from the media was dealt with in 2010.

Members are the principal spokespersons for the Oireachtas and are under constant pressure to perform effectively across both local and national media. Media briefings and advices are made available to members on request from the Communications Unit prior to media interviews. There is, of course, a challenge in one member trying to represent the often differing views of all members as well as promoting and defending the institution of parliament itself given the adversarial nature of the political system. The Ceann Comhairle and the Head of Communications currently fulfill the Commission spokesperson role as required.

Media coverage of Oireachtas Committee proceedings has increased following the appointment of two Committee

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Press Liaison Officers. The Press Officers work closely with Committee Chairpersons and Clerks and highlight to the media the main issues under consideration by each Committee. Consequently media attendance at Committee Report launches, off-site events and photo-calls has increased. 462 press releases were issued in 2010.

### Regional and Local Radio

Engaging with local and regional radio stations is an integral part of our Communications Plan. In April 2010, we commenced the first phase of a pilot scheme entitled "The Oireachtas Constituency Report". The programme is a weekly customised audio summary of contributions made by Deputies and Senators, in the Dáil, Seanad and Oireachtas Committees, which is broadcast once-weekly on selected local radio stations. Four local radio stations have taken part in the pilot scheme in 2010.

Every local radio station has been invited to broadcast live from the studio facilities in Kildare House during sitting periods. Five radio stations from around the country have availed of this opportunity, namely, Ocean FM, East Coast Radio, Mid West Radio, Community Radio Castlebar and Kilkenny Carlow Local Radio (KCLR).

### Local Newspapers

"This week in the Oireachtas" local newspaper articles continue to be popular in 13 local and regional newspapers around the country. The local articles update constituents about the parliamentary work of their local members and how it relates to them. 322 articles were published in 2010. Feedback from members on this initiative has been very positive.

### Education / Outreach Programme

The format of the Schools Outreach Programme was revised prior to the commencement of the new school year in September 2010. The new format was designed in consultation with members, participating students, teachers of Civil, Social and Political Education (CSPE) and former Outreach facilitators.

The main changes include:

- ◆ the new Outreach Programme will be delivered directly by Commission staff on a voluntary basis when capacity exists within their core duties.
- ◆ more workshops will be delivered on-site in Leinster House using the AV Room and considerably fewer outreach sessions will happen in the constituency.
- ◆ a limited Outreach service will be provided to transition year groups and community groups from 2012.

45 outreach workshops were held up to Easter 2011 – 27 on-site in Leinster House and 18 in the constituencies. Where they are delivered in the school, the advance notification to members will go from two to four weeks. Positive feedback has been received on the revised format. In all, since 2008, the programme has been delivered to over 19,323 students.

### Visitors to Leinster House

87,575 people visited Leinster House in 2010. 2,093 tours were conducted. The feedback from visitors from tours conducted is that their visit was a positive and informative experience. The Parliamentary Ushers who conduct the tours are certified to Fáilte Ireland tour guide standard.

An internally compiled report on International Benchmarking between Parliaments found that in terms of visitors per year, and in view of its relative size, the Houses of the Oireachtas fare well when benchmarked internationally, coming eighth out of ten parliaments surveyed. The result is equivalent to 1.89% of total population. Scotland had the highest percentage (8.03% of population) followed by Wales (4.1% of population).

We are continually striving to improve the visitor experience to Leinster House to ensure it is both informative and enjoyable – brochures and leaflets have been updated to appeal to various age groups and an educational short film has also been updated. The majority of tours are for school children and particular emphasis has been placed on linking their visit with the Outreach Programme by providing educational material. Although access to Leinster House continues to be primarily through the patronage of members, limited direct "walk-up" access to parliament is currently being examined and hopefully will be piloted later in 2011.

The Houses of the Oireachtas has participated in a number of public events since 2008, including:

- ◆ a smaller and more targeted approach – participating CSPE classes must first have included politics as their Junior Certificate CSPE Action Project, thus demonstrating a real commitment to learning about our parliamentary and political system.

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### Culture Night

Each year in September, a growing number of institutions of cultural importance open their doors to the public. Culture Night 2010 attracted over 1,500 visitors to Leinster House. Visitors were treated to tours of the Dáil and Seanad Chambers and musical entertainment and refreshments were also provided.

### Open House Architecture Day

This is an architectural event held in Dublin for the public to explore the architectural highlights of the city and county. This event provides members of the public with an opportunity to take a special architectural tour of Leinster House, visiting areas not normally accessible to visitors, including offices and the impressive atrium space in the Leinster House 2000 building, as well as access to both the Dáil and Seanad Chambers. Open House Architecture Day 2010 attracted over 600 visitors to Leinster House.

### National Bravery Awards

The National Bravery Awards were hosted by the Ceann Comhairle in the Members' Restaurant of Leinster House in September 2010. In all 23 awards were presented by the

Ceann Comhairle, of which two were posthumously awarded.

### Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliament of Ireland Book Launch

The Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach hosted the launch of the book *Houses of the Oireachtas, Parliament of Ireland - Editors - Muiris Mac Carthaigh and Maurice Manning*. This book was published by the Institute of Public Administration.

### Hosting of Meeting of the Irish Parliamentary (Former Members) Society in the Dáil Chamber

A sub-Committee of the Irish Parliamentary (Former Members') Society, chaired by Mr. Alexis Fitzgerald, organised a one-day seminar in the Dáil Chamber in January 2011 to debate such issues as creating a more effective Dáil, a more gendered-balanced Dáil, a more efficient budgetary process and a more effective Government.

Approximately 50 former members attended the seminar, including the late Dr. Garret Fitzgerald, the

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Honorable Mrs. Justice Catherine McGuinness, Mr. Pat Cox, Mr. Ray MacSharry, Mrs. Nora Owen, Mr. Barry Desmond and Mr. Jim Glennon. The late Dr. Fitzgerald summed up the day's proceedings and produced a 19 point plan for moving the themes discussed forward. The President of the Society, Mr. Michael D'Arcy, hopes that the Seminar will become an annual event with different themes up for discussion each year.

The seminar was broadcast on the in-house broadcasting system and the Former Members' Society was very pleased with the informed content of the debate and the overall coverage of the event.

### Website and social networking

The Oireachtas website has been redesigned and made more accessible to the general public. A social media plan is currently being developed to maximise the potential of social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter. We currently have 1,067 followers on Facebook and 2,913 followers on Twitter. We aim to fully exploit the rise in influence of new media as a means of improving public engagement, particularly with younger people.

### Plain language audit

A "plain language" audit of sample documents produced by the Service to assess and identify the extent to which the

documents meet internationally-recognised plain English guidelines for writing and layout was carried out by the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) in early 2011. The results of the audit are now being considered by a cross-functional team comprised of staff from sections with responsibility for publishing and/or communicating with the public. The project is designed to trigger a change in the language policy of the Service and to raise awareness of the benefits of using plain rather than technical language. It is intended that a style guide will be produced for all future publications of the Service. All staff will be briefed on the purpose and value of developing a plain language policy.

## PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARY AND RESEARCH SERVICE (L&RS)

The Library and Research Service (L&RS) is the parliamentary library. The L&RS delivered services during 2010 to support the legislative and scrutiny work of parliament. Specifically it delivered:

### Legislative Analysis Service for all members

The Bills Digest and Debate Pack products make up the L&RS's Legislative Analysis Service (LAS) which is designed



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to assist members in their scrutiny of legislation before the Houses. The LAS aims to provide relevant, authoritative and balanced information on the legislation before the Houses in time for Second Stage debate. Each Bills Digest provides an impartial analysis of the background, policy context and principal themes of a Bill (rather than a section-by-section analysis). Each Debate Pack is professionally presented information pack of carefully selected (in terms of content, credible/authoritative sources, balance) and edited secondary sources on the Bill.

During 2010 the L&RS enhanced its Legislative Analysis Service through cross-parliamentary peer review with the Scottish Parliament's Information Centre and the New Zealand Parliamentary Library. The L&RS met its commitment to produce a legislative briefing on all suitable Bills (excluding inter alia Emergency Bills, Finance Bills, and Bills not within L&RS expertise). The L&RS circulated all members with 20 Bills Digests and 14 Debate Packs during 2010 in time for Second Stage debate. The L&RS also developed an information portal for the Finance Bill.

The L&RS regularly monitors debates in the Chambers to assess the use of LAS material. There were many instances of members directly citing LAS materials in the Houses during 2010. There were also further instances of members using and relying on the content of LAS materials without directly citing the Library & Research Service as author (which is in line with the L&RS attribution policy).

Members commented favourably in the Houses on LAS materials with individual Bill Digests and Debate Packs being described as, for example, excellent, helpful, extensive, informative and well researched. A number of members indicated that the LAS materials had helped them to interpret and prepare to speak on legislation. The use and reliance on LAS materials was not confined to members of the opposition parties. Government parties and Ministers used the service (for example, the Minister for Health and Children commended the L&RS Bills Digest on the Prescription Charges Bill 2010).

### Information and research services for Committees

L&RS information and research services for Committees are delivered under the framework of an annual L&RS Committee Secretariat Protocol. The objective of the Protocol is to support Oireachtas Committees and to

maximise the effective use of the L&RS by the Committee Secretariat. The protocol is revised on an annual basis. This allows the L&RS to refine services, introduce services and promote new research resources based on feedback from Committee Clerks. The review of the 2010 protocol highlighted that, overall, Committees were very satisfied with the research services provided.

During 2010 the L&RS Committees team researched and wrote major research papers for the Committees and the Secretariat. These included:

- ◆ briefings for the Joint Committee on Justice, Defence & Women's rights in relation to EU proposals which the Department, following consultation with the Office of the Attorney General, indicated should be considered by the Houses of the Oireachtas in respect of an opt-in motion under Title V of the Lisbon Treaty;
- ◆ three research papers which formed the basis for Committee reports published in 2010, namely Primary Care in the Community, Ireland's Foreign Trade Promotion Policy, and Financial Disincentives to Marriage and Cohabitation.

The L&RS Committees team also worked on 3 additional reports during 2010 which formed the basis of Committee reports published at the beginning of 2011 (The role of the Oireachtas in the conduct of Parliamentary Inquiries, Developments in the Retail Sector, and EU Economic Governance Proposals).

### Processing Documents Laid before the Houses and making them available to members

The L&RS processed 1,784 Documents Laid during 2010 - a similar number of documents were laid in 2009. In order to facilitate the planned electronic laying of documents in 2011, the regulatory framework for documents laid was reviewed, the relevant Standing Orders were amended, procedures were streamlined and newly developed software was piloted.

The terms of the Protocol on the enhanced Role of National Parliaments under the Lisbon Treaty provided that both Houses of the Oireachtas will receive EU documents at the same time as they are forwarded to the European Parliament and the Council of Europe. These EU documents include EU Commission consultation documents, draft legislative Acts sent to the European

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Parliament and to the Council, and agendas and minutes of the Council.

In accordance with the provisions of the Protocol, the L&RS worked with the Committee Secretariat to scope and develop a weekly report of all documents. This report is laid before both Houses by the Clerks of the Houses. This list is available in both print and electronically, the latter includes hyperlinks to the full-text of the documents.

### Implementation of an Inter-Parliamentary Union toolkit

The L&RS in conjunction with the Office of the Commission and the Secretary General implemented an Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) toolkit. The toolkit is a self-assessment guide to help parliaments and parliamentarians evaluate their performance against a set of established criteria.

A questionnaire was tailored to the Houses of the Oireachtas and circulated to a random selection of Members in 2010. Drawing on the results of this questionnaire, two areas were selected for discussion in focus groups. The two areas were Parliamentary Oversight of the Executive and Parliament's Legislative Capacity. Members were randomly selected to attend the focus group from the members who answered the questionnaire. The first focus group was held in November 2010 and the second in January 2011. The results are currently being analysed.

### Parliamentary Fellowship

The Oireachtas Parliamentary Fellowship is designed to advance the study of, and contribute to scholarship on the Houses of the Oireachtas. The L&RS, in conjunction with the Communications Unit, managed the Fellowship programme during 2010. The first Fellow's monograph titled 'The Role of the Houses of the Oireachtas in the Scrutiny of Legislation' was completed. The second Fellowship was awarded, and the Fellow commenced work on his monograph titled 'The evolving role of the Oireachtas in European Affairs'.

## INTER-PARLIAMENTARY RELATIONS

### International visitors to Ireland

Every year we receive visits from other parliaments from around the world during which issues of mutual interest are discussed. The Ceann Comhairle and the Executive Committee of Cumann Parlaiminteach na hÉireann (the Irish Parliamentary Association) invited parliamentary delegations to visit Ireland during 2010 from the following countries:

International Visits to Ireland during 2010	
Country	Date of visit
Ukraine	23rd — 24th March
Saudi Arabia	23rd — 29th May
Australia	27th June — 3rd July
Quebec, Canada	13th — 16th October
Kenya	7th — 11th November

### Promoting Ireland's influence abroad — international role of members

Members of both Houses of the Oireachtas play an international political role through their membership of international bodies such as the Council of Europe, the British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Assembly and other interparliamentary associations (see details on next page).

The Houses of the Oireachtas also maintains a close working relationship with the institutions of the European Union through its participation in:

- ◆ the Conference of Speakers of European Union Parliaments, meetings of COSAC, (the Association of European Affairs Committees of EU national parliaments and the European Parliament),
- ◆ Joint Parliamentary Meetings (meetings organised and chaired jointly by the parliament of the country holding the EU Presidency and the European Parliament), and
- ◆ Joint Sectoral Committee Meetings (meetings organised and chaired jointly by the relevant sectoral committee or committees of the parliament of the Member State holding the EU Presidency and the relevant committee of the European Parliament).

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### Promoting Ireland's influence abroad – visits made by members during 2010

Study missions, conferences, plenary sessions and sub-committee, preparatory or regional assembly meetings	Number
Oireachtas Committees	40
Irish Parliamentary Association/Inter Parliamentary Union	4
Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and Committee meetings	24
Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly and Committee meetings	1
Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation of Security Co-operation in Europe and Committee meetings	4
Parliamentary Assembly of the Western European Union and Committee meetings	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>

### Role of the Houses of the Oireachtas under the Lisbon Treaty

Further work was undertaken in 2010 on implementation of the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty which provided new powers and entitlements to National Parliaments in order to strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the EU. In particular, the Joint Committees on European Affairs and European Scrutiny jointly examined in detail and prepared a report on how the Oireachtas can further enhance its role in EU Affairs in light of the Lisbon Treaty. In preparing their report, the Committees held a number of public hearings with leading practitioners in the area of EU affairs and parliamentary control, as well as with the Irish MEPs and the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The report of the two Committees was laid before both Houses on 7 July 2010.

Subsequently and as recommended in the report, Dáil and Seanad Éireann adopted new Standing Orders to ensure that the important new powers provided by the Lisbon Treaty and the European Union Act 2009 (the 2009 Act), are implemented and managed effectively. The new Standing Orders, while delegating the day-to-day management of the Lisbon Treaty powers to Oireachtas Committees, respect the authority of the two Houses under

the 2009 Act as the final arbiter on the exercise of the powers. In line with the Lisbon Treaty Protocol on the Role of National Parliaments, all members of the Houses are now provided with a weekly report on all legislative and non-legislative documents received from the EU Institutions.

A competition for the position of Oireachtas EU Representative was held towards the end of the year and the new representative will take up duty in Brussels when the posting of the current incumbent ends in mid-2011. The Oireachtas representative position is a key support mechanism for the enhanced role of the Houses of the Oireachtas under the Lisbon Treaty, as it enables regular, early, and informal information exchange on the results of other national parliaments' scrutiny activities and particularly on the subsidiarity provisions of the Treaty. The representative position will also be a vital component in the parliamentary dimension of Ireland's EU Presidency in the first six months of 2013, including the planning period in the run-in to the Presidency and supporting Ireland's membership of the Presidency "Trio" (comprising Ireland, Lithuania and Greece) in the 18 month period to mid 2014.

### Establishment of North-South Parliamentary Forum

The establishment of a North-South Parliamentary Forum, to bring together equal numbers of parliamentarians from the Houses of the Oireachtas and the Northern Ireland Assembly, for discussion of issues of mutual interest and concern, is a key institutional issue arising from the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement of 1998 and St. Andrew's Agreement of 2006, which has not been implemented to date. The establishment of the North-South Parliamentary Forum is a matter for the Houses of the Oireachtas and the Northern Ireland Assembly themselves. As it is linked with ongoing work towards the full implementation of the Good Friday and St Andrew's Agreements, progress on the establishment of the Forum is periodically noted at plenary meetings of the North-South Ministerial Council.

In early 2009, two all-Party Working Groups were established in both institutions under the Chairmanship of the Ceann Comhairle and the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, respectively, to take forward discussions on the Forum as envisaged in the Agreements. The two

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Working Groups continued their work during 2010 in conjunction with each other. The first joint meeting of the Working Groups was held in Stormont in June 2010 to agree the agenda for the first formal inter-parliamentary conference of representatives of all the main political parties from Ireland, North and South.

The North-South Parliamentary Forum Conference "Building Strong Pillars" took place in the Slieve Donard Hotel, Newcastle, Co. Down on 7-8 October 2010. The Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, Mr. William Hay, MLA, and the then Ceann Comhairle, Mr. Séamus Kirk, TD, co-chaired the conference. The Conference included plenary session discussions on two themes of mutual interest: Parliamentary Relationships with Europe and European Agricultural and Rural Development Reform. There was also an open discussion on the Role and Arrangements for the North-South Parliamentary Forum. Reaction to the Conference was generally very positive. A Report of the Conference was agreed by both Working Groups and will be printed and circulated to all members of the Houses of the Oireachtas and the Assembly in mid-2011. The next joint meeting of the two Working Groups will take place in Dublin in June 2011 following the Assembly Elections.

### British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly

2010 saw the 20th Anniversary of the establishment of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly. The 40th Plenary Session of the Assembly was convened in Cavan in February 2010 with the theme of "Towards Economic Recovery". The Plenary was addressed by An Taoiseach,

Mr. Brian Cowen TD, the Governor of the Irish Central Bank, Professor Patrick Honohan, the US Special Economic Envoy to Northern Ireland, Mr Declan Kelly, the Garda Commissioner, Mr Fachtna Murphy, and the PSNI Chief Constable, Mr Matt Baggot.

The 41st Plenary Session was convened in the Isle of Man in November 2010 with the theme of "Creating Space for Economic Development". The Plenary included an emergency debate on the economic crisis in Ireland, debates on the Saville Report and a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mr. Owen Patterson MP, addressed the Assembly.

### Travel Policy

In December 2010, the Commission approved a revised Travel Policy for foreign and domestic travel undertaken by members and staff. The policy, which was last revised in 2007, is in line with Department of Finance requirements and had been approved by the Joint Administration Committee.

The key objectives of the revised policy are to:

- ◆ provide a travel service with which members and staff are satisfied;
- ◆ minimise travel costs;
- ◆ ensure value for money is achieved; and
- ◆ set out clear procedures in relation to travel management.

### United States Legislative Leaders Foundation Conference

The Houses of the Oireachtas hosted the conference of the State Legislative Leaders Foundation from the United States (SLLF) in Leinster House in August 2010.

129 persons participated in the event - 63 Foreign Members, 15 TDs and Senators, and 51 Spouses and Special Guests from across Europe and the USA.

Our Interparliamentary Unit organised accommodation for the full list of participants, organised the Agenda, the venue and speakers and provided hospitality and organised tours on-site in Leinster House.

On the successful conclusion of the event, the feedback received from the SLLF was very positive.

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### RECORDS OF PROCEEDINGS

#### The Debates Office

The Debates Office produces the Official Report of the debates. This is an authoritative complete, accurate and impartial record of the contributions of speakers, in the language (Gaeilge or English) of the contribution. It is delivered through in-house reporting and in-house editing by a team of parliamentary reporters, editors and administrative staff.

#### Debates Office developments during 2010

The Service has invested significantly in the development and modernisation of the Debates Office in recent years. It is a strategic aim of the Service to develop in-house capacity, capability, ownership and control of the production and printing of the Official Report to reduce our long-term dependence on a single external printer.

To improve efficiencies, the debates production systems and processes have undergone fundamental changes in recent years through the application of innovative technical solutions. These have simplified the reporting and editing processes; given more in-house control over the production process; improved the efficient delivery of services and information; and provided opportunities for further efficiencies.

The introduction of digital sound and digital audio (DSDA) recording transformed the way that proceedings are logged and accessed. Reporters and editors can now access a digital log of speakers and digital recordings of debates and electronic versions of PQs directly from their computers. A Request for Tender for the support and maintenance of these services issued in 2010 and it is expected that significant cost savings will be achieved as a result in 2011 and subsequent years.

The use of new technologies to improve efficiencies is ongoing with the introduction of voice recognition software and the implementation of the Debates Authoring System. Further development of the Debates Authoring System will give the Debates Office the capacity to produce debates in print ready format while voice recognition software is being used by the Debates Office in order to optimise rosters in the context of a reduction in staff numbers.

Investment in technology has reduced labour-intensive tasks, simplified the reporting and editing processes, and achieved greater in-house control of the production process and data.

New technologies have shifted the focus from the printed version of the Official Report to a focus on providing the unrevised version of the Official Report on the internal network within two hours and on the Oireachtas website on a same day or next day basis.

These technological developments have enabled the Debates Office to absorb an approximate 15% reduction in staff numbers which, in turn, achieved a similar level of savings to the Service in pay expenditure in 2010. These developments have also enabled the Debates Office to discontinue printing daily books with a saving of 7% per page in 2011 and the potential for further significant savings in the context of a new print and publishing contract.

A VFM and Policy Review of the Debates Office was completed during 2010 (see page 73). The recommendations of the review are currently being implemented by the Debates Office.

#### New Broadcasting Contract

An EU tendering process for the new broadcasting contract for the Oireachtas was undertaken and completed during 2010. Technical consultants were engaged by the Service to assist in the drawing up of the Request for Tender and evaluating the Tenders. The successful tenderer (Pi Communications) took over the running of the broadcasting service from 1 January, 2011, and substantial annual cost savings have been achieved under the new contract.

#### Rannóg an Aistriúcháin – Translation Service

Rannóg an Aistriúcháin provides official translations of the Acts of the Oireachtas, Standing Orders of the Houses, Order Papers, Proceedings of the Houses, official correspondence of members of the Houses, Strategic Plans and Annual Reports of Commission, and miscellaneous items for the Service.

The Acts of the Oireachtas are the primary source of law in Ireland apart from the Constitution. Since July 2006,

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there is a statutory obligation to publish Acts of the Oireachtas simultaneously in both official languages after their enactment, as set out in section 7 of the Official Languages Act 2003. In accordance with section 3(2)(a) of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2006, the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission has a duty to provide official translations of the Acts of the Oireachtas.

A simultaneous translation (interpretation) service is provided during sittings of the Dáil and of the Seanad and, if requested, during Committee meetings. Since its first publication in 1958, Rannóg an Aistriúcháin has responsibility for managing and publishing the Official Standard Grammar for Irish (An Caighdeán Oifigiúil). In addition, Rannóg an Aistriúcháin is the national authority of the State as regards the Irish language version of EU Treaties.

### Core Translation Resources

In recent years, the Service has invested heavily in training, resources and restructuring in Rannóg an Aistriúcháin in order to place itself in a position to provide official translations on a current Act basis. A customised translation aid was developed which allows translators to automatically access precedents in the [www.achtanna.ie](http://www.achtanna.ie) database, established by An Rannóg. This programme of change was subsequently validated by the ability of the unit to meet the obligations for simultaneous translation of Acts placed on it by statute.

A strategy has been put in place to clear historical arrears of translations. An external framework of translators has been established and the services of the framework have been drawn down as and when required.

In 2010, 40 Acts, containing 1,719 pages of legislation, were passed by the Oireachtas and all have been translated by An Rannóg. This compares with 46 Acts and 1,364 pages of legislation in 2009, an increase of more than 20%.

### Irish Language Scheme

The Rannóg prepared an Irish Language Scheme for the Houses of the Oireachtas Service which has been adopted by the Service pursuant to section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003. The Scheme sets out our commitments in regard to the services that will be provided in the Irish language, or bilingually, for the three-

year duration of the Scheme. The Scheme also includes a commitment to assess on an ongoing basis the level and nature of demand for services through Irish and to ensure that the Service continues to meet this demand in a planned, coherent and accessible fashion.

An easily-accessible Rannóg an Aistriúcháin page on the Oireachtas website is currently under construction and will soon be available. The page will contain material of interest, including glossaries of terminology from the Acts which it is envisaged will be a useful resource for members and other interested parties.

### Increased use of the Irish language by members

In regard to the simultaneous translation service, an analysis of contributions in the 30th Dáil and the 31st Dáil has shown a substantial increase in the use of the Irish language by members and Party Leaders - from 12% in the last Dáil to 20% in the current one.

## HOUSES OF THE OIREACTHAS BUILDINGS, ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES

### Precinct Development Plan

In conjunction with the OPW, we continued to progress the long-term strategic development plan for the Leinster House campus during 2010. Progress was slow however as the OPW 2010 budget was substantially reduced due to the current difficult economic climate. We aim to progress the plan incrementally over the next few years, finances allowing.

### Accommodation Plan

The accommodation strategy for the Leinster House campus is to migrate staff from rented accommodation and move them to Agriculture House. This is in line with Government policy to achieve savings by moving civil servants from rented accommodation to State-owned offices vacated by decentralised departments. The Commission, on the recommendation of its sub-Committee on Accommodation Strategy, approved this policy during 2010 in view of the rent savings to be realised.

It is envisaged that the decant from Georgian Leinster House for the duration of the restoration works will form the main element of first phase of using Agriculture House;

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the second phase will be the withdrawal from rented accommodation. Access to accommodation in Agriculture House is now dependent on the timing of the decentralisation of the staff from the Department of Agriculture to Portlaoise and the consequent freeing up of offices as a result. In the interim, the Houses of the Oireachtas has been allotted parking spaces in Agriculture House for the duration of the OPW works on the roof of the National Gallery which has impacted on parking availability on the Leinster Lawn side of the building.

### Restoration of Georgian Leinster House

The major works on the restoration of Leinster House are still envisaged to take place within the next three years subject to availability of OPW funding. In the meantime investigative, and where necessary, remedial work is being carried out. These interim works are facilitating the detailed planning for the main project and help to provide cost certainty as well as spreading the costs over a number of years. Where any item of work is assessed to need immediate attention for safety reasons it is being dealt with. One of the most complex parts of the restoration project is the rewiring of Georgian Leinster House which will be time consuming and costly and this is due to commence in 2011.

### Building Improvements

New fire safety lifts were installed in the 1966 Block and the Engineering Block. Preparatory work was carried out in the basement of the 1966 Block to prepare the link into the Engineering Block and facilitate universal access to that building.

### Allocation of accommodation to Members following the General Elections

In line with the Commission's policy for the allocation of accommodation after the General Elections, all members were assigned offices prior to the first sitting of the new Dáil and Seanad. This proved to be a big logistical undertaking in view of the high turnover of members at the Elections. Accommodation was assigned by the Superintendent's section working in partnership with the Party Whips and Party Administrators.



### Security Services in Leinster House

During 2010 the parliamentary complex was the focus for a large number of street protests. On several occasions these protests were on a large scale, and in some cases reached a level of intimidation which was quite threatening to the property and business of the Houses. On one occasion an unsuccessful attempt was made to push past the gate security - this incident was inaccurately reported in the media as the "parliament was stormed by protestors". On another occasion the front gate was temporarily blocked by a cement truck which was quickly removed by the Gardaí.

The in-house and Garda management of the security threats ensured that there was no disruption to the business of the Houses and all parliamentary activities and events continued as normal. A memorandum of understanding between the Service and an Garda Síochána will be finalised in 2011. The memorandum will set out the roles for all security staff and the required reactions in certain circumstances and events.

### Health and Safety Policy

The Service is committed to ensuring the health and safety of its members and employees, and all those affected by its activities. A key tenet of the Health and Safety policy is

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that a safe workplace will be achieved and maintained by all employees actively supporting the health and safety procedures of the Service.

Our safety record is good, and considering the volume of human traffic throughput there are very few accidents. During 2010 six accidents occurred, mainly in the form of slips or trips on steps or staircases.

The recommendations of the Health and Safety Management System Audit Report 2009 have been reported to the MAC. An Implementation Plan and timeframe were approved by the MAC. Significant elements of the Implementation Plan are:

- ◆ The Safety Statement of the Service has been circulated to all staff.
- ◆ A Health and Safety Committee was established in 2010.
- ◆ Risk assessments are ongoing.
- ◆ Development of an audit system for legal and other requirements is ongoing.
- ◆ Seminars for managers are planned.
- ◆ Fire Warden lists are continuously updated.
- ◆ A Health and Safety training plan has been drafted.
- ◆ New fire lifts have been installed in the 1966 Block and Engineering Block.

### Energy Management Reporting

A report on the Energy Usage in the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2010 is set out at Appendix 10, page 109.

### Crèche

The take-up of crèche places has grown steadily since the facility opened in 2006 and is now operating at maximum capacity with steady demand for placements. The crèche provides an on-site childcare facility for parents working in the Oireachtas and offers full day care and pre-school learning for children up to age 5, as well as late-evening care and drop-in services. It is open to the children of members and staff and to staff of Government Departments also. The services are paid for directly by the users to the service provider.

Surveys of users indicate a continuing high level of satisfaction among parents availing of the service and an independent inspection conducted in early 2010 also confirms a high quality service delivery. Following an open tender competition in 2010, the service operator who held the previous contract was again selected to operate the facility on a fully commercial basis for a further period of two years.

### Fitness Room

The Oireachtas Fitness Room continues to be a popular facility used by members and staff. There are approximately 92 visits to the fitness room on a weekly basis. A fitness instructor is in attendance at all times during opening hours. User satisfaction ratings indicate a high level of satisfaction with the service.

### Catering Facilities

Bar and Restaurant catering facilities are provided to members, staff and visitors to Leinster House.

The restaurant continued with its policy of promoting healthy option menus to customers during the year and this has proven very popular with members and staff who work long hours during sitting periods.

An internal audit report on the 2008 Accounts of the Oireachtas Bars and Restaurants found that the internal control framework in these operations were generally adequate. Many strong controls were found to be in place and the detailed testing of records did not reveal any material errors in processing transactions, or in the year end accounts in either the bar or the restaurant. The report was considered by the Audit Committee during 2010 and its recommendations concerning the enhancement of the control environment and processing arrangements are currently being implemented by the Service.

# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 1: IMPROVING SERVICES TO PARLIAMENT

### MEASURING OUR PROGRESS

#### Operational Statistics

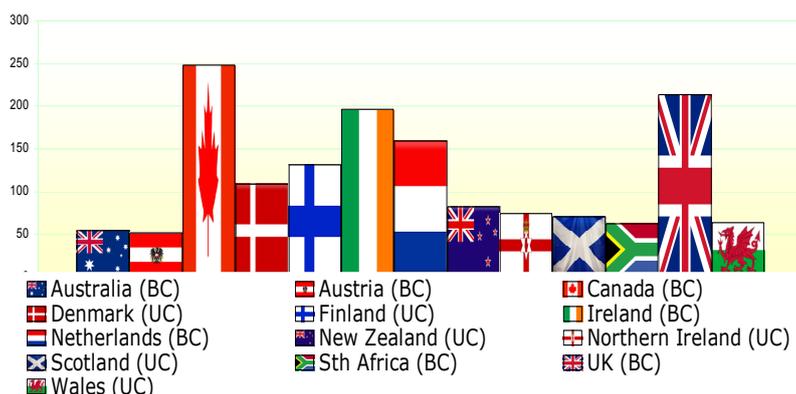
Activity	2008	2009	2010	Total Output 2008-10	% variation 2008-10
No. of Dáil sitting hours	795	934	843	2,572	6%
No. of Dáil sittings days	96	101	100	297	4%
No. of Seanad sitting hours	551	659	613	1,823	11%
No. of Seanad sittings days	93	100	97	290	4%
No. of Committee sitting hours	1,129	1,032	1,065	3,220	-6%
No. of Committee meetings	593	571	623	1,762	5%
No. of Committee reports	77	58	82	216	6.5%
No. of submissions (from Procedural Offices)	1,777	1,374	1,388	4,539	-22%
No. of pages printed - Order Paper	1,418	1,380	1,572	4,370	11%
No. of pages printed - Question Paper	4,369	3,843	3,858	12,070	12%
No. of takes - Debates	14,534	15,234	14,151	43,919	-3%
No. of pages printed - Bills Only	4,268	4,778	6,659	15,129	56%
No. of pages printed - Amendments to Bills	903	1,075	1,264	3,195	40%
No. of pages printed - Acts	954	1,364	1,719	3,944	80%
No. of Press releases	114	400	458	972	302%
No. of visitors to Leinster House	109,419	103,315	87,575	300,309	-20%
No. tours conducted of Leinster House	2,486	2,196	2,093	6,775	-16%
No. of Departmental Officials Visits	14,376	16,563	12,968	43,907	-10%

#### Extract from Report on Comparative Benchmarking of Parliaments re Sitting Days, Sitting Hours, Recess Weeks, Parliamentary Questions

#### Sitting Days and Hours

The Houses of the Oireachtas performs well when benchmarked against other national parliaments surveyed in terms of total sitting days and sitting hours, recording third place with a total of 197 **sitting days** and second place with a total of 1,456 **sitting hours** for both Houses. The UK recorded the highest total of 214 sitting days and 1,537 hours per year for both Houses.

#### Total Sitting Days



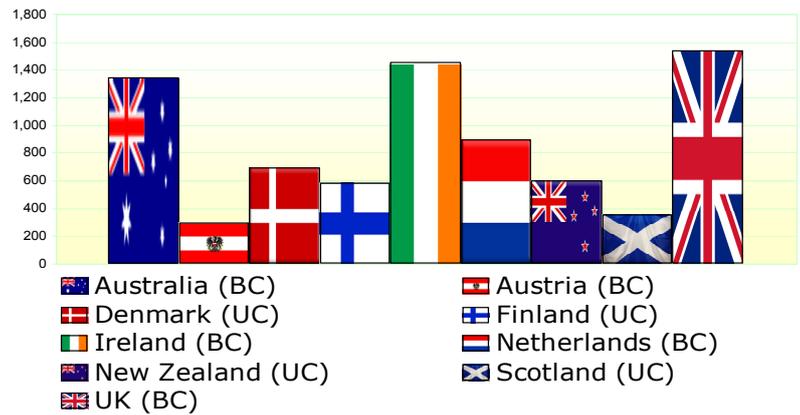
# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 1: IMPROVING SERVICES TO PARLIAMENT

In comparison with other bicameral parliaments surveyed, the Houses of the Oireachtas comes ahead of Australia, Austria and the Netherlands in terms of sitting days.

Compared to unicameral parliaments surveyed, the Dáil as a chamber in its own right comes first in terms of total **sitting hours**, ahead of Denmark, New Zealand, Finland and Scotland and third in terms of total **sitting days**, ahead of New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

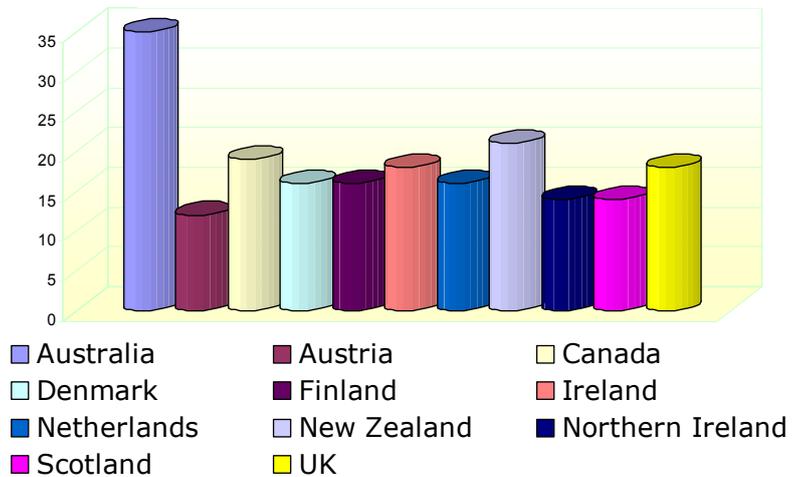
Total Sitting Hours



### Recess Weeks

When comparing the number of recess weeks out of ten parliaments surveyed, Dáil Éireann finishes in joint third place with the UK with a total of 18 recess weeks, above the average of 16.1 weeks. The highest number of recess weeks recorded was 21 for New Zealand.

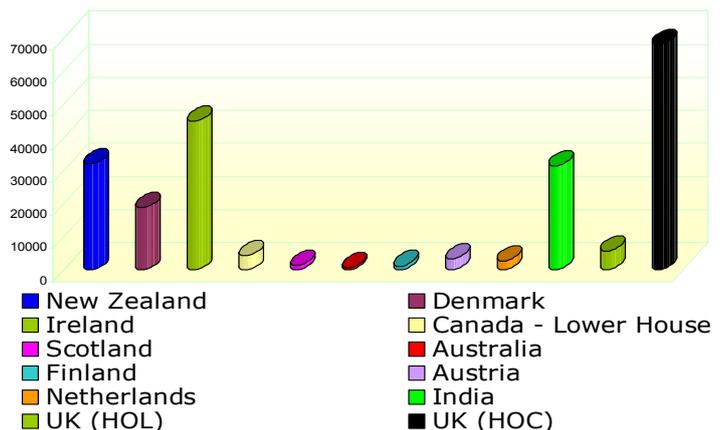
Number of Recess Weeks per Year



### Parliamentary Questions

With a total of 44,943 parliamentary questions (PQs) tabled, Dáil Éireann registered second highest out of twelve parliaments surveyed, second only to UK House of Commons which recorded 68,189. The Irish figure is almost two and a half times the average number of questions tabled.

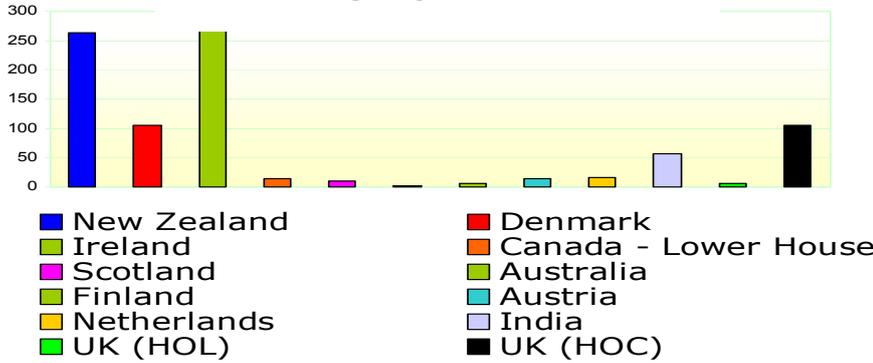
No of Parliamentary Questions



# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 1: IMPROVING SERVICES TO PARLIAMENT

Average PQs Per Member

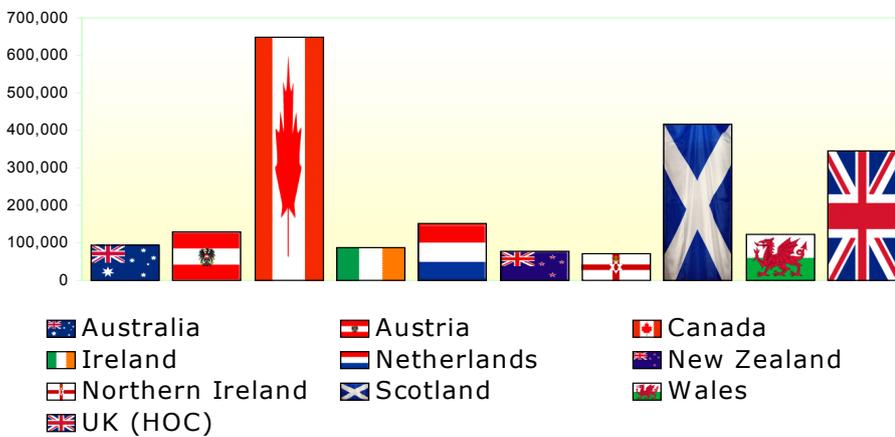


### Parliamentary Questions per Member

Comparing the number of PQs tabled with the number of members of the house in which the questions were tabled, Dáil Éireann finishes in first place with 271 questions per TD, over three times the average figure of 72 questions per member.

New Zealand recorded second place with 263 PQs per member followed by Denmark with 105.

Numbers of Visitors



### Total Number of Visitors

In terms of visitors per year, and in view of its relative size, the Houses of the Oireachtas fares well when benchmarked internationally coming eighth out of the ten parliaments surveyed, with 87,575 visitors annually. The result is equivalent to 1.89% of total population.

Percentage of Population Numbers who have visited Parliament during year



### Visitors as percentage of Population

The Houses of the Oireachtas is in fifth place with 1.89% of the population visiting Parliament during the calendar year. Scotland comes in first, with 8.03% of the population followed by Wales with 4.1%. The UK (HOC) recorded the lowest percentage of the population visiting parliament at 0.19%.

# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 2: IMPROVING SERVICES TO MEMBERS



*Photograph provided by Conan McKenna, member of staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service*

# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 2: IMPROVING SERVICES TO MEMBERS

### STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 2 - IMPROVING SERVICES TO MEMBERS

This Strategy is about ensuring that members receive the services they need to fulfill their roles as public representatives.

#### JOINT ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE (JAC)

This Joint Administration Committee (JAC) was established as a formal communications channel between members and the Commission. It communicates the views of members on matters of policy to be decided by the Commission and makes recommendations on such matters as appropriate.

The JAC met 13 times during 2010 and considered a range of subjects, including the following:

- ◆ Broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings, including the feasibility of establishing a Parliamentary Channel.
- ◆ Measures to improve ICT network data security.
- ◆ Members' constituency database.
- ◆ The Houses of the Oireachtas Communications Strategy.
- ◆ Leinster House merchandising.
- ◆ The Houses of the Oireachtas Customer Charter.

#### HUMAN RESOURCES (HR)

##### HR Services for Members and their staff

In summary:

- ◆ We support members as employers by providing best-practice employer advice.
- ◆ We provide personnel administration functions for the staff of members and the parties employed under the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance (the Scheme).
- ◆ We implement the Training Programme for members and political personnel as approved by the Commission.
- ◆ We administer the Superannuation or "pension" scheme for staff employed under the Scheme.

##### Administration of Scheme for Secretarial Assistance

Under the Scheme, secretarial assistants, administrative assistants, parliamentary assistants, administrators and

Chefs de Cabinets are employed by Deputies, Senators and qualifying parties, but are paid by the Commission. The Commission also regulates the number of staff employed under the Scheme and has oversight of its operation. However, the Minister for Finance retains authority for terms and conditions of employment (for example, pay, leave and other entitlements) of those employed under the Scheme.

Immediately before the dissolution of the Dáil there were 450 people employed to fill approximately 370 full-time equivalent posts. The annual budget for this category of expenditure is approximately €21 million (which includes €3 million for overtime). The staff are employed under a specified purpose contract for the duration of each Dáil and Seanad (often referred to as "Dáil to Dáil" contracts).

In the course of its ongoing review of expenditure last year, the Commission, in the context of achieving payroll reductions across all expenditure items/lines, authorised the Service to consult with the staff of the Scheme to achieve savings in payroll costs. (As the staff employed under the Scheme are not public servants, the Pension Related Deduction (PRD) or "pension levy" and the pay reductions were not applied to them in 2009 and 2010 and, as a result, there was no reduction in expenditure in this category of expenditure. Instead, there was an increase which was inconsistent with other pay categories.) Consultations with staff and unions were commenced and the issue was referred to the Conciliation Service of the Labour Relations Commission. Prior to the General Election, the Commission approved a two hour reduction in the overtime limit for all staff employed under the Scheme with effect from the new Dáil and Seanad. The Commission has requested that further savings options be brought before the Commission of the new Dáil and Seanad.

##### HR General Election support to members and their staff

Once it became apparent that the General Elections were to be held in early 2011, the main emphasis of HR support for members was concentrated on planning for the efficient

# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 2: IMPROVING SERVICES TO MEMBERS

administration of early retirement/severance and redundancy payments and the engagement of new staff employed by members and parties. This work involved the calculation and payment of redundancy settlements and providing template contracts to members and parties for the staff employed for the 31<sup>st</sup> Dáil and 24<sup>th</sup> Seanad. Due to the high turnover in members returned, there has been a significant workload in processing some 190 applications for early retirement/severance and redundancy payments, with a corresponding intake of new staff.

The total election turnover cost under the Scheme is estimated at €5.3-€5.8 million. It is not possible to give accurate amounts at this stage as 27 applications are provisional pending confirmation of allocations to the parties of staff resources (this is the staff allocation made by the Commission to each of the parties over and above the individual entitlement of members). A final cost of €5.8 million would represent an increase of 45% on the amount paid in 2007 when €4 million was paid in respect of 151 applications.

### Members' Employers' Advice Information

Prior to the General Election, we published an overview of the provisions of the Scheme including details of administrative procedures. The Employers' Guide to Human Resources which gives practical advice and guidance on how to manage employment issues was first published in 2007 and continues to be available. These publications gave members an overview of the operation of the Scheme, including setting out the respective responsibilities of the Commission and the Minister for Finance.

### Training for Members and their staff

We continued to roll out training to members and their staff during 2010. In all, 53 people availed of training opportunities up to 31 December, 2010. 51 participants were political staff and two were members. The most popular training courses availed of by political staff were Constituency Database training and Executive Secretary/PA Skills training (of which 41 attended). No regional training was provided during 2010.

Following the General Elections, we provided a tailored training and information programme for new members and their staff. Training was provided in-house and covered

the following areas:

- ◆ Overview of IT systems and facilities.
- ◆ IT Skills – Microsoft Office 2010 (Word, Excel and Powerpoint), Lotus Notes and Social Networking – these sessions were held on sitting days over three weeks and were attended by 218 people.
- ◆ Information sessions on Internal Procedures in Parliament (for example, Parliamentary Questions, adjournment matters, motions, Bills and amendments).
- ◆ Other information sessions (for example, EU Institutions and the Role of the Oireachtas under the Lisbon Treaty, Secretarial Facilities and Allowances, and ePayslips training).

Constituents Database training for Members/political personnel commenced in May and will be rolled out weekly until all requests for training have been accommodated.

Further information sessions on Library & Research Services, FOI and Ethics will take place in due course. We intend to provide in-house language training in Irish and French later in 2011 when demand has been assessed and arrangements for delivery of the training have been put in place.

## FINANCIAL RESOURCES / MEMBERS' SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

### Members' Allowances - implementation of Parliamentary Standard Allowance

The new system for members' allowances, introduced by the Minister for Finance in March 2010, replaced the then existing array of allowances and entitlements with a single monthly automatic payment comprising two elements – a travel and accommodation allowance and a public representation allowance.

The travel and accommodation element of the allowance is based on the members' travel distance from their normal place of residence to Leinster House and requires verification of their attendance at Leinster House as well as an annual declaration that they have incurred the costs. The allowance is calculated on the basis of 150 days attendance at Leinster House, however, members must register their attendance for at least 120 days

# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 2: IMPROVING SERVICES TO MEMBERS

annually in a full year to retain the full allowance. A deduction of 1% of the allowance is made for each day less than the minimum attendance required under Statutory Instrument (S.I.) 84/2010. Attendance recording at Leinster House is by means of an electronic System for Recording Attendance (SRA) or by signing a daily attendance record located in the One-Stop-Shop. Members can register their attendance once daily at any time during the day or evening when Leinster House is open. All but six members of the Oireachtas [i.e. 3%] achieved full attendance in 2010. Those who did not repaid some €10,900 in Travel and Accommodation Allowances.

The S.I. provides for the reconciliation of a member's attendance record in certain circumstances. For example, for reasons of ill-health, absence for official travel purposes or where the member has forgotten to record his or her attendance at Leinster House on a given day and provides sufficient proof of attendance in accordance with Commission policy for that day.

Under the public representation element of the allowance, members may opt annually for either a vouched or unvouched amount. The categories of expenses allowed under this element of the allowance are set out in the S.I. It is largely a matter of judgement for the member to determine whether the expenditure they incurred can be legitimately submitted under the categories of expenses as set out in the S.I. Audit Guidelines with a non-exhaustive list of expenses have been prepared to assist members in this regard. The S.I. provides for a random annual audit of not less than 10% of those who have opted for the vouched amount. Some 100 members chose the vouched amount during 2010 and not less than 10% of these members will be audited during May/June 2011.

The staff of the One-Stop-Shop continue to be available to answer members' queries in relation to the new allowances system and an intranet site is now fully operational setting out details of the scheme. All the relevant application forms are also available on-line.

### Audit of Public Representation Allowance

The Members' Services section has completed a public procurement process to procure audit services to complete the random audits of 10% of members who have opted for the vouched allowance. Members hold their own receipts and make them available for audit inspection. The purpose of the audit will be (i) to establish that a member has



receipts to match the amount of the allowance paid to them and (ii) that those receipts are in respect of items which are allowable expenditure within the categories specified in the S.I. The audits for 2010 are currently underway. Reports arising from audits will be amenable to FOI.

### Review of Parliamentary Standard Allowance

Given the significant level of change introduced by this new system it was considered appropriate at the time of its introduction to review the system after its first year of operation. This review will be conducted by the Department of Finance, the statutory authority, in conjunction with the Houses of the Oireachtas Service, the service provider. The review will take place during 2011 and will take into account any issues which arose from the implementation of the scheme as well as any changes proposed by the incoming Government in relation to the vouching aspect of members' expenses.

### Publication of Members' Expenses Details

Members' expenses details, as well as their attendance records, are now published to the Oireachtas website on a

# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 2: IMPROVING SERVICES TO MEMBERS

monthly basis since 1 March, 2010, the date of implementation of the new system for members' allowances. This was an intended feature of the new system as introduced by the Minister for Finance.

### Members' Services section General Election support to members and their staff

Once it became apparent that the General Elections were to be held in early 2011, pre and post-election plans were put in place in the Members' Services section to provide information to outgoing members and to plan the efficient administration of salaries and allowances and pension and termination allowances for them. In addition, planning commenced on the development and provision of information which would be necessary for new and returning members after the elections.

### Dissolution Guidelines for Members

Under section 4(4A) of the Commission Acts, the Commission prepares and publishes guidelines for outgoing Deputies, and Senators who are contesting the next Dáil General Election, on the use by them of services and facilities provided out of public funds following a dissolution of the Dáil, and specifies appropriate charges for such use made other than in respect of the members' duties as a public representative.

An Election Handbook was issued to all members prior to the dissolution of the 30<sup>th</sup> Dáil detailing the arrangements to be applied, in the dissolution period, in relation to allowances and facilities. Services and facilities used other than in respect of duties as a public representative during the dissolution period must be declared and certified to the Commission and the cost reimbursed within 40 days from polling day. To date, approximately €136,000 has been repaid to the Commission in respect of these dissolution charges.

### Oireachtas Members' Pensions system

Following revision of pension entitlements in legislation, the Members' Pensions Section produced new information booklets for Oireachtas members in 2010. These booklets provided information on termination arrangements and payments and pension arrangements for members on cessation of their membership.

The estimated cost of Termination Payments post the 2011 General Elections is €1.6 million in Termination Lump Sums and €3.85 million in monthly Termination payments over the next year.

There were 349 pensioners on the payroll prior to the 2011 General Election and following the election the Members Pension Unit calculated the termination and pension entitlements of the 76 former Deputies and 23 Senators who retired or were not returned at the election.

Individual information clinics continued to be offered to enable members to discuss individual factors such as transfer of service from other public bodies and future entitlements of spouse and children. Information clinics were held with 50 members in November/December 2010 which is almost double the number of clinics held in 2009.

### Houses of the Oireachtas Printing Facility

Throughput in the Printing facility has increased enormously over the last number of years. Job numbers (i.e. output) have increased by 21% in 2010 over 2009 and by 48% since the inception of the facility. Print impressions, an accepted measure of throughput, now stand at some 21 million per annum in 2010 – a 22% increase over 2009. The facility continues to develop the range of print products it provides to members and strives at all times to remain within its service level agreement (SLA) in terms of quantities produced and delivery times. The Print facility is overseen by the Printing Users' Council, comprising four Commission members and two senior managers of the Service.

An SLA is also in the process of being finalised with the various sections of the Service who also use the facility on a regular basis. This will be completed once the appropriate software is installed. The purpose of the SLA is to standardise the type and format of documents being sent to the facility and also to set out the standards users can expect from the facility in return in terms of quality and delivery times. This will lead to optimal use of staff time in the facility and improve delivery times for users.

# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 2: IMPROVING SERVICES TO MEMBERS



### TECHNOLOGY AND OFFICE SUPPORT

#### ICT support services

ICT services for members and their staff are provided both in Leinster House and countrywide in their homes and constituency offices through an externally managed services contractor, Fujitsu. A tendering process for ongoing ICT support was finalised at the end of 2010 and the new contract, which has delivered substantial annual savings, will be in place until March 2014. The internally-staffed ICT Unit also provides first-line ICT support services to over 400 civil service staff.

Under regulations made by the Commission, a specified set of computers, laptops, printers, scanners, etc., together with broadband service, are supplied to each Deputy or Senator. A help-desk is provided in Leinster House for members and we also have a number of specialist applications, including a Constituency Database management system, which are made available to members.

ICT supports and services for members are under constant review and development, with the following key standard ICT supports in place for members:

- ◆ A help-desk based in Leinster House providing telephone and desk-side support, and supported by field staff based in 34 locations nationwide.
- ◆ Broadband connections between members' constituency offices / homes and Leinster House. Local computer networking is also provided at remote sites.
- ◆ Through web enablement, all members may now access and edit their Leinster House files via the "Internet Café" facility from any PC with Internet access.
- ◆ A comprehensive Constituency Database management system for handling constituency casework, which was used during 2010 by 160 members of both Houses. This database incorporates the relevant electoral register(s), which the Service processes following receipt from local authorities each year and then integrates into the database. This system facilitates tailored and targeted

# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 2: IMPROVING SERVICES TO MEMBERS

correspondence ranging from individual replies to customised and personalised constituency mailshots.

- ◆ Access on the move to key services. Members may use Blackberries, iPhones or iPads to access their email while “on the move” – the Oireachtas IT systems integrate with these devices and consideration is being given to supporting other devices in future.
- ◆ Digital dictation facilities which enable members to dictate memos, correspondence, etc., into a handheld device which, when cradled, automatically routes an electronic sound file of their dictation to their secretarial staff (based in Leinster House or at a remote location) via the Oireachtas computer network. Staff can then process dictation with minimal transmission delay.
- ◆ State-of-the-art Voice over Internet Protocol telephony services in Leinster House.
- ◆ WiFi is available in all areas of Leinster House, including members’ offices. A guest access system is available for use by visitors.
- ◆ A desktop PC-based video conferencing system was introduced in 2010. This system enables members to “meet” constituents by video conference while the member is in Leinster House and the constituent is in the member’s constituency office, and to hold video conferences with other external parties.

During 2010, the Service completed a programme of encrypting the hard drives of all portable computers. A programme to secure “data in transit” was also completed, and data may now be copied only to encrypted portable media. The Service also introduced restrictions on connection of third-party devices to USB ports, and is continuing implementation of a programme to improve data security.

The number of projects under way during 2010 was smaller in comparison to previous years, for two reasons:

- ◆ the available budget had been reduced, and
- ◆ the Service was conducting a competitive dialogue tendering process in respect of our managed IT service.

For this process, bidders were advised that the Service would minimise changes in the nature of the ICT services / systems during the tendering process, which lasted almost a year. As a result, the Service suspended ICT

development in all but absolutely essential areas, or areas which facilitated clearly demonstrable cost savings.

Throughout 2010, the ICT Unit ensured that it was ready to deal with Dáil and Seanad General Elections by ensuring that drawdown contracts were in place for additional hardware which would be required and that third-party contractors would be available at short notice to implement changes. The General Elections gave rise to the deletion or creation of user accounts for over 700 computer users. Following the change in Government, the ICT Unit commenced a shared managed service, under which Departments may, subject to payment of an appropriate fee, use the Oireachtas as an agency for the delivery of ICT services and support to the constituency-based offices of Ministers and Ministers of State. This is expected to give rise to significant cost reductions by standardising service provision and by avoiding otherwise unnecessary rotation of equipment.

### ICT Strategy

In addition to the Commission Statutory Instrument which legislates for the amounts of equipment and facilities available to members, there is also an ICT Strategy put in place approximately every three years which sets the overall strategic framework within which services are delivered.

A review of implementation of the 2008-2010 Strategy is currently under way, including a post-implementation review of key projects to determine whether anticipated benefits have been realised. During the lifetime of the Strategy, a number of projects were cancelled by the Commission due to the worsening economic climate.

A new ICT Strategy is to be prepared in 2011 and will be submitted for Commission approval.

### Internal Audit ICT Security recommendations

There are a number of outstanding internal audit ICT security recommendations relating to the use of computer systems by members. In particular, recommendations which address previously un-regulated use of facilities, giving rise to possible serious security and other risks for the Commission, as well as risks to members and their staff. Many of these risks were identified in recent years in internal audit reports.

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## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 2: IMPROVING SERVICES TO MEMBERS

These issues relate to network and data security, the absence of an Acceptable Usage Policy for members and their staff, storage of copyright material on our systems, inadequate password controls and similar areas.

Once the Joint Administration Committee is re-established, it will be asked to consider an Acceptable Usage Policy in respect of the use of ICT facilities by members and their staff. The Committee will also be asked to propose such a policy for formal adoption by the Commission.

The ICT Unit is in the meantime implementing a series of changes / restrictions on how data can be accessed and transported.

### RESEARCH AND INFORMATION

#### Library & Research Service (L&RS)

The L&RS continued to be member-focused in 2010. Its client relations and marketing strategy 2010-2012 prioritises the development of a better understanding of members' changing information needs. The L&RS delivered expert research and information services that met members' needs as parliamentarians and public representatives. Specifically the L&RS delivered:

#### On-demand information/research services to individual members and other users

Members used the expert analysis from the L&RS to contribute to parliamentary debates, scrutinise legislation,

develop and analyse policy, keep abreast of constituency issues and prepare for media appearances. The L&RS responded to 2,550 on-demand information and research queries from individual members and other users during 2010. This is a 19% increase on the number of queries received during the first year of this service in 2007. The table below shows the number of requests from each client category.

#### Briefings for all members on a wider range of policy issues

Eight Economic Indicators and seven Spotlights were published during 2010. These proactive research products are designed to provide members with regular analyses of a wider range of policy issues. The Economic Indicators are written by economists in the L&RS and examine key indicators in relation to the Irish economy. The Spotlight publications written by L&RS multi-disciplinary research teams covered financing local government, debt (mortgage debt, personal debt and consequences, the imprisonment of civil debtors), accounting standards, gender balance in EU parliaments and benchmarking Ireland's health system.

The L&RS organised two expert seminars (May and June) to which all members were invited. External speakers, from the academic and research community, were engaged to speak at the seminars which covered planning and housing, and financing local government. These seminars were well-received and were also available to members via podcasts.

The L&RS in collaboration with the Office of the Parliamentary Legal Adviser developed a system to underpin future legal briefings to members.

#### Liberty and new technologies

The L&RS launched its new collection management system (Liberty) in January 2010. All members were provided with their own personal log-in and access to the system enabling them to set up current interest and awareness alerts and to search for, request and reserve items.

The L&RS undertook a web 2.0 survey across UK parliaments to assess the level of take-up of such systems and the various approaches to alert members of new resources and services. The outcome of this survey will directly inform the L&RS 2011 web 2.0 and social media project.

L&RS on-demand information/research service statistics		
Client Category	No. of requests	% of requests
Members	1,215	47.6%
Members' Staff	581	22.8%
Committee	94	3.7%
Houses Staff	248	9.7%
External - ECPRD	80	3.1%
External - Other	216	8.5%
External - General Public	116	4.5%
Total	2,550	100%

# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 2: IMPROVING SERVICES TO MEMBERS

### MEASURING OUR PROGRESS

#### Operational Statistics

Activity	2008	2009	2010	Total 2008-10	% variation 2008-10
No. of ICT help desk calls	6,760	7,536	9,462	23,758	40%
No. of payments	7,669	8,122	8,410	24,201	10%
No. of members on training courses	107	120	2	229	-98%
No. of political personnel on courses	515	301	51	867	-90%
No. of FOI requests dealt with by Members' Services	6	53	58	117	867%
No. of queries dealt with by Members' Services (telephone/written)	3,905	3,025	2,295	9,225	-41%

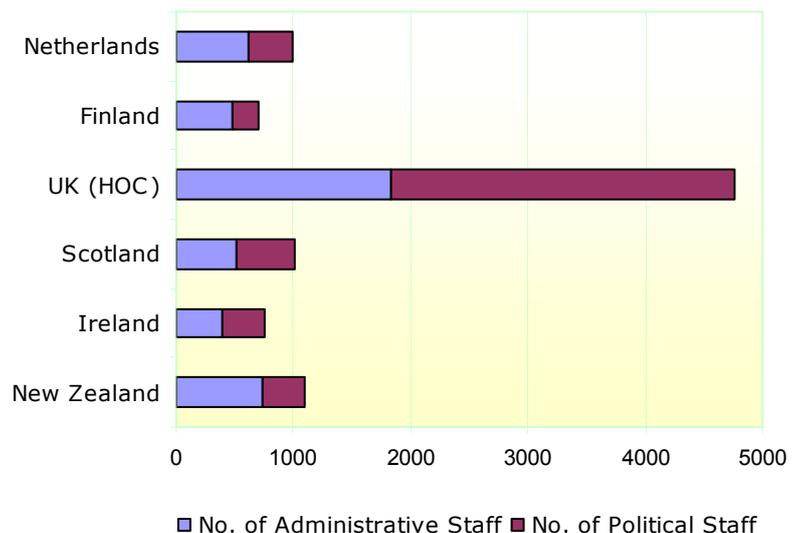
### Extract from Report on Comparative Benchmarking of Parliaments:

#### Total Staff in Parliament

With a combined total of 753 staff (incorporating both administrative staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service and Members' political staff (362 positions filled by 472 people), the Houses of the Oireachtas records the fifth highest total number of staff of six parliaments surveyed, coming behind the UK House of Commons (4,754), New Zealand (1,101), Scotland (1,005) and Netherlands (998) while Finland has the least at 709 staff.

The Houses of the Oireachtas recorded the third highest proportion of members' political staff to total staff at 48%. The UK has the highest proportion with 61%, while New Zealand and Finland recorded the lowest percentage in this comparison at 33%.

#### Total Parliamentary Staff - divided between Administrative and Political Staff



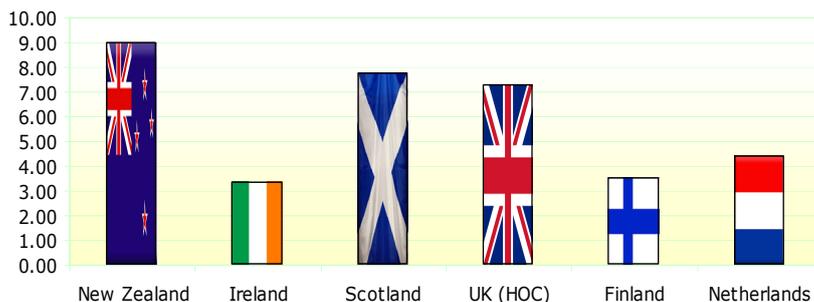
# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 2: IMPROVING SERVICES TO MEMBERS

### Ratio of Total Staff to Members – administrative and political staff

Of the six parliaments surveyed, the Houses of the Oireachtas is in sixth place in terms of overall staff numbers (both staff of the Service and political staff) with a ratio of 3.33 staff overall for every Member. New Zealand is in first place with a ratio of 9.02 staff to every Member.

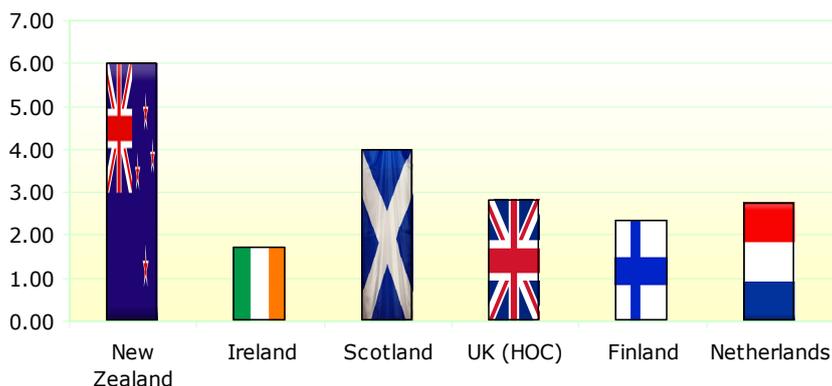
### Number of Staff (both Political and Administrative) to each Member



### Ratio of Administrative Staff to Members

In the comparison of the number of administrative staff (staff of the Service), Ireland comes in at sixth place with 1.73 administrative staff overall to each Member. New Zealand is in first place with 6.02 administrative staff per Member.

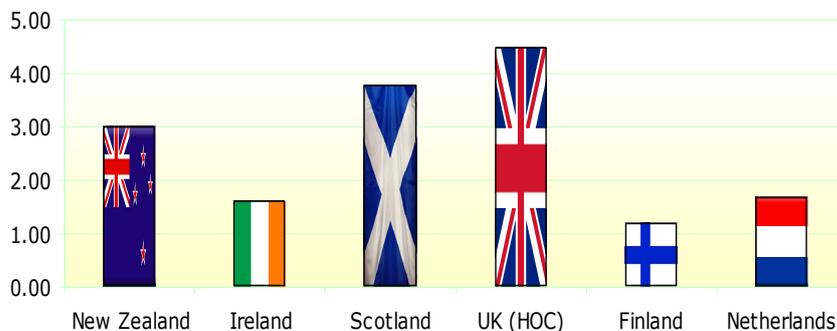
### Number of Administrative Staff to each Member



### Ratio of Political Staff to Members

In the comparison of the number of Members' political staff to the number of Members, Ireland comes in at fifth place, with a ratio of 1.60 staff overall per Member. The UK House of Commons comes in at first place with a ratio of 4.48 Members' political staff per member.

### Number of Political Staff to each Member



# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 3: ENHANCING SERVICE CAPABILITY



# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 3: ENHANCING SERVICE CAPABILITY

### STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 3 - ENHANCING SERVICE CAPABILITY

This Strategy is about achieving the highest standard in public service and parliamentary administration.

#### MANAGING PEOPLE AND BUDGETS

##### Human Resources (HR) services

Our HR area comprises the Personnel Unit (which provides services in respect of civil service staff), the HR Unit for Members (which provides services to members and political personnel) and the Training Unit (which provides training services to members, political personnel and to civil service staff).

There are two main categories of staff in Leinster House. Firstly, those who are the civil service staff of the Commission - some 387 in post at the moment out of sanctioned numbers of 435. In addition to these, a further 54 staff are employed as "industrial civil servants" between the Restaurants, Bars and Printing Facility. Secondly, those who are the staff of members and parties under the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance (450 people employed in 370 full-time equivalent posts). Both categories are on the payroll of the Commission, though their relative status is completely different.

##### HR – overview of current operating environment

It is important to note the changed environment in which the Service now operates. The Commission agreed to apply to its own civil service staff the principles of the Government Moratorium and also agreed to the target reduction in civil service numbers recommended by An Bord Snip Nua - consequently our activity in recruitment and promotion has reduced significantly and when a vacancy does arise work or staff is generally re-allocated. The Commission has statutory authority to decide its own civil service staff numbers up to and including Principal Officer standard or ordinary level (it has no role in relation to terms and conditions of staff which are a matter for the Minister for Finance). A resource plan is reported to the Commission on an annual basis. Since 2009 the Commission has, at the request of the Secretary General, sanctioned the filling of a small number of vacancies but only where the post is a designated critical post. Also, the principle generally applied is that where a post is filled the consequential vacancy is suppressed. Pay reductions and

pension levies have affected all of our staff and the Transforming Public Services Agenda and the Public Service Agreement (the Croke Park Agreement) require us to reduce expenditure, reduce staff and work more efficiently. Reductions in our civil service staff numbers since 2009 have resulted in an annual saving of approximately €1.5 million.

##### HR Plan

Our HR Plan, setting out the priority activities for HR for the period 2010-2012, was approved by the MAC in November 2010, and issued to staff shortly afterwards. The Plan was drafted following consultation with staff. A sub-group of the Partnership Committee considered the draft plan in detail and the Partnership Committee approved it at an ordinary meeting before its submission to the MAC. It is aligned with the Strategic Plan 2010-2012 and includes all HR Corporate Business Plan deliverables.

Building on the targets of our previous HR Plan which concentrated on the establishment of the HR Unit for Members and new initiatives such as the training programme for members and members' personnel, the focus of our targets for the period of this plan is on consultation, review and planning for the next General Election (this task was ultimately prioritised due to the earlier than anticipated dissolution of the 30<sup>th</sup> Dáil). Progress on implementation of the HR Plan is reported quarterly to the MAC.

##### HR Management Information Reporting

In addition to our core work or the more traditional role of personnel administration, we have, in recent years, developed our reporting capacity on the Human Resource Management System (HRMS). This is the IT system we use for all personnel records and management reporting. Key HR indicators are now reported to the MAC on a monthly basis.

The Report to MAC includes:

- ◆ details of staff numbers sanctioned and numbers actually in place,

# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 3: ENHANCING SERVICE CAPABILITY

- ◆ various statistics relating to staff, such as age profile, mobility, and PMDS ratings and compliance,
- ◆ statistics on various activities in the HR area, such as applications under the various schemes – for example, the travel pass scheme, the shorter working year scheme, the bike to work scheme, etc., as well as the time spent monitoring internet usage, warnings issued, etc.,
- ◆ statistics on annual leave, sick leave, compensatory leave and other leave (including study leave).

Information seminars for all managers on HR and ICT issues were held in early 2011. Managers were specifically briefed on developments in current staffing levels, revised procedures for managing sick leave, revised procedures for PMDS arising from the wider civil service review of the scheme, reporting arrangements on the system for recording attendance, and the ongoing annual leave audit. Four seminars were held and over 100 managers attended. Further seminars are now to be held for the remainder of our staff.

### Management Seminar for the Service

A seminar for senior managers on the key managerial challenges now facing the Service was held in early 2011. It was attended by the MAC, Principal Officers and Assistant Principals. Outputs from the seminar included the introduction of a senior management development programme and the establishment of knowledge and information sharing networks for senior managers of the Service.

### Staffing Agility and Resource Plan

Although all matters in relation to managing staff appointments are a matter for the Secretary General, a new mechanism to aid decision-making on resource planning and allocation was introduced in 2009. A Directors Group on Resourcing, comprising the Directors of the four Directorates of the Service as well as the Head of the Office of the Commission and the Secretary General, assesses the level of resources in place, considers business cases to fill vacancies and recommends assignments at Senior Clerk level and higher (Junior Clerk and CO level

assignments are decided by HR in consultation with managers). The recommendations of the Directors Group are considered by the MAC and decided by the Secretary General. As already mentioned, a civil service staffing resource plan is reported to the Commission each year. As there is now less scope to fill vacancies, the emphasis is to fill vacancies from within existing Directorate resources.

### Flexible Working Hours

Following on from the introduction of a System for Recording Attendance, a pilot "flexitime" system was rolled out in early 2011 following consultation with staff, unions and the Partnership Committee. Four sections are participating in the pilot and a report on the operation of the system will be reported to the MAC in July 2011.

### ePayslips Portal

All payslips, P60s, Income Levy certificates and Pension-Related Deduction (PRD) certificates are now available electronically on the Corepay ePayslips Portal. This improved service has also yielded time savings for staff previously involved in processing, sorting and distributing paper payslips.

## TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

### Management Training and Development

A review of the implementation of the Training and Development Strategy 2007 to 2009 was carried out and will be reported to the MAC in 2011. A recent internal audit report on the training strategy concluded that the training activities provided have made a valuable contribution to the operational activities of the Service and have been undertaken within budget. The report recommended that more qualitative specific reporting to the MAC on training activities be commenced in view of the potential for training activities to contribute positively to the effectiveness and efficiency of the Service. This reporting will commence in 2011.

During 2010 we continued to provide training services (technical and personal development) to civil service staff and also to members and their staff. The training for staff of the Service was provided in areas such as:

- ◆ Customer Service Training

# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 3: ENHANCING SERVICE CAPABILITY

- ◆ ICT Training in the Office Suite at all levels and specialist ICT training, as required
- ◆ Language Training
- ◆ Report Writing
- ◆ Freedom of Information Act
- ◆ Minute taking
- ◆ Project Management
- ◆ Internal Audit Training
- ◆ Public Procurement
- ◆ Time Management
- ◆ Leadership and Team Building
- ◆ Business Process Improvement
- ◆ Negotiation Skills
- ◆ Guiding Skills Course (Ushers) (Fáilte Ireland).

### Management Development, Leadership and Values

Training in managerial skills for Senior Clerks, Junior Clerks and equivalent grades commenced in 2010. The objective of the training is to equip staff with the managerial skills they require to ensure that the business objectives of their sections and of the Service as a whole are achieved. The training will also assist staff in their personal development and future career goals. The course was piloted in December 2010 and feedback from the participants is now being evaluated to ensure the initiative once fully rolled out will meet the specific needs of the staff of the Service.

There is also a specific Management and Leadership Development Programme aimed at staff at PO and AP management levels. The overall structure of the programme is agreed and focus groups met in March and April to consider the detail of the programme which will be rolled-out in 2011.

### Professional Development Programme for the Library & Research Service staff

During 2010 the L&RS enhanced its capability by focussing on the professional development of its people, using ICT innovatively, collaborative working and good governance. A

Professional Development Programme for L&RS staff was prepared and the implementation of the related action plan was commenced.

### Parliamentary and Legislative Studies Course

A Parliamentary and Legislative Studies course, delivered by Trinity College Dublin, commenced in November 2009, with the roll-out of a pilot module. Following evaluation of the pilot it was agreed that the remaining seven modules be rolled out. Participants must complete all eight modules and complete assessments for six of those modules. Of the eight modules, five are compulsory and three are elective. Four modules were rolled out in 2010 and the remaining modules will be rolled out prior to June 2011. 16 members of staff are participating in the course.

### Refund/Advance of Fees Scheme

A review of the Service's operation of the Refund of Fees Scheme was undertaken and reported to MAC in 2010. A guidance note subsequently issued to all staff clarifying criteria for inclusion in the scheme. 48 staff of the Service participated in this scheme in the 2010/2011 education cycle.

### Health, Safety and Well-being Programme

The following health and safety courses/well-being seminars took place during 2010:

- ◆ Occupational First Aid
- ◆ Fire Warden
- ◆ Manual Handling for lifting or moving services
- ◆ Loss and Bereavement
- ◆ Achieving work-life balance
- ◆ Ferre Laevers (well-being for care settings, i.e. Oireachtas crèche).

Seminars are also regularly held on health and safety generally, disability awareness and health promotion.

Flu vaccinations were also organised on-site for both members and staff during 2010. Approximately 132 people availed of the service (subject to the payment of a fee to the medical practitioner providing the service).

# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 3: ENHANCING SERVICE CAPABILITY

### INTER-PARLIAMENTARY EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES

#### Staff Exchange Programmes and Networks

- ◆ There is a formal exchange programme in place with the German Bundestag since 1999 whereby two staff visit the other parliament in alternating years. One member of Oireachtas staff visited the German Bundestag in October 2010. A reciprocal visit to the Oireachtas by two members of Bundestag staff is due to take place in September/October 2011.
- ◆ Under the formal exchange programme with the Danish Parliament one member of staff of the Folketing visited in June 2010.
- ◆ The Debates Office is continuing with its exchange with the Scottish Parliament whereby, since 2004, one staff member from the Debates Office spends four weeks working there while a counterpart works in the Oireachtas. A further such staff exchange is planned for September 2011.
- ◆ A delegation from the Netherlands Parliament visited in May 2010.
- ◆ Familiarisation visits are undertaken by staff of the Service to Brussels where they meet with officials from the EU institutions. Four staff undertook such visits in 2010.

#### Formal and semi-informal networks which exist between the Service, Westminster, the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh and Northern Ireland Assemblies:

- ◆ Administrative Contact Group (Directors of Corporate Services) – generally covering HR, Finance and Members' Services issues. This has been in existence since 1999 and meets to share and develop initiatives on matters of common interest approximately every eight months on a rotating basis in terms of location.
- ◆ The ICT Group (Heads of ICT) – has been in existence since 2006 – generally it meets once annually on a rotating basis in terms of location and shares ICT information between the parliaments and assemblies.
- ◆ The Legal Group (Parliamentary Legal Advisors and equivalents) has been in existence since 2002 and also,

generally, meets once annually.

- ◆ The Committees Group has been in existence since 2000 and acts as a common forum on Committees and meets approximately twice annually.
- ◆ The Training Network was established in 2009 and it aims to meet at least once annually. A meeting was held in Edinburgh in February 2010 which was attended by two members of staff of the HR area. A further meeting is planned for 2011 (most likely to be hosted by the Service in the last Quarter).
- ◆ The Inter-Parliamentary Research and Information Network (IPRIN) serves as a forum for parliamentary research and information service staff in the islands of Britain and Ireland and Crown dependencies for the exchange of knowledge in order to develop and improve the quality of information/research services to members. The Oireachtas Library & Research Service (L&RS) is an active member of this network and since mid-2010 the L&RS has responsibility for managing and developing the IPRIN website for a two-year period.
- ◆ The Heads of Internal Audit Group of the Isles - during 2010 the Internal Audit function of the Service was invited to participate in an informal network of Heads of Internal Audit in Parliament composed of representatives of the parliaments and assemblies of the United Kingdom, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey. The group meets periodically to share information, knowledge and experience of the work of internal audit in a parliamentary and public service context. The group met in the Isle of Man in October 2010 and is to meet in Dublin in June 2011.

### PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND REWARDS AND RECOGNITION

#### Performance Management and Development System (PMDS)

Responsibility for compliance with PMDS is assigned to Principal Officers and is reported on a quarterly basis. A Department of Finance notification that PMDS interim and final review forms include an explicit reference to punctuality and sick leave records is being implemented by the Service.

# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 3: ENHANCING SERVICE CAPABILITY

We have commenced a review of the customised competency profile developed by the Service for PMDS in 2001 to check whether the competencies and the indicators remain fit for purpose. A cross-functional team is undertaking the review and will report its findings to the MAC in 2011.

### Rewards and Recognition Scheme

There were nine awards agreed by the Rewards and Recognition Committee which met twice in the course of 2010. This is a pilot initiative and a report is to be made to the Partnership Committee and the MAC in 2011.

### Partnership Committee

Five meetings of the Partnership Committee were held during 2010. The issues considered included:

- ◆ ePayslips Project.

- ◆ Updates on the System for Recording Attendance.
- ◆ HR Plan 2010-2012.
- ◆ Pilot Flexible Working Hours.
- ◆ The Croke Park Agreement Action Plan.
- ◆ Disability Awareness.
- ◆ Customer Service Charter.
- ◆ Acceptable Usage Policy (ICT equipment).

### FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

#### Best practice in financial management

In the current economic climate, managing expenditure and achieving savings where possible is a critical focus for the Service. This was the first year of the three-year 2010-2012 budget and actual expenditure for 2010 was €107.2 million,



# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 3: ENHANCING SERVICE CAPABILITY

down from the estimate of €118 million. This was a €10.6 million saving or 9% reduction on budget. Reductions in numbers, budget reductions in pay and allowances, improved reporting and targeted approaches to achieving savings were primarily responsible for this saving.

### **Our financial control, reporting and governance systems**

The Service has very tight and detailed financial control and reporting systems in which spend against budget across all subheads and cost centres is reported every month to the MAC and examined in detail with senior managers explaining their variances. Every quarter a financial report goes for consideration to the Finance Committee of the Commission, which again examines officials in relation to the figures and then makes a summary report to the Commission itself where these matters are discussed further. There is an active internal audit function and an Audit Committee of the Commission, with an external Chair and external accountant members, to which all internal audit reports are submitted for examination. The accounts of the Commission are prepared and signed each year by the Secretary General, audited by the C&AG and published in the Commission's annual report, which is a statutory annual review of performance and activity published mid-year.

Maintaining an adequate control environment is fundamental to the minimisation of risk to the Service. Following a previous review on internal controls, the internal audit unit conducted a review of the control environment in the organisation and its documentation so as to identify any significant control weaknesses. Arising from the audit, no significant matters were identified. However, a number of recommendations were made suggesting improvements in the processes and procedures of the organisation with a view to achieving increased control. These recommendations are being implemented across the Service.

### **Financial Governance Handbook**

One of the recommendations of the internal audit of internal controls was the completion and publication to staff of a comprehensive financial governance handbook. The handbook was approved by MAC in early 2011. It contains an amalgamation of the procedures that operate in the Service in addition to providing background and

information on the financial rules and regulations that exist. For example, the handbook sets out guidelines on the preparation and evaluation of business cases and details the financial responsibilities of managers as budget owners. This complements the information provided in the Department of Finance's guide on Public Financial Procedures. The handbook will be updated on an ongoing basis as new procedures are developed.

### **EFT payments to suppliers and EFT salary payments**

Payment by Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) is the Department of Finance's recommended method of payment as it ensures that money is securely and promptly transferred to suppliers and is a cheaper method of payment for the Service to operate. During 2010, payment was made by EFT to all new suppliers as well as to approximately 98% of all current suppliers. Work is ongoing to ensure 100% of payments to suppliers can be made by EFT during 2011.

Work began in 2010 in moving all staff salary payments to EFT and this will be completed during 2011. The Dáil and Seanad elections afforded the opportunity to proceed to move all members' and political staff salary payments to EFT in 2011.

### **HR, Salaries and Financial Systems Integration**

The integration of HR, payroll and financial management systems (FMS) was delayed during 2010 due to technical compatibility issues between the HR and payroll systems. However, the project board has determined that integration of the HR and financial management systems will enable the original aims for reliable information produced from the FMS to be met and work proceeded on this basis.

### **Documenting procedures in Salaries**

Work to document processes and procedures for the Salaries Section was completed in 2010 and these are now available to staff in the area through an electronic database. Updating of these procedures and processes is now taking place following a salary system upgrade and updating will be a continuous process for the section as procedures and processes evolve.

# PROGRESS UNDER OUR THREE STRATEGIC COMMITMENTS

## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 3: ENHANCING SERVICE CAPABILITY

### Capital Assets Registration Policy

In 2010, the MAC approved a revised policy on the registration of capital assets. This policy sets out changes in asset registration in the Service where assets are now recorded on a central register at the end of each month or quarter, as appropriate, and assets no longer in use are disposed of. A physical audit is also carried out twice a year on a selection of assets and this audit includes an inspection of the invoices associated with the assets selected. The Fixed Assets Register is also audited annually by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

### CUSTOMER FOCUS

#### Post-Election induction and mentoring plan for new members

Since the 2002 General Elections we have organised induction programmes for newly elected members of the

Dáil and Seanad. For the 2011 Elections, 43 Liaison officers, in addition to the staff of the One-Stop-Shop and the HR Unit for Members, were trained to meet and help new members "find their feet" following their election to either House. The initial meetings with the new members was followed up by a reception prior to the first sitting of each House, information seminars on allowances, staff and ICT equipment, specific ICT training for members and their staff as well as seminars on procedural matters.

An Information Handbook was prepared and circulated to all members of the 31<sup>st</sup> Dáil and 24<sup>th</sup> Seanad providing them with a practical guide on the procedural and administrative supports available to them to assist them in their parliamentary duties. It sets out information on key areas such as security and access to the Houses, the workings of the Dáil, Seanad and Committees, summary of Ethics in Public Office Acts 1995 and 2001, as well as overview information on services provided by Communications Unit and the Library and Research Service.



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### Informal Feedback Forum for Members (IFF)

The Secretary General continued to meet with members of the Informal Feedback Forum for Members (IFF) during 2010, to discuss service delivery and improvements initiatives with them. The cross-party concept will be resumed in the 31<sup>st</sup> Dáil/24<sup>th</sup> Seanad as it provides a valuable forum for discussions between members and the Secretary General.

### Members' Survey 2010

The survey of members undertaken in December 2010 indicated that members continue to display high levels of satisfaction with the services provided to them and with the staff providing them (see Appendix 11, page 110). Members' satisfaction levels with administrative services such as the provision of accommodation, salaries and allowances, legal advices, etc., have all improved. Services already rated at 85% or higher in the 2008 survey improved their rating in 2010.

For the first time in 2010 we measured satisfaction levels for a range of services such as the restaurant, coffee dock, etc., and all were rated above the target level of 85%. This will set a baseline for these services for future surveys.

In relation to members' satisfaction with the staff of the Service, 16 of the 21 staff units subject to surveying improved on their 2008 satisfaction ratings. Five sections showed a marginal decline while still remaining above the 85% target level of satisfaction.

### Surveying Policy

The Service developed a Surveying Policy during 2010, including a Best Practice Guide to Research prepared by the L&RS which included detailed steps (and advantages/disadvantages) on various research methodologies including surveys. The policy was implemented via an Office Notice. The L&RS advises Service staff on designing and administering surveys, and other research approaches. The Office Notice issued to staff and members also set out the policy regarding requests received by members to participate in surveys.

### Customer Service Action Plan

Following consultation with staff and the Joint Administration Committee in 2010, the Customer Service Action Plan 2011-2013 will be rolled out in 2011. The Plan sets out details of the services provided by the Service and the standards of service which can be expected by all our customers. In line with best practice, it commits the organisation to meeting 12 Quality Customer Service Principles over the lifetime of the plan. These principles form part of the Civil Service wide Quality Customer Service Initiative launched in 1997 and the commitment to achieving a modern, efficient and customer focused service as set out in the Croke Park Agreement. It also sets out key actions which have been prioritised over the life of the plan to strengthen the services we provide to our customers. For each service provided, targets have been set by the sections responsible. These target the standard of services our customers can expect when dealing with the Service.

Progress on implementation of the plan will be monitored and reported to the Partnership Committee. Any changes required to these services and standards will be updated quarterly in the online version of this Plan at [www.oireachtas.ie](http://www.oireachtas.ie).

## TRANSFORMING THE WAY WE WORK

### The Office Review Team

The Office Review Team (ORT) was established in 2008 to review our current use of staffing resources and to identify process improvements and management issues within the Service.

The ORT made 35 recommendations which were considered by MAC and implementation of these recommendations has been ongoing during the course of 2010.

In relation to the recommendations made to amalgamate functions the following progress has been made:

- ◆ The Interparliamentary Unit and the Travel Section have been amalgamated under one centralised travel function to improve efficiency in the use of staff resources.

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- ◆ Facilities management functions (bars, restaurants, crèche and gym) have been consolidated into one central facilities section to streamline these functions and deliver greater efficiency in the use of staff resources.
- ◆ The Finance Unit and the MIF Unit have been amalgamated in view of their management information reporting roles.
- ◆ Statutory Services and Records Management functions have been established and are delivered under the L&RS.
- ◆ Organisation reviews (VFM, efficiency and process reviews), performance measurement (KPIs and surveying policy) and project management policy functions have been re-assigned from Corporate and Members' Services Directorate to the Office of the Commission and Secretary General, where organisation planning, strategic planning, corporate business planning and progress reviews and reports are co-ordinated.
- ◆ The temporary placement of university students in the Committees area has now ceased.
- ◆ The recommendation for the integration of the procedural sections is currently under consideration.
- ◆ Further section staffing levels reviews are currently underway as the Directors Group on Resourcing assesses the level of resources in place on an ongoing basis.

The number of staff released as a result of these changes will be reviewed later in 2011 when the mergers have been fully completed and the level of activity in travel, in particular, resumes normal levels. In the interim, it has been possible to release three of the staff assigned to these areas (two Clerical Officers and one Junior Clerk (EO)) on temporary redeployment to the Passport Office and the Central Statistics Office.

The implementation of these and other recommendations to achieve administrative and staffing savings remains a priority for the Service and are being



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## STRATEGIC COMMITMENT 3: ENHANCING SERVICE CAPABILITY

progressed in tandem with our commitment to identify savings under the Croke Park Agreement.

### Efficiency Savings Group

The Efficiency Savings Implementation Group continued to target savings across the Service in 2010 and achieved savings of approximately €900k over the year. This group's work was closely associated with the ongoing work on the development of the Service's action plan under the Croke Park Agreement. The savings identified by the group were reported regularly to MAC under the monthly financial report.

### Croke Park Agreement

The Public Service Agreement 2010-2014 (otherwise known as the Croke Park Agreement) set out a vision for reform of the civil service with a view to achieving a leaner, more efficient and effective service operating with a lower cost base. It requires all public sector bodies, including the Commission, to reduce expenditure, reduce staff and work more efficiently. The Agreement is part of the framework for public service reform and the ongoing process of constraints on public expenditure.

An Implementation Body has been established to drive this reform process and each public sector body has been required to submit an action plan, identifying savings and initiatives, and will be required to report progress on delivering on its plan to the Implementation Body during the lifetime of the agreement up to 2014. Our Croke Park Action Plan was submitted to the Implementation Body in November 2010 and our first progress report was submitted in May 2011.

The Service and the Houses of the Oireachtas recognise the importance of achieving substantial savings in line with the overall public sector requirements. To this end, each Directorate in the Service conducted a review of all services using an agreed template to identify potential areas for administrative savings. The results of this review were assessed by the Director Group on Resourcing to ensure savings identified were significant and achievable.

Our Action Plan identified two categories of savings: firstly administrative type savings which are within the authority of the Secretary General and secondly, further potential savings which require political signoff.

In relation to administrative savings, a significant saving can be achieved through reducing staff numbers and pay reductions. Since 2009, our numbers have been reduced by almost 9% with a reduction in staff costs from 2009 to 2011 of over €2.2 million. However, the Croke Park Agreement only allows for savings achieved since 1 April, 2010, to be included. On that basis, our reduced target saving on administrative spend is €5.2 million with a further €1.195 million being achieved from savings in areas requiring political sign-off, such as printing, opening hours, broadcasting and paperless Committees have been identified for implementation in 2011/2012. Again, these savings do not include the €3m of savings which had already been realised from 2009 through reductions by the Minister for Finance in members' pay and allowances.

Setting aside the savings achieved from 2009, for the purposes of savings which can be counted for the Croke Park Agreement, our revised target is €6.4 million or nearly 6% of total spend in 2010.

Further potential savings at the political level had been under consideration by the Commission in the 30<sup>th</sup> Dáil and proposals in this regard will be tabled again at the new Commission. The Secretary General and the MAC have a constant and ongoing process in place to identify further savings potential in the administrative areas and all of our services and operations are being kept under review and proposals assessed at MAC level. In the meantime, as noted elsewhere, our civil service numbers have already dropped nearly 9% (out of a total target of 10% set originally by An Bord Snip Nua) and, with the moratorium in place, numbers are expected to drop well beyond the 10% target between now and end 2012.

### Knowledge Management

The MAC approved the development of a high-level vision for knowledge sharing in the Service that would highlight the principles underpinning a culture of learning and collaborative working, and link to relevant organisation values. The new/enhanced strategy will be developed in early 2011.

### Records Management

The development of a records management policy was commenced by the L&RS with research on current records

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management initiatives in Irish Government departments and parliaments internationally. A tender issued in the first quarter of 2011 for consultancy services relating to a survey of the records series held by the Houses of the Oireachtas with the purpose of establishing and quantifying the scale, scope and range of these records.

### Oireachtas Website

A cross-functional Website Editorial Board (WEB) was established in 2010. The purpose of the WEB is to formulate and implement policy in relation to the Houses of the Oireachtas website. The WEB is working with a web design/internet consultancy team to draft an internet strategy. This will be finalised during the first quarter of 2011.

### Procurement Strategy 2010-2012

A review of the Corporate Procurement Plan 2007-2009 demonstrated that a high level of technical procurement advice is available within the Service with two advisors who have attained a Certificate in Public Procurement. The Procurement Unit, in conjunction with the Parliamentary Legal Advisor, have also developed template Requests for Tender (RFT) and contract documents which assist sections in completing procurement processes.

The progress made under the previous plan has been built upon in the Procurement Strategy 2010-2012 which was approved by the MAC in June 2010. This sets out the Services' commitments to:

- ◆ demonstrate the highest possible professional standards,
- ◆ communicate effectively in sharing expertise and best practice,
- ◆ continuously improve and take an innovative approach in our procurement strategies,
- ◆ reduce the environmental impact in so far as possible, and
- ◆ deliver ethical and social improvements within our contracts.

The Procurement Unit developed a comprehensive procurement guidance booklet and checklists and issued this electronically to all staff. In addition, the Unit rolled out a "roadshow" for all sections providing one-on-one

training and dissemination of advice and expertise to sections as well as facilitating an assessment of compliance with Public Procurement Rules. 15 "roadshow" meetings have taken place with 94 staff in attendance from 20 sections.

During 2010, analysis of expenditure and targeting of savings for routine stationery purchases has enabled savings of over €100k to be realised through sourcing of cheaper supplies. There were also cumulative savings of €148k in ICT consumables for members due to limits set down by the Commission.

## GOVERNANCE AND FUTURE PLANNING

### Code of Conduct for Commission Members

The Commission is required under section 4A of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2009 (inserted by the 2009 Act) to prepare and publish, following consultation with the Standards in Public Office Commission, a Code of Conduct for Commission members in the performance of their duties. The Code, which reflects and enhances the Operating Principles observed by the Commission since its inception in 2004, was adopted by the Commission in January 2011. The Standards in Public Office Commission has been consulted on the preparation of the Code. Commission members are also bound by the requirements of the Codes of Conduct for members of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann in their capacity as Deputies and Senators as required under the Ethics Acts.

Commission staff, as civil servants, must comply with the Code of Standards and Behaviour for Civil Servants as issued by the Department of Finance and with internal Service guidelines on working with members and working with each other. A cross-Directorate working group of staff at Assistant Principal level have drafted Guidelines for staff on working together. The draft Guidelines are currently being reviewed by Principal Officers and it is hoped that the policy will be circulated to staff later in 2011.

### Induction Briefing for Incoming Commission Members

An Information Handbook was prepared for incoming Commission members to provide them with relevant

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background information on the role of the Commission and to facilitate the orderly and effective dispatch and conduct of Commission business. It also contained information on the role of the Secretary General (as Chief Executive of the Commission) and the Houses of the Oireachtas Service (the parliamentary administration).

The Information Handbook incorporated the recent changes effected by the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2009, the business procedures and guidance for members adopted by previous Commissions, as well as evolving practice.

### Parliamentary Service Reform Group

A Parliamentary Service Reform Group has been established to review the legislative framework and policies governing the management and staff of the Service in preparation for the next Commission (Amendment) Bills in 2012 and 2015. This is an important project which will plan for the future long-term direction of the Service. Officials from the Department of Finance will also be involved in the Group's work. This initiative is a follow-on to the cross-functional team established in 2008 which was successful in achieving a number of progressive legislative changes in 2009. The Group is expected to present its preliminary report by December 2011.

### Management Advisory Committee (the MAC)

The MAC is the senior management body of the Service which acts in a strategic oversight, advisory and co-ordinating capacity in support of the Secretary General. The membership of the MAC is outlined at page 7.

It decides on issues of strategic, operational and financial policies for the Service which may then be submitted to the Commission for decision as appropriate. The Committee's agenda is driven to a large extent by the policies adopted by the Commission, as well as by the strategies and programmes as set out in the Strategic and Corporate Business Plans of the Service.

The MAC Charter was revised in early 2011. Modifications to the Charter included changes to its membership as outlined above and its sub-committee structures, as well as technical changes to its agenda planning, policy and service delivery role. A leadership role for the MAC in promoting the values of the Service is now espoused in the MAC Charter.

The revised MAC agenda structure includes standing items such as enhanced financial and HR management information reporting as well as risk management updates and Directorate updates.

All MAC documents are accessible and placed on a database which is accessible to all staff except where the sponsor of the paper requests restricted circulation. The MAC business is tracked via a MAC work programme which is updated before every meeting. The MAC work programme is linked to our Corporate Business Plan and overdue items are discussed at quarterly review meetings with Directors and Principal Officers. The MAC agenda is also closely aligned with the Commission agenda.

The MAC met 21 times in 2010. The main policy issues considered included discussions of proposals to achieve savings under the Croke Park Agreement, progressing ORT recommendations to improve efficiency, risk management processes within the current framework and development of a new risk management strategy for the Service, VFM and efficiency reviews conducted in the Service including a report on the completion of the VFM and Policy Review of the Debates Office 2001-2008, and priorities for the Corporate Business Plan 2010-11.

### Risk Management Policy – development and piloting

The Service conducted a review of its risk management system with the aim of strengthening its risk management policy framework. A cross-functional team, chaired by the Director of House Services, reviewed risk management policies in place and made recommendations based on consideration of the international standards in risk management which were published in March 2010. The team also took into account recommendations made in the internal audit review of risk management conducted in 2010.

The team noted there is a large degree of risk treatment in everyday work processes in the Service and the current risk management system complies with a number of principles set out in the international standards. However, in proposing a new policy, the team set out a framework to focus on the strategic and operational risks facing the Service including a mechanism to measure on an ongoing basis the effect of risk management strategies used. This new risk management policy was approved by

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MAC in early 2011 and will now be implemented across the Service. Implementation will involve a review of all sections' activities and section heads across the Service will play a key role in identifying risks and risk management strategies. The various roles and responsibilities under the new policy will be clearly defined and set out.

The policy will ensure that all activities are risk assessed annually with templates which are customised for individual sections but which also require the assessment of standard risks affecting all areas. Templates will also be provided in order to risk assess new projects and activities. All risk materialisations will be put through the risk assessment templates in order to ensure that assessment activities are both standardised and systematic. Risk Management will be monitored and reported on regularly to the MAC.

### Business Continuity Planning (BCP)

The new risk management system implementation will also feed into the development of business continuity planning (BCP) in the Service. Analysis will be conducted on risk reviews from sections which will allow identification of areas where BCP is appropriate. By their very nature these are likely to be areas that affect a number of business units across the Service and, in particular, the template will focus attention on them by forcing units to consider the resilience in their operations to cope with unusual occurrences and their preparedness for events such as loss of accommodation, services, personnel, etc. The analysis will be considered by the risk management committee with a view to preparing plans for a BCP response as required and for coordinating BCP activity throughout the organisation.

Alongside the development of this new organisation-wide approach and system, work continued on the simulation of the contingency arrangements for sittings in Dublin Castle. This contingency plan is to ensure that the Service can provide procedural services for sittings of the Dáil, Seanad and a limited number of Committee meetings at another location in the event that Leinster House became unavailable. A partial simulation exercise took place in March 2010, and proved the capability of carrying out live work in Dublin Castle over the ICT network. Two alternative Chambers were set up for the Dáil and Seanad respectively and were demonstrated to representatives

from the Committees on Procedure and Privileges of each House and the feedback was positive. Key procedural sections were also moved to the Castle on that day to carry out live work. The main outcome of the exercise was the verification that the Service's Business Continuity Plan is workable and that Dublin Castle is suitable as an alternative venue for the Houses in an emergency situation. There are plans to further improve the contingency arrangements for holding sittings in Dublin Castle, including a proposal to run a live Committee meeting in Dublin Castle. A permanent IT link between Leinster House and Dublin Castle has now been put in place with a local IT network centre established at the Dublin Castle location.

### Enhanced internal audit and oversight functions

The resourcing dedicated by the Service to the internal audit function has increased substantially in recent years. The Service currently has a seconded internal auditor which provides a full-time dedicated resource with professional level audit qualifications and experience. Reporting to the Head of the Office of the Commission and Secretary General (OCSG), the Internal Auditor is fully responsible for Internal Audit and related matters and presenting relevant reports to the Secretary General and the Audit Committee. Staff of the Service are working with the Internal Auditor for the duration of the secondment yielding an internal audit skills transfer to the organisation and also ensuring audits and related work is carried out to the highest standard and according to agreed timeframes. Six internal audit reports were completed in 2010 and presented to the Secretary General and the Audit Committee. The implementation of Audit Report recommendations is monitored on an ongoing basis and risk management reports are routinely presented to the Audit Committee. Internal Audit matters are also considered by the MAC.

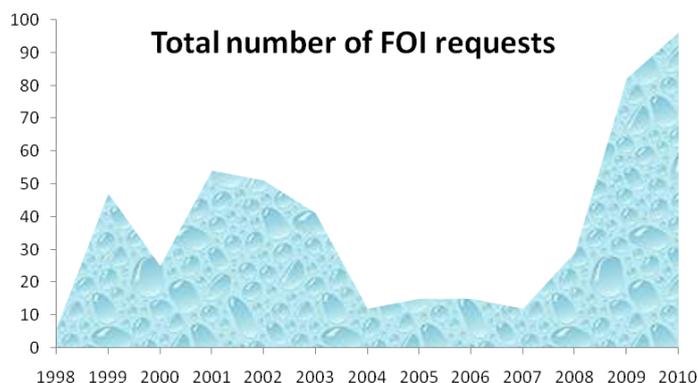
### Freedom of Information (FOI)

In June 2010, the FOI function was transferred to the Library & Research Service (L&RS). The FOI Officer is being supported from the existing L&RS staff resources.

There was a marginal increase in the number of FOI requests received in 2010 over that received in 2009, increasing from 82 to 96 requests. This continues the

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upward trend in the numbers of FOI requests dealt with by the Service annually. The majority of requests come from the media, and this category of requestor represents 88% of the requests received.

Following a report in May 2010, the MAC agreed in principle to develop an ICT-based solution to assist in streamlining FOI procedures in view of the need to make the processing and tracking of requests more efficient and less staff-intensive. The development of a Lotus Notes FOI tracking system is a key component in reducing the level of direct staff input into FOI processing and the system will be implemented in the second quarter of 2011.

The graph and table show: (1) the increasing number of FOI requests annually and (2) the categories of FOI requests received.

Category of FOI requests 2010	Number of Requests	% of Total
Records re Member's pay, pensions, expenses, travel, attendance, addresses	70	77%
Broadcasting/Bar/Restaurant	7	7%
Committees	5	5%
Oireachtas Commission	5	5%
Other	5	5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Statutory Services

An audit of statutory services functions in the Clerks' offices was commenced by the L&RS and will be completed

in the first quarter 2011. The audit included an inventory of legislation relevant to the statutory services functions. This initiative has both knowledge and records management elements and, on its completion, the Service will have up-dated-records combined with the Clerks' know-how.

### Legal Advice Services

The Parliamentary Legal Advisor (PLA) provides legal advices to:

- ◆ the Houses of the Oireachtas and their Committees,
- ◆ the Commission and Oireachtas Office Holders in respect of the discharge of their functions,
- ◆ the Houses of the Oireachtas Service and its staff in respect of legislative requirements and legal issues arising in a corporate setting, and
- ◆ members of the Houses in respect of matters arising from their membership of Dáil Éireann or Seanad Éireann.

In general, the Office of the PLA advises in relation to matters such as electoral and ethics legislation, constitutional queries, contracts, procurement, FOI and employment matters. It also deals with litigation cases involving the Houses of the Oireachtas, or their members, arising from matters relating to their parliamentary duties, and the Service.

During 2010 the Office of the PLA produced 282 legal advices, of which 32.62% were in response to advices sought from Oireachtas Committees and 67.38% in response to advices sought by the Service. Six requests for legal advice were outsourced for specialist advice in 2010.

A revised Protocol and Service Level Agreement (SLA) has been drawn up detailing the procedure in place for requesting advice from the PLA.

The PLA maintains a confidential database of all legal advices produced for the Service. A separate legal database is maintained for the Committees of the Houses, accessible by the Committee Secretariat.

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### MANAGING AND MEASURING PERFORMANCE

#### Corporate Business Planning and Review

Corporate Business Plans are published by the Service setting out the programmes and actions underpinning the delivery of our strategic commitments under our Strategic Plan 2010-2012.

Our current Corporate Business Plan 2010-2011 is the first of two 18-month plans intended to allow for flexibility of planning within the three-year timeframe of the overarching Strategic Plan. We are currently preparing a second Corporate Plan for the remaining 18-month period from mid-2011 to end-2012.

Corporate planning is an essential means of keeping the Service moving forward at the strategic level while maintaining our day-to-day operational workload. It provides the framework for the accountability of the Secretary General for the work of the Service by way of annual implementation reports to the Commission. The Secretary General reviews progress on the Corporate Business Plan deliverables by means of quarterly meetings with Directors and Principal Officers.

#### Value for Money (VFM) and Policy Reviews

A VFM and Policy Review of the Debates Office was completed during 2010 and reported to, and accepted by the MAC and the Audit Committee.

The recommendations contained in the VFM report are currently being implemented. The recommendations include changes to rostering and other work practices, the phasing out of certain printed products, changes to the processing of written Parliamentary Questions (PQ) and the development of future performance indicators.

A VFM Review on Parliamentary Printing was progressed during 2010 for completion during 2011. It is intended that the completed VFM report will inform the future policy for the provision of parliamentary printing services, including any possible synergies with the internal printing unit for members.

The MAC approved the selection of two new areas of the Service for VFM and Policy Review during 2011.

#### Efficiency Review Programme

The Efficiency Review Programme for 2010 focused on the ICT, HR and Procurement Units. The reviews included the development of new key performance indicators (KPIs) for five areas of responsibility within these units. These KPIs are currently being piloted.

An Efficiency Review of the procedural structures that are in place in the Procurement Unit to achieve saving and an efficiency review on the operation of the "Advance/Refund of Fees Scheme" by the Houses of the Oireachtas Service were carried out during 2010.

A preliminary Business Process Improvement (BPI) project on the ICT Helpdesk process was undertaken during 2010 and the next and final stage is due for completion during 2011. Further BPI projects were agreed for 2011.

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### MEASURING OUR PROGRESS

#### Operational Statistics

Activity	2008	2009	2010	Total 2008-10	% variation 2008-10
Civil Service Staff turnover - incorporating new entrants, retirements/departures, internal promotions, career breaks and persons on secondment	149	90	43	282	-71%
No. of financial transactions	12,919	12,429	10,209	35,557	-21%
No. of PMDS meetings	820	681	653	2,154	-20%
No. attended training courses	3,109	1,720	922	5,751	-70%
No. of staff calls to ICT helpdesk	4,704	4,088	3,188	11,980	-32%
No. of people for whom travel arrangements were made	174	98	86	358	-51%
No. of pages translated	2,704	2,755	3,365	8,824	24%
No. of Commission meetings	8	10	8	26	0%
No. of Commission Committee meetings	9	6	7	20	-22%



**Attendance management** – a system to record (electronically if possible) the daily times of arrival and departure of our staff at their place of work so as to comply with Organisation of Working Time legislation.

**Clerking services** - procedural advice services to the Chair during, or in the context of, sittings e.g. advice on Standing Orders, rulings of the Chair or other conventions and practice.

**Clerks' rota** – Members of staff at Assistant Principal level and above, who have the required procedural knowledge and experience, perform clerking duties in the Houses on a rota basis. The rota is managed by the Clerk's office and each member of staff is assigned a fixed slot (usually of one hour's duration) each week.

**Commission** – the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission is the governing board which oversees the provision of services to the Houses of the Oireachtas and their members by the parliamentary administration – the Service.

**Corporate governance** – the system by which organisations are directed and controlled. Corporate governance is concerned with the way corporate entities are governed, as distinct from the way businesses within those companies are managed. Corporate governance addresses the issues facing boards of directors, such as the interaction with top management, and relationships with the owners and others interested in the affairs of the organisation.

**Croke Park Agreement** – the objective of the Croke Park Agreement is the transformation of public services. It requires all public sector bodies to reduce expenditure, reduce staff and work more efficiently.

**Informal Feedback Forum (IFF)** – a cross-party group of members from both Houses, acting on a voluntary and informal basis, to provide feedback on the performance of the Service in meeting members' needs in the delivery of services and to act as a sounding board for initiatives that will arise from time to time in these areas.

**Knowledge management (KM)** – Effective knowledge management ensures that staff have access to the right knowledge and information at the right time so that they can put that knowledge into action and work more efficiently. Knowledge management is the art of identifying and organising tangible information to make it easily accessible across the organisation and facilitating the interaction of people to share their experiences and knowledge to grow and learn or decide better and faster.

**The MAC** – the Management Advisory Committee consists of the Secretary General and the five most senior managers in the Service. The Committee meets every two weeks to consider and decide on issues of major strategic, operational or financial importance, which may then be referred to the Commission.

**Office Review Team (ORT)** – internal team of senior managers set up to review our current use of staffing resources and to identify process improvements and management issues within the Service.

**Procedural services** – procedural services are those concerned with advice to the Chairs of the Houses and their Committees (e.g. clerking services concerned with Standing Orders, rulings of the Chair and parliamentary conventions) as well as services provided by the Committee secretariat and the procedural offices e.g. the General Office (parliamentary questions, adjournment matters), the Bills Office (Bills, amendment lists) and the Journal Office (Journals of Proceedings, Standing Orders, rulings, Order Papers).

**Resource Plan** – the process whereby an organisation sets out in detail the staffing resource requirements for each business unit to carry out its functions and carries out an annual review process and necessary adjustments to ensure that requirements are kept up to date.

**Risk** - the various things which can go wrong in the running of a business and assessing, if they do go wrong, what damage will result and what can be done to either prevent the risk or manage it if it happens.

**Risk materialisation reporting** - a system where, if a risk does come about and cause difficulties, the person responsible has to formally report on what happened, why, what the impact was and what new things have been learned in order to prevent a recurrence.

**Sectoral Committees** – Committees made up of Members of one or both Houses which "shadow" Government Departments e.g. the Joint Committees on Transport, Foreign Affairs, etc.

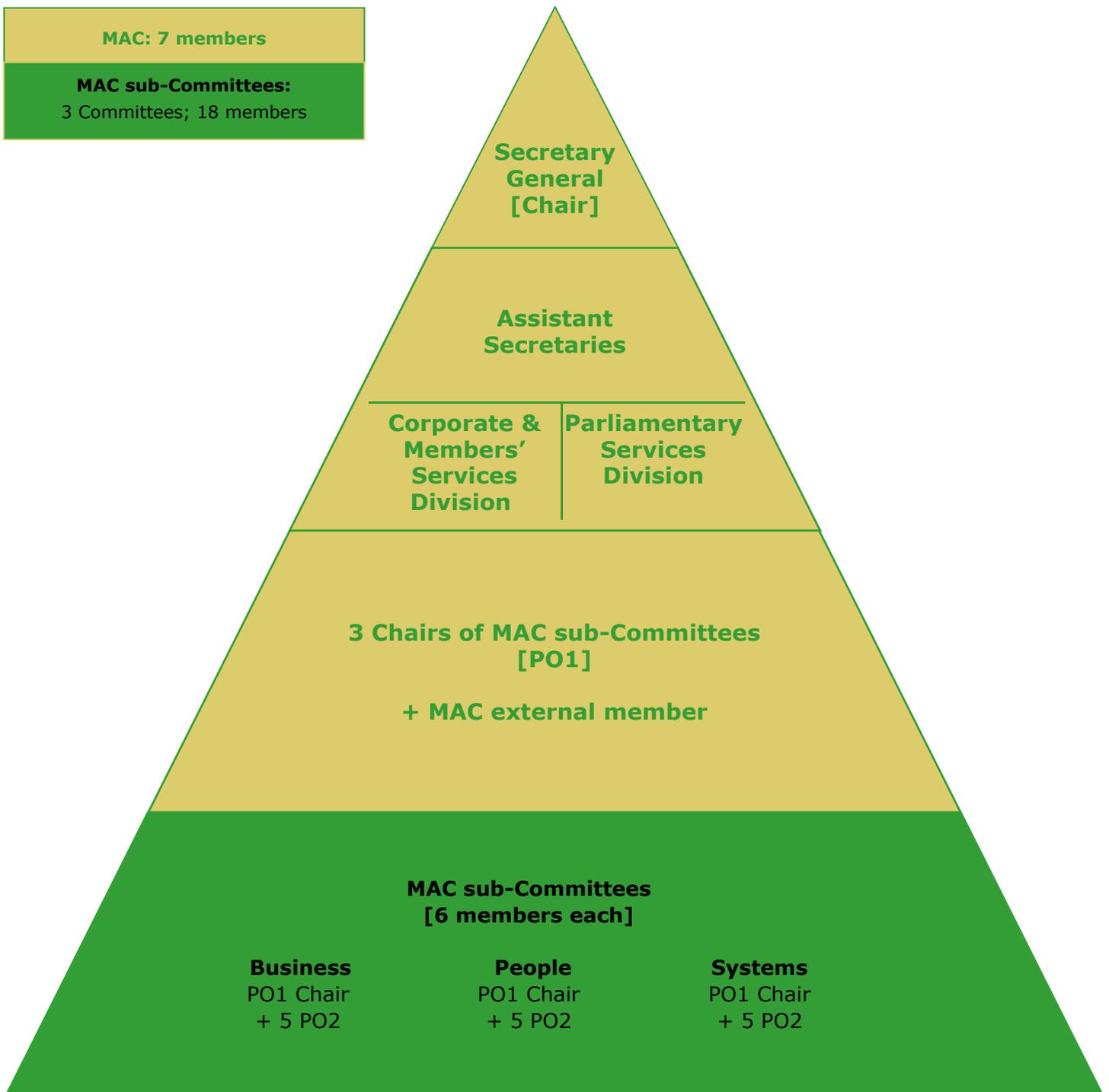
**The Service** – The Houses of the Oireachtas Service (formerly called the Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas) is the public service body which provides administrative services to the Houses of the Oireachtas and their members. It is headed by the Secretary General and Clerk of the Dáil, who has responsibility for managing the Service on a day-to-day basis and for implementing Commission policies.

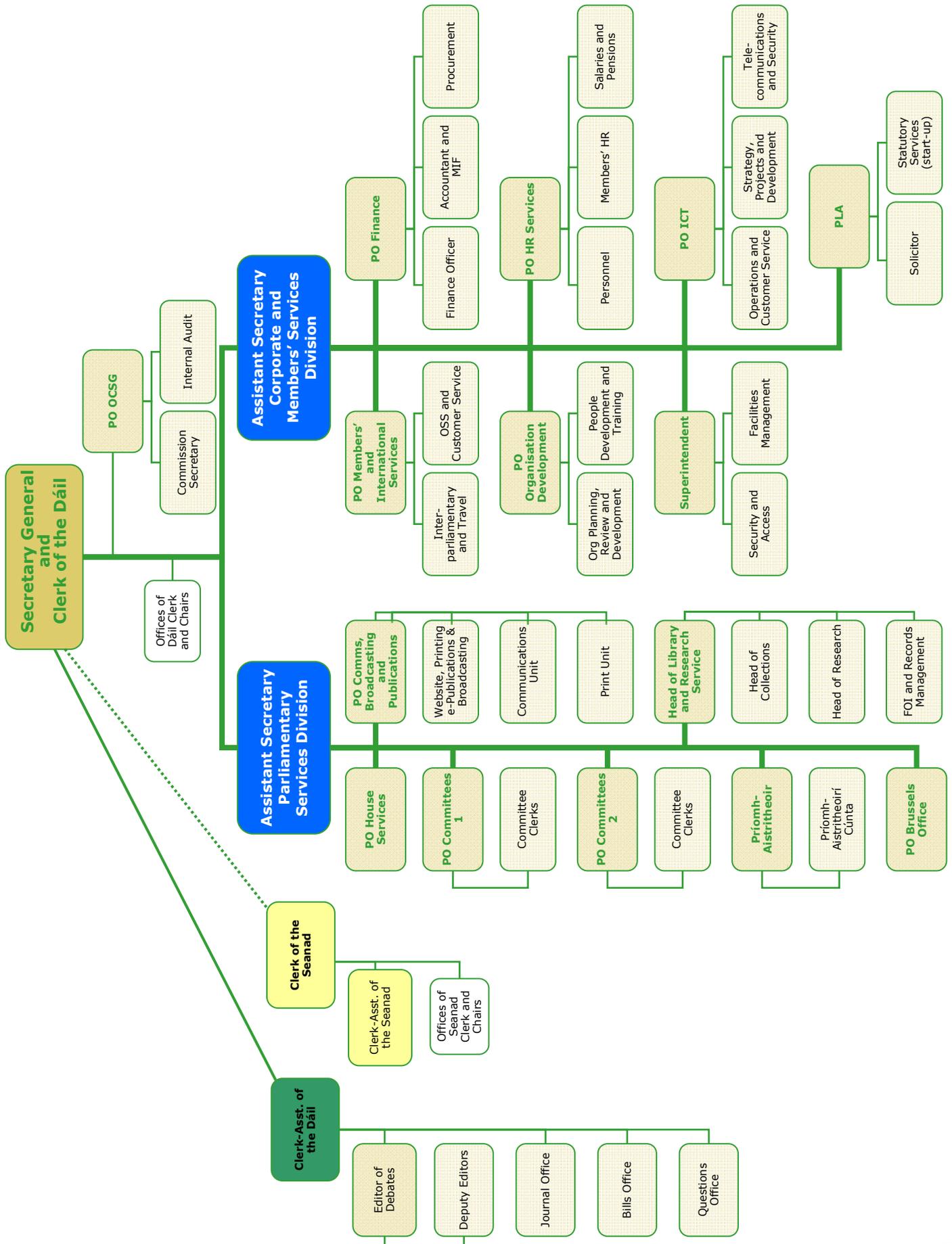
# APPENDIX 2

## MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MAC) - COMPOSITION JUNE 2011

### KEY

MAC: 7 members
MAC sub-Committees: 3 Committees; 18 members





# APPENDIX 3

## FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

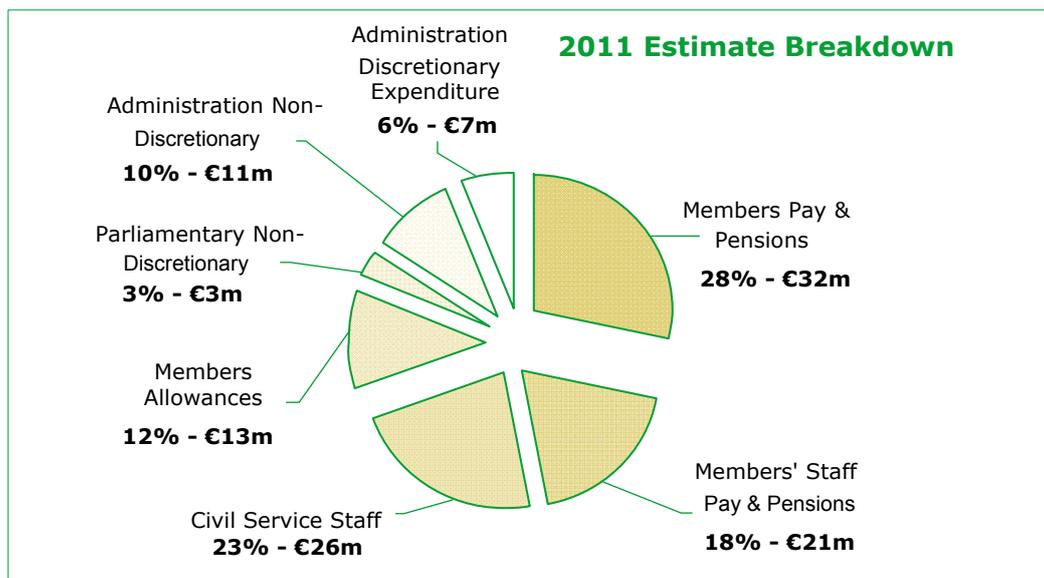
**3 YEAR BUDGET FIXED BY STATUTE (2009 ACT) = € 360m**

Breaks down as follows:	
	Total
2010 Outturn	€107m
2011 Projected Outturn	€131m*
2012 Forecast	€113m
Total	€351m

*\*Includes estimated costs of the Dáil and Seanad elections not provided for in the original estimate of €113m.*

Category	2010 Outturn	2010 Budget	Variance	
	€000	€000		
Administration and Services	40,677	48,951	-17%	underspend
International Parliamentary Activities	413	617	-33%	underspend
Members' and MEPs' Pay and Pensions	31,029	33,463	-7%	underspend
Members' and Former Members' Allowances and Expenses	13,769	12,963	7%	overspend
Members' Staff Pay and Pensions	20,908	20,872	0%	overspend
Committee Travel	122	259	-53%	underspend
Other Committee Expenses	279	715	-61%	underspend
	<b>107,197</b>	<b>117,841</b>	<b>-9%</b>	

### 2011 ESTIMATE - €113 MILLION



2011 Estimate		
<b>The Commission's 2011 Estimate breaks down as follows:</b>		
Pay and Pensions:	<b>€m</b>	<b>%</b>
Members (including Pension Payments)	32	28%
Members' Staff	21	18%
Civil Service Staff (includes catering staff)	26	23%
Sub-total:	79	69%
Non-Pay:		
Non-Discretionary	27	25%
Discretionary	7	6%
Sub-total:	34	31%
<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>100%</b>

## APPENDIX 4

### REPORT ON COMPLIANCE WITH PROMPT PAYMENTS OF ACCOUNTS ACT AND REGULATIONS

#### REPORT ON COMPLIANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE PROMPT PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS ACT 1997 AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES (LATE PAYMENT IN COMMERCIAL TRANSACTIONS) REGULATIONS 2002 (S.I. NO. 388 OF 2002)

Period covered by this review: 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2010

#### Statement of Compliance

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service complies with the provisions of the Prompt Payment of Accounts Act 1997 and the European Communities (Late Payment in Commercial Transactions) Regulations 2002 (S.I. No. 388 of 2002).

The Act has been implemented in full since 10 May 2002 within the Service. It is the policy of the Service to settle all invoices promptly with due regard to contractual terms where applicable, good financial and cash management practices and the provisions of the legislation.

Instructions have been issued by the Finance Unit to all staff processing payments to ensure that the provisions of the legislation are complied with. While the procedures are designed to ensure compliance with the Act, they can only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance against material non-compliance with the Act.

#### Payments that fell due under the terms of the Act within the relevant period

In the period under review, there were a total of 15 late payments and the amount of interest paid in respect of these late payments was €322.34

11 of these payments involved invoices in excess of €317; the total value of the 15 payments was €53,173.14. The average delay in making these payments was 123 days. During the period in question, the proportion of the total value of payments (almost €30 million) represented by payments which involved prompt payment interest was 0.2%.

#### Reduction of payment period to 15 days

With effect from 15 June 2009, the Service reduced its maximum target period for payments to suppliers from 30 days to 15 days to reflect a change in Government policy. Had the 15 day target been in place on a statutory basis, a further 56 payments would have incurred prompt payment interest, representing 0.5% of the total number of payments processed from 1 January 2010 to 31 December 2010.



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Conan McKenna,  
Assistant Secretary,  
Corporate and Members' Services  
May 2011

## HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION

ACCOUNTS OF THE  
HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION  
FOR THE PERIOD FROM 1 JANUARY TO 31 DECEMBER 2010  
*(kept in accordance with the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2009)*

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# APPENDIX 5

## ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2010

### Introduction

As Accounting Officer for the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission ("the Commission"), I am required each year to prepare the account for the Commission in the form of an appropriation account and to submit the account to the Comptroller and Auditor General for audit.

In accordance with this requirement, I have prepared the attached account of the amount expended in the year ended 31 December 2010 for the salaries and expenses of the Houses of the Oireachtas, including certain grants-in-aid, and for certain expenses in connection with the European Parliament.

The expenditure outturn is compared with the statement of estimates, prepared and published by the Commission in accordance with the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2009 ("the Acts"), of the amount of moneys required by the Commission in respect of ongoing expenditure for the year ended 31 December 2010.

The Statement of Accounting Policies and Principles (appended at note 7) and notes 1 to 6 form part of the account.

### Statement of Accounting Policies and Principles

The standard accounting policies and principles for the production of appropriation accounts have been applied in the preparation of the account except for the following:

#### *Basis of Accounts*

The accounts of the Commission are prepared in accordance with the Acts and with accounting rules and procedures laid down by the Minister for Finance. The Acts require that the Commission keep the accounts in such form as may be approved of by the Minister for Finance. The Minister has directed that the accounts be kept in the form of an appropriation account.

The Commission's accounts are a cash-based record of the receipts and payments in the year compared with the amount of moneys stated in the statement of estimates that is (a) prepared and published by the Commission (b) presented to Dáil Éireann and (c) furnished to the Minister for Finance in accordance with the Acts.

#### *Receipts*

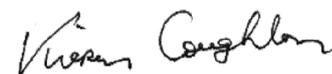
The Acts require specified receipts of the Commission to be paid by it into the Central Fund. Such receipts may not be used to meet expenditure incurred by the Commission. Where they arise, they are reported in a note to the Account (Note 4).

#### *Superannuation*

Superannuation payments for former members of the Houses of the Oireachtas, former secretarial assistants employed by members of the Houses and former members of the European Parliament are met on a current basis by the Commission.

### Statement on Internal Financial Control

Along with the account, I have submitted a statement in the standard format on the system of internal financial control that operates in the Houses of the Oireachtas Service.



**KIERAN COUGHLAN**

Accounting Officer

Houses of the Oireachtas Commission

31 March 2011



**Comptroller and Auditor General**  
**Report for presentation to the Houses of the Oireachtas**

### Houses of the Oireachtas Commission

I have audited the account of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission for the year ended 31 December 2010 under the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Act 2003. The account, which has been prepared under the accounting policies set out therein, comprises the Statement of Accounting Policies, the Cash Account and the related notes. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and accounting policies laid down by the Minister for Finance.

#### Responsibilities of the Secretary General

The Secretary General is responsible for the preparation of the account in accordance with the financial reporting framework and for ensuring the regularity of transactions.

#### Responsibilities of the Comptroller and Auditor General

My responsibility is to audit the account and report on it in accordance with applicable law.

My audit is conducted by reference to the special considerations which attach to State bodies in relation to their management and operation.

My audit is carried out in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) and in compliance with the Auditing Practices Board's Ethical Standards for Auditors.

#### Scope of Audit of the Account

An audit involves obtaining evidence about the amounts and disclosures in the account, sufficient to give reasonable assurance that the account is free from material misstatement, whether caused by fraud or error. This includes an assessment of

- whether the accounting provisions of *Public Financial Procedures* have been complied with
- whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the Commission's circumstances, and have been consistently applied and adequately disclosed
- the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made in the preparation of the account, and
- the overall presentation of the financial statements.

I also seek to obtain evidence about the regularity of financial transactions in the course of audit.

In addition, I read all the financial and non-financial information in the annual report to identify material inconsistencies with the audited financial statements. If I become aware of any apparent material misstatements or inconsistencies I consider the implications for my report.

#### Opinion on the Financial Statements

In my opinion, the account properly presents the receipts and expenditure of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission for the year ended 31 December 2010.

In my opinion, proper books of account have been kept by the Commission. The account is in agreement with the books of account.

#### Matters on which I Report by Exception

I report by exception if

- I have not received all the information and explanations I required for my audit, or
- my audit noted any material instance where moneys have not been applied for the purposes intended or where the transactions did not conform to the authorities governing them, or
- the information given in Commission's Annual Report for the year for which the account is prepared is not consistent with the account, or
- the Statement on Internal Financial Control does not reflect the Commission's compliance with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, or
- I find there are other material matters relating to the manner in which public business has been conducted.

I have nothing to report in regard to those matters upon which reporting is by exception.

**John Buckley**  
**Comptroller and Auditor General**

30 June 2011

# APPENDIX 5

## ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2010

### Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Account 2010

Service	2010 Estimate provision €000	2010 Outturn €000	2009 Outturn €000
<b>1 Administration</b>			
(a) Salaries, wages and allowances in respect of members of staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas	24,463	23,545	26,076
(b) Travel and subsistence	617	387	563
(c) Incidental expenses	5,575	2,590	5,686
(d) Postal and telecommunications services	1,228	1,029	1,180
(e) Office machinery and other office supplies	11,757	8,380	14,987
(f) Office premises expenses	1,985	1,643	1,835
(g) Value for money and policy review	10	3	2
<b>2 Other services</b>			
(a) Payment in respect of catering and bar staff	1,758	1,787	1,911
(b) Expenses of delegates to other parliamentary assemblies	217	140	249
(c) Televising of proceedings of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann and other services	1,557	1,313	3,394
(d) Grant in aid in respect of inter-parliamentary activities	200	133	99
(e) Grant in aid to British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body	200	140	151
(f) Allowances to or in respect of former members of the Houses of the Oireachtas	98	49	-
(g) Grant to Irish Parliamentary (former Members) Society	40	-	-
(h) Grant in aid in respect of "Ciste Pinsean Thithe an Oireachtais"	10,309	10,000	10,340
(i) Pension scheme for secretarial assistants	539	415	674
(j) Expenses relating to Oireachtas Committees	715	279	343
<b>3 Salaries of Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas (including office holders and Oireachtas committee chairpersons) and of the European Parliament</b>			
(a) Dáil Éireann	17,684	16,095	17,944
(b) Seanad Éireann	4,471	4,152	4,444
(c) European Parliament (including superannuation payments)	901	733	1,394
<b>4 Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for non-office holding Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas</b>			
(a) Dáil Éireann	17,739	17,848	17,104
(b) Seanad Éireann	2,595	2,645	2,420
<b>5 Travel expenses of Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas</b>			
(a) Dáil Éireann	3,461	4,178	3,441
(b) Seanad Éireann	1,579	1,662	1,607
(c) Committee travel	259	122	126
<b>6 Other allowances and expenses of Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas</b>			
(a) Dáil Éireann	6,515	6,693	6,280
(b) Seanad Éireann	1,369	1,236	956
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<u>117,841</u>	<u>107,197</u>	<u>123,206</u>
<b>Surplus for the year</b>		10,644	14,943

## Notes to the Account

## 1 Operating Cost Statement 2010

	Note	€000	2010 €000	2009 €000
Expenditure on administration [ <i>sum of subheads 1(a) to 1(g)</i> ]			37,577	50,329
Expenditure on services and programmes			<u>69,620</u>	<u>72,877</u>
Total expenditure			107,197	123,206
<b>Changes in Capital Assets</b>	2.1			
Purchases Cash		(496)		
Depreciation		1,983		
Loss on disposals		<u>100</u>	1,587	(1,820)
<b>Changes in assets under development</b>	2.2			
Cash payments			-	-
<b>Changes in Net Current Assets</b>				
Decrease in closing accruals		(1,089)		
Increase in Stock	2.4	<u>(73)</u>	<u>(1,162)</u>	<u>(1,187)</u>
<b>Direct expenditure</b>			107,622	120,199
Net allied services expenditure	1.1	24,969		
Notional Rents		<u>4,410</u>	<u>29,379</u>	<u>32,131</u>
<b>Operating cost</b>			<u>137,001</u>	<u>152,330</u>

## 1.1 Net Allied Services

The net allied services expenditure amount is made up of the following estimated amounts in relation to the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission borne elsewhere

Vote		2010 €000	2009 €000
7	Superannuation and Retired Allowances	3,249	3,844
10	Office of Public Works	7,335	8,289
20	Garda Síochána	204	180
	Central Fund:		
	Allowances to Leaders of certain Parties in Dáil Éireann	8,347	8,470
	Re-imbursments of Electoral Expenses	64	-
	Pensions in respect of former Cinn Comhairle (No. 38 of 1938, etc.)	331	329
	Payments to qualified parties under the Electoral Acts 1997 to 2001	<u>5,439</u>	<u>5,506</u>
		<u>24,969</u>	<u>26,618</u>

# APPENDIX 5

## ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2010

### 2 Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at 31 December 2010

	Note	2010 €000	2009 €000
<b>Capital Assets</b>	2.1	4,060	5,273
<b>Capital Assets under Development</b>	2.2	-	-
		<u>4,060</u>	<u>5,273</u>
<b>Current assets</b>			
Net liability from the Exchequer	2.7	10,592	6,048
Stocks	2.4	309	236
Prepayments		1,586	2,092
Accrued income		122	95
Other debit balances	2.5	<u>1,378</u>	<u>749</u>
<b>Total Current Assets</b>		<u>13,987</u>	<u>9,220</u>
<b>Less Current Liabilities</b>			
Bank and Cash	2.3	9,016	4,888
Accrued Expenses		513	2,081
Other credit balances:	2.6	<u>2,954</u>	<u>1,909</u>
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>		<u>12,483</u>	<u>8,878</u>
<b>Net Current Assets</b>		<u>1,504</u>	<u>342</u>
<b>Net Assets</b>		<u>5,564</u>	<u>5,615</u>

#### 2.1 Capital Assets

	IT Equipment €000	Furniture and Fittings €000	Office Equipment €000	Total €000
<b>Gross Assets</b>				
Cost or Valuation at 1 January 2010	4,924	2,221	13,676	20,821
Additions	435	-	61	496
Adjustments <sup>2</sup>	2,027	115	997	3,139
Disposals	<u>(226)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(138)</u>	<u>(364)</u>
Gross Assets at 31 December 2010	<u>7,160</u>	<u>2,336</u>	<u>14,596</u>	<u>24,092</u>
<b>Accumulated Depreciation:</b>				
Opening Balance at 1 January 2010 <sup>1</sup>	2,578	1,165	11,805	15,548
Depreciation for the year	1,185	234	564	1,983
Adjustments <sup>2</sup>	1,691	79	995	2,765
Depreciation on Disposals	<u>(128)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(136)</u>	<u>(264)</u>
Cumulative Depreciation at 31 December 2010	<u>5,326</u>	<u>1,478</u>	<u>13,228</u>	<u>20,032</u>
<b>Net Assets at 31 December 2010</b>	<u>1,834</u>	<u>858</u>	<u>1,368</u>	<u>4,060</u>
<b>Net Assets at 31 December 2009</b>	<u>2,346</u>	<u>706</u>	<u>2,221</u>	<u>5,273</u>

<sup>1</sup>The opening balances for Furniture and Fittings and Office Equipment have been amended to take into account incorrect closing balances at the end of 2009.

<sup>2</sup>The Adjustments figures includes assets whose gross value was adjusted to reflect invoice value and assets that had been purchased in previous years that had not been recorded on the register, were included on the register in 2010.

### 2.2 Capital Assets under Development

	<b>In-House Computer Applications €000</b>
Amounts brought forward at 1 January 2010	-
Cash Payments for the Year	-
Transferred to Asset Register	-
Amounts carried forward at 31 December 2010	<u>-</u>

### 2.3 Bank and Cash

	<b>2010 €000</b>	<b>2009 €000</b>
at 31 December		
PMG balances and cash	(9,017)	(4,889)
Petty cash	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>
	<u>(9,016)</u>	<u>(4,888)</u>

### 2.4 Stocks

	<b>2010 €000</b>	<b>2009 €000</b>
at 31 December		
Stationery	159	98
IT consumables etc.	115	117
Other	<u>35</u>	<u>21</u>
	<u>309</u>	<u>236</u>

### 2.5 Other Debit Balances

	<b>2010 €000</b>	<b>2009 €000</b>
at 31 December		
Advances to OPW	-	-
Recoupable salaries	-	-
Recoupable energy costs	423	339
Recoupment of travel schemes	133	3
Other debit items	<u>822</u>	<u>407</u>
	<u>1,378</u>	<u>749</u>

# APPENDIX 5

## ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2010

<b>2.6 Other Credit Balances</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2009</b>	
	<b>€000</b>	<b>€000</b>	
at 31 December			
<b>Amounts due to the State</b>			
Income tax	950	965	
Pay Related Social Insurance	579	523	
Withholding tax	37	64	
Value Added Tax	73	127	
Pension	171	(24)	
Receipts	49	123	
Pension levy	503	(2)	
Income levy	<u>109</u>	<u>107</u>	
	2,471	1,883	
Payroll deductions held in suspense	303	3	
Other credit suspense items	<u>180</u>	<u>23</u>	
	<u>2,954</u>	<u>1,909</u>	
<b>2.7 Net Amount due from the Exchequer</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2009</b>	
	<b>€000</b>	<b>€000</b>	
at 31 December			
Surplus for the year	10,644	14,943	
Exchequer grant undrawn	<u>(15,188)</u>	<u>(14,992)</u>	
Net amount due from the Exchequer in respect of 2010	(4,544)	(49)	
Balance brought forward at 1 January	<u>(6,048)</u>	<u>(5,999)</u>	
	(10,592)	(6,048)	
Represented by:			
Debtors			
Bank and cash	2.3	(9,016)	(4,888)
Debit balances: suspense	2.5	<u>1,378</u>	<u>749</u>
		(7,638)	(4,139)
Creditors			
Due to state	2.6	(2,471)	(1,883)
Credit balances: suspense	2.6	<u>(483)</u>	<u>(26)</u>
		(2,954)	(1,909)
		<u>(10,592)</u>	<u>(6,048)</u>
<b>2.8 Commitments</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2009</b>	
	<b>€000</b>	<b>€000</b>	
at 31 December			
Total of legally enforceable commitments	427	2,712	

### 3 Variations in Expenditure

An explanation is provided below in the case of each expenditure subhead where the outturn varied from the amount provided by more than €100,000 and by more than 5%.

Sub-Head	Less/(more) than provided €000	Explanation
1(b)	230	(i) Low expenditure on travel by staff reflected a reduction in travel by committees and in interparliamentary activities. (ii) The level of travel activity by officeholders was lower than had been provided for.
1(c)	2,985	(i) A contingency provision of €1.2m was not used. (ii) The Records Management project did not proceed in 2010 as the staff resources were not in place. (iii) The Electronic Document Laying project commenced later than expected and is due to be completed in March 2011. (iv) Communications costs were lower than provided for mainly because the Communications Plan was only agreed in July and Educational Facilitators were provided from within existing Oireachtas staff rather than being brought-in as planned. (v) Take-up of training was lower than expected. (vi) Expenditure on consultancy was less than anticipated. (vii) Efficiency measures resulted in savings in the Library and Research Service. (viii) A provision in respect of legal settlements was not required as the case in question was settled towards the end of 2009 and a contingent provision for legal advice was not fully required.
1(d)	199	(i) Replacement of certain PABX equipment was lower than anticipated. (ii) The replacement of leased data lines by broadband reduced expenditure on the former. (iii) There were reductions in tariffs for major telephone account calls and for mobile telephone calls.
1(e)	3,361	(i) A number of IT projects, such as Lotus Notes Projects, Audio Server replacement project, BCP/DR projects, Security Projects and the Virtualisation - Server, were completed within the core cost of the IT managed services agreement without extra payment. (ii) Savings were made on equipment and maintenance costs due to the successful implementation of the Server Virtualisation project. (iii) Improved purchasing efficiencies resulted in savings in ICT consumables. (iv) A revision of procurement practices resulted in savings in stationery supplies. (v) Savings arose due to the reduction in costs under the new printing contract covering parliamentary documents.
1(f)	342	(i) Gas and electricity supply cost less than anticipated because the level of consumption and the unit price charged were reduced. (i) Provision for furniture was underspent because the refurbishment of the Seanad did not go ahead.
2(c)	244	(i) The first quarterly prepayment for the televising contract budgeted for in 2010 was not paid until 2011 due to a delay in finalising the new contract.
2(i)	124	A contingency provision for termination lump sums and payments was not used.
2(j)	436	(i) There was a saving in the provision for legal advice because the Joint Committee on the Constitutional Amendment on Children completed its work earlier than anticipated. In addition it was decided to discontinue provision for direct legal advice to parties represented on the Joint Committee. (ii) The use of consultants by committees was lower than anticipated. (iii) The use of advertising by committees was lower than anticipated. (iv) Entertainment by Committee Chairs was lower than provided for.
3(a)	1,589	TDs' pay allocation was underspent due to Public Service pay cuts and vacancies.
3(b)	319	Senators' pay allocation was underspent due to Public Service pay cuts.
3(c)	168	The underspend relates to an unused contingency for superannuation.
5(a)	(720)	The overspend is due to once-off transitional factors arising from the change, during the year, to a new standardised system of allowances with some outstanding liabilities arising from the old system.
5(c)	137	The level of travel undertaken by committees was lower than provided for.
6(b)	130	(i) The saving is due to a reduction in the members postal allowance from 1 March 2010. (ii) The drawdown under the special secretarial allowance scheme was lower than anticipated.

# APPENDIX 5

## ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2010

### 4 Receipts

4.3 Receipts payable to the Central Fund	2010 €000	2009 €000
1 Sales of parliamentary publications	-	-
2 Sales of televised proceedings of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann	-	-
3 Sales of services of Broadcasting Unit	72	91
4 Net income of catering and bar services	226	430
5 Members' contributions under the European Parliament (Irish Representatives) Pension Scheme 1979	5	43
6 Any other receipts obtained by the Commission in the performance of its functions except where they consist of expenses paid by the Commission on behalf of its members and staff which have been recouped by it from them.	13	16
	<u>316</u>	<u>580</u>

### 5 Employee Numbers and Pay

#### Employees of the Commission

	2010	2009
Number of staff at year end (full time equivalents)	<u>445</u>	<u>460</u>
	€000	€000
Pay	21,613	23,687
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	216	263
Other allowances	141	141
Overtime and extra attendance	1,471	1,660
Shift and roster allowances	403	454
Employer's PRSI	<u>1,523</u>	<u>1,678</u>
<b>Total pay</b>	<u>25,367</u>	<u>27,883</u>

#### Employees of Members of the Houses

	2010	2009
Number of staff at year end (full time equivalents)	<u>361</u>	<u>355</u>
	€000	€000
Pay	15,446	15,341
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	28	27
Other allowances	2	-
Overtime and extra attendance	3,119	2,928
Employer's PRSI	<u>1,865</u>	<u>1,853</u>
<b>Total pay</b>	<u>20,460</u>	<u>20,149</u>

### 5.1 Allowances and Overtime Payments

	Number of recipients	Recipients of €10,000 or more	Maximum individual payment 2010 €	Maximum individual payment 2009 €
<b>Employees of the Commission</b>				
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	51	6	19,605	20,616
Other allowances	37	2	33,490	30,313
Overtime	242	75	31,580	31,797
Shift and roster allowances	70	-	7,709	8,058
<b>Employees of Members of the Houses</b>				
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	3	1	21,012	20,615
Other allowances	1	-	3,749	-
Overtime and extra attendance <sup>1</sup>	478	139	43,706	25,655

<sup>1</sup>This figure is greater than the full time equivalent figure shown above (361) as it includes worksharers and changes in personnel.

### 5.2 Performance and Merit Payments

€6,000 was paid ex-gratia to an officer in acknowledgement of the officer's contribution to a vital role.

### 5.3 Other Remuneration Arrangements

€126,615 was received from the Department of the Taoiseach in respect of salary costs.

€6,449 was received from the Financial Services Ombudsman in respect of salary costs.

€9,207 was received from the National Consumer Agency in respect of salary costs.

€159,764 was paid to the Department of Foreign Affairs in respect of recoupable salary costs.

€47,147 was paid to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in respect of recoupable salary costs.

€55,135 was received from AWEPA in respect of salary costs.

€43,292 was received from the Department of Health and Children in respect of salary costs.

€65,508 was paid to Clare County Council in respect of recoupable salary costs.

€50,293 was paid to the Department of Transport in respect of recoupable salary costs.

€45,406 was paid to Limerick County Council in respect of recoupable salary costs.

Three former civil servants were re-engaged on a fee basis at a total cost of €11,342.

One officer received a taxable benefit-in-kind to the value of €9,173.

## 6 Miscellaneous Items

### Contingent Liability

A contingent liability arises in respect of the Joint Committee on Article 35.4.1 of the Constitution and section 39 of the Courts of Justice Act 1924. A bill of costs amounting to €1,977,794 in respect of witness legal costs has been received and is being examined.

### Matured Liability

A matured liability of €1,462 was undischarged at year end and paid in February 2011.

# APPENDIX 5

## ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2010

### 7 Statement of Accounting Policies and Principles

#### Standard Statement of Accounting Policies and Principles

##### Basis of Accounts

Appropriation Accounts, showing the financial transactions of Government Departments, are prepared in accordance with the Exchequer and Audit Departments Act, 1866 (as amended by the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act, 1993) and with accounting rules and procedures laid down by the Minister for Finance.

The Accounts are a cash-based record of the receipts and payments in the year compared with the amounts provided under the Appropriation Act. The Accounts also show prior year figures for comparison purposes. Some information of an accruals nature is included in the notes to the Accounts.

The standard accounting policies and principles set out below are applied in the preparation of the Accounts. Any departures from the standard policies and principles are explained in the Accounting Officer's *Introduction* to the Account.

##### Reporting Period

The reporting period is the year ended 31 December 2010.

##### Receipts

Appropriations in aid are receipts that may, under section 2 of the Public Accounts and Charges Act, 1891, be used to meet expenditure to the extent authorised by the annual Appropriation Act. In general, these are receipts arising in the normal course of a Department's business under the Vote.

The Department of Finance requires certain receipts of Departments to be credited directly to the Exchequer as 'extra' receipts. In general, these are receipts that have no direct connection with the Vote expenditure or are 'windfall' receipts. Such extra receipts may not be used to meet expenditure from the Vote. Where they arise, they are reported in a note to the Account (Note 4).

##### Payments

Payments consist of those sums which have come in course of payment during the year. Sums are deemed to have come in course of payment where the liability has been incurred, payment is due and the cheque or payable order has been drawn.

##### Matured Liabilities

Where a liability has been incurred and payment is due (i.e. the liability has matured), payment should be completed before the year end to ensure the integrity of the Appropriation Account. In cases where payment has not been effected and matured liabilities are outstanding at year end, the amount of such liabilities should be given in a note to the Account (Note 6).

##### Accruals

Each Appropriation Account incorporates information of an accruals nature in the notes to the Account, including

- ◆ an operating cost statement (Note 1), showing the total amount of resources consumed by the Department in the year
- ◆ a statement of the Department's assets and liabilities at year end (Note 2), with further explanatory notes including details regarding capital assets, capital assets under development, the net liability to the Exchequer, and commitments.

The statement of assets and liabilities includes the position at year-end in relation to the following.

- ◆ **Accrued expenses** — these represent liabilities other than liabilities in regard to remuneration and pensions. In the case of goods and services, an accrued liability is recognised when the payee has met the contractual requirement to provide the goods or services ordered. Amounts due for goods delivered, but not yet paid for, even if un-inspected and not taken to stock, are treated as a liability. In the case of grants, a liability is recognised when the grantee has met all the requirements of the grant scheme but has yet to receive payment.

<sup>1</sup> In this statement, the term 'Department' includes central government departments, offices and agencies responsible for Vote management and accounting.

- ◆ **Prepayments** — payments made during the year of account to meet expenses which will arise in whole or in part in a subsequent financial year.
- ◆ **Accrued income** — income due to the Department at the end of the year of account which has yet to be received.
- ◆ **Deferred Income** — income received by the Department during the year of account for goods/services which it has yet to provide.

### Capital Assets

The opening and closing values of capital assets on a Department's asset register and details of depreciation are shown by way of note to the statement of assets and liabilities.

The following are not included in the statement of capital assets

- ◆ assets worth less than €318 acquired from 1 January 1995 to 31 December 2003, or assets worth less than €1,000 acquired since 1 January 2004.
- ◆ heritage assets, the value of which cannot be adequately expressed in financial terms.

### Valuation of Assets

#### Land and Buildings

All lands and buildings owned by the State and controlled/managed by a Department are included in the statement of assets and liabilities (and capital assets note). Where relevant, the basis of valuation of land and buildings is explained in the Accounting Officer's *Introduction* to the Account.

Where land and buildings are (a) vested in the Office of Public Works or (b) vested in a Minister but in fact controlled/managed by the Office of Public Works, they are included in the account for that Office. Otherwise, they appear in the account for the relevant Department.

Where lands or buildings are vested in a Minister but are, in fact, controlled/managed by an outside body, they are not included as assets of the Department, but the ownership of the asset is noted in the Department's Account.

Departments which cannot provide valuations for state-owned lands and buildings controlled/managed by them

append to the Account a schedule of these assets.

#### Equipment, Furniture and Fittings

Equipment, furniture and fittings are valued at cost, apart from certain acquisitions prior to January 1995, which are valued at departmental valuations.

#### Other Assets

Where required, accounting policies in respect of valuation of other assets (e.g. specialised vehicles) are set out in the Accounting Officer's *Introduction* to the Account.

#### Depreciation

Land is not depreciated. Where relevant, buildings are depreciated as indicated in the Accounting Officer's

*Introduction* to the Account.

Equipment, furniture and fittings are depreciated on a straight-line basis at the following annual rates over their estimated useful lives:

- ◆ furniture and fittings, and telecommunications equipment — 10%
- ◆ IT equipment and software, scientific and laboratory equipment and other office machinery — 20%.

Where required, other capital items are depreciated as indicated in the Accounting Officer's *Introduction* to the Account.

#### Capital Assets Under Development

A statement on capital assets under development is provided as a note to the statement of assets and liabilities. It shows cash payments on assets being developed within the Department, e.g. software development or construction projects, which were not yet recognised as assets at the start of the year of account.

#### Stocks

Consumables are stated at the lower of cost or departmental valuations.

#### Net Amount due from/to the Exchequer

The net amount due from/to the Exchequer represents the outturn for the year less any issues from the Exchequer together with balances due from the previous year.

# APPENDIX 5

## ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2010

### Commitments

A commitment is a contractual obligation to pay on delivery for goods or services which have yet to be supplied at year-end. In the case of grant schemes, a commitment is recognised when the grant is approved but the grantee has yet to fulfil the requirements of the scheme.

A note provides figures for commitments likely to materialise in the subsequent years under (a) procurement and (b) grant subheads, excluding commitments under €1,270.

A separate note is provided giving details of multi-annual capital commitments over €6,350,000.

### Superannuation

Superannuation payments for retired civil servants, Gardaí, teachers, army personnel and Health Service Executive and former Health Board personnel are met on a current basis from Votes 7, 20, 26, 37 and 40. Provision for superannuation does not appear in the Appropriation Accounts of other Votes.

### Foreign Currency Transactions

Transactions arising in foreign currencies are translated into Euro at the rates of exchange ruling at the dates of the transactions. Monetary assets and liabilities denominated in foreign currencies are translated into Euro at the year-end rates of exchange.

### Other Notes to the Accounts

#### General Principles

In general, the other notes to the Accounts aim to draw the attention of the Dáil and of the Committee of Public Accounts to matters bearing on parliamentary control, or to provide fuller information about material transactions of an unusual nature recorded in the Account e.g. losses, special or *ex gratia* payments, and extra remuneration. Except in the cases outlined below, notes are provided where an individual transaction, or a category of transactions taken together, involves a sum of €50,000 or more.

Where amounts lower than the threshold values are involved, notes are also provided where a serious issue of principle arises or where the Comptroller and Auditor General or the Department of Finance considers that a note should be given.

### Variations from Grant

In the case of variations from grant (Note 3), a note is provided where the variation

- ◆ is €100,000 or more and
- ◆ represents 5% or more of the subhead (25% in the case of administrative subheads).

Where special circumstances warrant, a lower percentage variation may be explained by way of note.

Notes in relation to variations in the categories of appropriations in aid are included on a similar basis.

### Extra Remuneration

In the case of extra remuneration, the details given (Note 5) include the total amount paid under each category, the total number of recipients, the number of individuals that received €10,000 or more, and the maximum individual payment, if over €10,000.

### Late Payments

In the case of interest payments under the Late Payment in Commercial Transactions Regulations, 2002, information is supplied (Note 6) where

- ◆ the total of interest payments due was €10,000 or more or
- ◆ an individual payment was €10,000 or more.

### Commissions and Inquiries

Where appropriate, Miscellaneous Notes (Note 6) include a statement of expenditure on each Commission or Inquiry financed from the Vote. Where a Commission or Inquiry has been established on a temporary basis, the total expenditure since its establishment is also given.

### Grant-in-Aid Fund and Miscellaneous Accounts

Where relevant, accounts of grant-in-aid funds financed from the Vote and of other miscellaneous accounts are presented in Note 7.

### 1. Introduction

The Statement sets out the key objectives and associated actions contained in the Strategic Plan 2010 -2012 and assigns an estimated proportion of the financial provision in the Commission's Statement of Estimates for 2011. This is compared with corresponding financial information for 2010. Similarly, output targets for each key objective for 2011 are listed alongside comparative information for 2010. The numbers of staff assigned to each strategy area in 2010 are also stated.

In recommending an annual statement that links outputs, resources and strategic objectives, the intention of the Department of Finance was that the statements would be available to Dáil Éireann and its committees when considering the revised estimates of expenditure for Government departments and offices. As the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission is independent of this process and as its estimates procedures are set out separately in

legislation, the Commission's statement is published in its annual report.

The Houses of the Oireachtas Commission is committed to good governance, use of resources and modernisation and aims to meet best public service practice in this regard. The Houses of the Oireachtas Service will continue to monitor developments in relation to systems for the alignment of strategic and financial information and will implement change in a manner that advances the achievement of its key objectives.

### 2. Summary Statement of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission's Key Objectives

The mission of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission is to enable the Houses of the Oireachtas, their Committees and members to do their work, to deliver services to members that respond to their needs and to promote public understanding of the work of our parliament.

2. Summary of key objectives		Combined performance indicators
<b>a</b>	<b>Improving Services to Parliament</b> The Chairpersons and Members of the Houses and their committees can be assured of continuous, high quality parliamentary support services.	◆ Surveys of officeholders and members on core procedural services.
		◆ Compliance self-audit of key support services for House and committee sittings.
<b>b</b>	<b>Improving Services to Members</b> Members will receive the services they need to fulfil their roles as public representatives through their parliamentary work.	◆ Surveys of members on administrative support services.
<b>c</b>	<b>Enhancing Service Capability</b> The Houses of the Oireachtas Service will achieve the highest standards in public service and parliamentary administration.	◆ Implementation of initiatives under Towards 2016 and Transforming Public Services.
		◆ International benchmarking against other parliaments and their administrations.
		◆ Surveys of staff and Members on facilities and services provided.

### 3. Financial provision for the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission

	Statement of Estimates 2010 € million	Outturn 2010 € million	Statement of Estimates 2011 € million	% Change on 2010 Outturn
Central Fund*	117.841	107.197	112.983	5%

\* Section 5 of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2009 provides a 3 year budget to the Commission and stipulates that the expenditure incurred by the Commission in the performance of its functions is charged on, and paid out of, the Central Fund. The Commission is obliged by section 13 of the Acts to prepare and publish each year a statement of estimates of the amount of moneys required by it in respect of ongoing expenditure.

# APPENDIX 6

## ANNUAL OUTPUT STATEMENT 2011

### 4. Breakdown of total gross expenditure by key objective

	Key objectives	Statement of Estimates 2010 € million	Outturn 2010 € million	Statement of Estimates 2011 € million	% Change on 2010 Outturn
<b>a</b>	Improving Services to Parliament	78.431	71.924	76.767	7%
<b>b</b>	Improving Services to Members	29.243	26.047	26.607	2%
<b>c</b>	Enhancing Service Capability	10.167	9.226	9.609	4%
		117.841	107.197	112.983	1%

### 5a. Improving Services to Parliament

#### Objectives

##### House and Committee Business

Strengthen our ability to provide advice and other services to chairpersons and members in the core business area of parliamentary procedure.

##### Public Engagement

Promote greater knowledge and perception of parliament through our public information, media relations, education and visitor programmes, and our official publications.

##### Parliamentary Library

Promote the parliamentary library as a research hub to support the legislative and scrutiny work of parliament.

##### Inter-Parliamentary Relations

Foster international and EU relations and North-South co-operation through participation in inter-parliamentary activities.

##### Records of Proceedings

Provide enhanced public access to the work and records of parliament through our reporting, broadcasting and Irish language translation services.

##### Parliament Buildings

Develop and improve the physical environment of parliament as an institution of State, a workplace and a place for visitors.

	Statement of Estimates 2010 € million	Outturn 2010 € million	Statement of Estimates 2011 € million	% Change on 2010 Outturn
<b>Central Fund</b>				
<b>Pay</b>				
Members' pay and pensions	33.463	30.980	31.971	3%
Members' staff pay and pensions	20.873	20.908	20.889	0%
Staff of the Service	12.319	12.276	12.186	-1%
Total pay	66.655	64.164	65.046	1%
Non-pay	11.776	7.760	11.721	51%
Total Expenditure	78.431	71.924	76.767	7%
Number of staff employed on key objective (whole time equivalents) in 2010: 183				

**IMPROVING SERVICES TO PARLIAMENT**

**Key Operational Outputs Achieved**

- ◆ 87,575 visitors to Leinster House.
  - ◆ Over 7,000 school pupils attended Oireachtas outreach programme, with 287 classes being visited.
  - ◆ Over 2,200 requests for information dealt with by Communications Unit.
  - ◆ 2,550 research requests fulfilled by the Library and Research Service, 71% from Members and their staff.
  - ◆ 5,267 online resources accessed and downloaded via Liberty, the Library & Research Service's collection management system.
  - ◆ 44,943 Parliamentary Questions and 4,782 amendments to Bills processed.
  - ◆ 22% more pages translated than in 2009.
  - ◆ Debates Authoring System fully implemented in both Houses and in Committees.
  - ◆ 623 Committee meetings held and 82 Committee Reports tabled.
  - ◆ Tendering process for the televising of Oireachtas proceedings completed.
  - ◆ Quarterly meetings of Health and Safety Committee held.
  - ◆ New Leinster House Visitor Programme designed.
  - ◆ Rannóg an Aistriúcháin page on Oireachtas website under construction.
  - ◆ An Caighdeán Oifigiúil produced and ready for publication and Acts' Short Titles publication at design stage.
  - ◆ Revision of Private Standing Orders underway.
  - ◆ US State Legislative Leaders' Foundation Conference organised and managed.
  - ◆ Seanad Members' Interest Committee, staffed by the Seanad Office, completed 6 committee investigations.
  - ◆ Seanad bye-election held.
  - ◆ Regular Committee Clerks' meetings held to share procedural knowledge and clerking experience.
  - ◆ Report of the Joint sub-Committee on Review of the Role of the Oireachtas in EU Affairs laid on 7 July 2010.
  - ◆ Revision of Standing Orders and Committee Orders of Reference completed and approved by both Houses.
  - ◆ Competition for Oireachtas EU National Parliament Representative (EU NPR) posting completed and candidate appointed.
  - ◆ Joint meeting of Oireachtas and N.I. Assembly NSPF Working Groups held on 21 June 2010.
  - ◆ Conference of the North-South Parliamentary Forum (NSPF) [Good Friday & St. Andrews Agreements] took place on 7-8 October.
- Library & Research Service**
- ◆ A strategy for developing an enhanced online parliamentary library as a public resource approved by MAC.
  - ◆ First Fellow's monograph titled 'The role of the Houses of the Oireachtas in the Scrutiny of Legislation' completed. Second Fellowship awarded and work commenced on monograph titled 'The evolving role of the Oireachtas in European Affairs'.
  - ◆ 3 year Strategic Plan prepared and approved by MAC.
  - ◆ 2010 business plan prepared and implemented.
  - ◆ Client relations and marketing strategy prepared.
  - ◆ Legislative Analysis Service delivered for all suitable Bills - 20 Bill Digests and 14 Debate Packs circulated to all Members in time for Second Stage Debate; service enhanced through cross-parliamentary peer reviews.
  - ◆ Research on development of a budget scrutiny office undertaken by the Library & Research Service and the Committee Secretariat.
  - ◆ Protocol between Library & Research Service and Committees revised and agreed. Survey of Committee Clerks revealed high level of satisfaction with service provided.
  - ◆ Software to facilitate electronic laying of documents developed and internally tested.

# APPENDIX 6

## ANNUAL OUTPUT STATEMENT 2011

Performance Indicators		
2010 Output Target	2010 Output Achieved	2011 Output Target
Office Holder Survey	Achieved	Surveys of Office holders and Members on core procedural services. Compliance self-audit of key support services for House and Committee sittings.

### 5b. Improving Services to Members

#### Objectives

#### Human Resources

Support Members as employers by providing best-practice employer advice and personnel administration and training supports under the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance.

#### Financial Resources

Provide expert advice services and financial systems to ensure that Members receive their pay, allowances, pensions, entitlements information and other financial supports for their work.

#### Technology and Office Support

Provide ICT systems, office equipment, supplies and other office services that Members need to conduct their parliamentary business.

#### Research and Information

Deliver expert research and information services to Members that meet their needs as parliamentarians and public representatives.

#### Accommodation and Facilities

Provide office accommodation, refreshment and other workplace facilities that enable Members and their staff to work effectively and in comfort.

	Statement of Estimates 2010 € million	Outturn 2010 € million	Statement of Estimates 2011 € million	% Change on 2010 Outturn
<b>Central Fund</b>				
<b>Pay</b>				
Staff of the Service	9.662	9.635	9.558	-1%
Non-pay	19.581	16.412	17.049	4%
Total Expenditure	29.243	26.047	26.607	2%
Number of staff employed on key objective (whole time equivalents) in 2010: 130				

### IMPROVING SERVICES TO MEMBERS

#### Key Operational Outputs Achieved

- ◆ 9,462 ICT Help Desk calls from Members dealt with.
- ◆ All laptops encrypted.
- ◆ Email and diary integration provided for iPhones.
- ◆ Project in place to achieve virtualisation of all servers.
- ◆ Tendering process for new managed ICT services concluded with significant savings achieved.
- ◆ Voice Recognition Technology implemented in the Debates Office and all staff trained in its use.
- ◆ Improvements put in place in job turnaround for Print Room digital jobs.
- ◆ Print facility produced 692 jobs on the digital engine.
- ◆ 3 day or under turnaround achieved for 97.4% of print jobs in print facility.
- ◆ The Library & Research Service new collection management system, Liberty, launched to Members in January.
- ◆ Passport renewal system reviewed.
- ◆ Common information record system of foreign expenses developed.
- ◆ Policy developed on publishing all FOI releases on line.
- ◆ New Parliamentary Standard Allowance (PSA) system developed and implemented.
- ◆ Changes arising from new PSA regulations disseminated to Members by seminars, information booklets, etc.
- ◆ New audit programme for PSA commenced.
- ◆ Progress made in paying all salaries and allowances by EFT.
- ◆ Scheme for Secretarial Assistance codified and published.
- ◆ Employees consulted on achieving savings in payroll costs.
- ◆ Party Administrators consulted on the operation of the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance.
- ◆ Training Programme for Members and political personnel reviewed.
- ◆ Protocol on tracking legal developments agreed between Library & Research Service and Parliamentary Legal Adviser.
- ◆ Preparatory work to introduce electronic payslips for all Members and political staff following general elections completed.
- ◆ Survey of Members carried out to obtain feedback on services provided.
- ◆ 70 Freedom of Information requests on a range of issues relating to Members dealt with.
- ◆ Policy developed for monthly on-line publication of Members' expenses.
- ◆ Revised Travel Policy developed and implemented.
- ◆ Tender process completed for the Oireachtas crèche, with contracts signed and contractor in place.

#### Performance indicators

2010 Output Target	2010 Output Achieved	2011 Output Target
Survey of Members	Achieved	Survey of Members
Feedback from Commission and House Committees	Achieved	Feedback from Commission and House Committees
Staff input to new service development	Achieved	Staff input to new service development

# APPENDIX 6

## ANNUAL OUTPUT STATEMENT 2011

### 5c. Enhancing Service Capability

#### Objectives

##### Managing and Developing People

Make best use of our people through strategic recruitment and effective resource planning, by implementing our policies on performance management, career planning and training and by fostering our values of professional excellence. Provide financial management systems to ensure that best economic use is made of the financial resources of the Commission.

##### Customer Focus

Renew our commitment to quality service by engaging with Members and other key customers and building on our existing service improvement and feedback initiatives.

##### Transforming the Way We Work

Increase our service agility by continuously reviewing our structures, systems and policies in keeping with best practice in public service management.

Foster collaborative approaches to working through team-building and cross-functional initiatives.

Support effective working through our policies on knowledge and records management, better internal communications and sustainable working.

##### Governance and Future Planning

Modernise our legislative framework to enhance our systems of governance and optimise our senior management structures under the Commission.

Strengthen our future planning and critical review capabilities by improving our systems of risk management, business continuity planning and audit.

Redefine our approaches to the provision of legal advisory services and the discharge of our electoral and other statutory functions.

##### Managing and Measuring Performance

Implement these strategies through our local business plans, measure our performance and review our efficiency and effectiveness to ensure our services deliver value for money.

	Statement of Estimates 2010 € million	Outturn 2010 € million	Statement of Estimates 2011 € million	% Change on 2010 Outturn
<b>Central Fund Pay</b>				
Staff of the Service	4.257	4.245	4.212	-1%
Non-Pay	5.910	4.981	5.397	8%
Total Expenditure	10.167	9.226	9.609	4%
Number of staff employed on key objective (whole time equivalents) in 2010: 78				

### ENHANCING SERVICE CAPABILITY

#### Key Operational Outputs Achieved

- ◆ Standards identified for key services. Procedures for obtaining feedback and complaints developed and to be published in 2011 along with Customer Service Action Plan.
  - ◆ Plans in place for 2011 dissolution and general elections.
  - ◆ Drafting group on Code of Behaviour for Service Staff established.
  - ◆ Management Conference held in July.
  - ◆ Re-branding of "the Office" as "the Service" as a result of the 2009 Commission Act completed.
  - ◆ Review carried out of the application to the Commission of 2009 Code of Practice for State Bodies.
  - ◆ Audit Committee Charter reviewed and Internal Auditor contract tendered and awarded
  - ◆ Guidance materials for Commission and Audit Committee members updated.
  - ◆ Code of Conduct for Commission Members adopted by Commission.
  - ◆ Parliamentary Service Reform Group established.
  - ◆ Review of top level management roles completed.
  - ◆ Annual Reports, Strategic Plan and Corporate Business Plan designed and printed in-house achieving savings.
  - ◆ Final progress report on implementation of the Strategic Plan 2007-09 produced and noted by Commission.
  - ◆ Value for Money review of Debates Office carried out.
  - ◆ All travel related activities amalgamated within one area.
  - ◆ Development work carried out on the Committee Secretariat legal database.
  - ◆ Protocol in place for access by Committee Clerks and Principal Officers to legal advices.
  - ◆ Internal Audit Report recommendations in relation to enhanced financial management and reporting in the Bar and Restaurant implemented.
- Library & Research Service:**
- ◆ Professional Development Programme developed and in place.
  - ◆ Website Editorial Board established to formulate and implement policy in relation to the Service's website.
  - ◆ Best practice policy and guidelines for Service staff responsible for undertaking research jointly produced by the Library & Research Service and Office of the Commission and Secretary General; policy implemented by way of an Office Notice.
  - ◆ Development of a records management policy commenced with research on current records management initiatives in Government departments and parliaments internationally.
  - ◆ FOI function transferred to the Library & Research Service in June 2010; streamlining of procedures and development of an FOI tracking database commenced.
  - ◆ Audit of statutory services functions in the Clerks' offices commenced to be completed in the first quarter 2011; audit included the consolidation of legislation relevant to the statutory services functions.
  - ◆ Inter-Parliamentary Union toolkit (self-assessment guide to help parliaments and parliamentarians evaluate their performance against a set of established criteria) implemented by the Library & Research Service and Office of the Commission and Secretary General.
  - ◆ Cross-functional team established and plan produced to develop strategy on Knowledge Management which would support a culture of learning and collaborative working and link to relevant organisation values; plan approved by MAC.

#### Performance Indicators

2010 Output Target	2010 Output Achieved	2011 Output Target
Staff Survey	Achieved	Implementation of initiatives under "Towards 2016" and "Transforming Public Services"
Benchmarking Exercise	Achieved	Annual Benchmarking exercise
Compliance Audit — legal and other public service management standards	Achieved	Survey of staff and Members on facilities and services provided

# APPENDIX 7

## SEVENTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

### ESTABLISHMENT AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

The Audit Committee was placed on a statutory footing in 2010. The relevant provisions (see Appendix I) were made under the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2009 which was enacted on 21 December 2009 and came into effect on 1 January 2010.

The membership of the Committee comprises:

- (a) one member of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission,
- (b) at least one but not more than 3 other members of either House of the Oireachtas,
- (c) at least 2 but not more than 3 external persons,
- (d) one member of the staff of the Service.

The members of the Committee were accordingly appointed by the Commission as follows: Mr. Eddie Sullivan (*Chairman, external member*), Senator Jim Walsh (*Commission member*), Deputy Michael Ahern, Deputy Terence Flanagan (in substitution for Deputy Kieran O'Donnell) and Senator Dominic Hannigan (*Oireachtas members*), Mr. Cyril Maybury, Mr. Bryan O'Sullivan (*external members*), and Mr. Art O'Leary (*staff member*).

### ROLE OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

The role of the Committee is to:

- (a) advise the Secretary General on financial matters relating to his or her functions,
- (b) advise the Commission on matters of corporate governance relating to its functions, and
- (c) report in writing at least once a year to the Commission on its activities in the previous year.

The Committee's duties include advising the Secretary General on financial matters relating to his or her functions including the following:

- (a) the proper implementation of public service guidelines on financial matters,
- (b) compliance with section 22 of the Exchequer and Audit Departments Act 1866, section 19 of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993 and any other obligations imposed by law relating to financial matters,
- (c) the appropriateness, efficiency and effectiveness of the Commission's procedures relating to public procurement, seeking sanction for expenditure and complying with that sanction, acquiring, keeping custody of and disposing of assets, risk management, financial reporting, internal audit, internal controls, and

- (d) the form of accounts of the Commission for approval by the Minister for Finance.

### MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

The Audit Committee met three times in 2010 – March, June and October. No meeting was held in January 2010 pending the appointment of members to the Committee.

In carrying out its duties under section 14A of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2009, the Committee advised the Secretary General on financial matters arising relating to his functions [subsection (10) (a)], and on the proper implementation of public service guidelines on financial matters, public procurement, asset and risk management, financial reporting, and internal controls [subsection (11)]. The Committee also reviewed the revised form of accounts of the Commission proposed by the Department of Finance in line with government accounting practice.

The following matters were considered by the Committee.

#### Internal Audit Work Programme:

The Committee considered the 2010-2012 Internal Audit work programme that had been approved by the Secretary General and noted the Internal Audit plan for 2010 subject to the following:

- ◆ The audit review of policies and practices in relation to overtime cost and time off in lieu of overtime should include ensuring economy in its focus with a view to reducing costs.
- ◆ The audit review of the management of human and financial resources for 2010 to 2012 in light of current economic climate should focus on innovation and productivity to ensure efficient management of resources.
- ◆ The audit programme should be kept under review for the possibility of bringing forward to 2010 any audits which may generate cost savings in specific areas.

#### Internal Audit Reports:

The Committee noted the following seven Internal Audit Reports:

- i) Internal Audit of the 2008 Accounts of the Oireachtas Bar and Restaurant March 2010
- ◆ This audit was undertaken to ensure that there were no material misstatements in the accounts. The audit reviewed the accounting and internal control systems in order to assess their adequacy as a basis for the preparation of the financial statements and to ensure that proper accounting records were maintained for the

Bar and Restaurant. The accounting policies and practices in use were also reviewed to ensure compliance with accounting principles. The Committee monitored the implementation of the recommendations.

ii) Internal Audit of Management Information Reporting.  
March 2010

- ◆ The audit reviewed the range and adequacy of management information provided to the Management Advisory Committee (MAC) and the Secretary General, the reliability and integrity of information provided, and all key information provided to the MAC and the Secretary General.

iii) Backup, Business Continuity & Disaster Recovery Planning Audit.  
June 2010

- ◆ This audit identified and reviewed the risks inherent in backup and recovery arrangements for all applications, services and data managed by the internal IT function and relevant third party service providers, focussing on key areas as defined by recognised best practice; the controls that support existing communication links between sites and their resilience; the proposal(s) submitted to implement a disaster recovery solution to support the Service. The controls were assessed to determine if they were adequate and effective and that procedures were in place to ensure their enforcement.

iv) Review of Risk Management Policy.  
June 2010

- ◆ This audit reviewed risk management policy and practices; the risk register; the materialised risk reporting system; the risk categorisation methodology; the manner in which materialised risk is dealt with; the level of compliance with risk management policies; and the overall risk framework and the related control framework.

v) Internal Audit of Compliance with Office Guideline on Approval of Expenditure (Office Notice 01/08).  
June 2010

- ◆ The audit objective was to review compliance with the Office Guidelines in relation to approval of expenditure. Recommendations on systems and controls were included in the report, with a view to appropriate actions being implemented.

vi) Internal Audit of Overtime Policy and Practices.  
October 2010

- ◆ The audit reviewed the overtime policies and practices in the Oireachtas Service. The audit objectives included validating overtime procedures, identifying control issues, establishing key factors giving rise to trends in overtime cost, and appraising management reviews of overtime.

vii) General Review of Internal Controls. October 2010

- ◆ This audit reviewed the overall control environment of the Service and relevant documentation and to identify any control weaknesses.

**Implementation of Internal Audit recommendations:**

The Committee noted a review of implementation of recommendations from Internal Audit Reports during the period 2008-2010. 10 Internal Audit Reports were analysed in October 2010 comprising 120 recommendations of which 80 (69%) recommendations had at that time been implemented, 25 (22%) recommendations were in the process of being implemented, and 11 (9%) recommendations were not implemented – 7 for technical and operational reasons; 4 due to the introduction of new policies and systems.

**Risk Management:**

The Committee reviewed risk materialisation reports for the Service for the period July to December 2009, and for the first and second quarters of 2010, and endorsed recommendations for greater engagement with Internal Audit to provide an independent perspective on risks identified by local managers.

**Revised presentation format of the Appropriation Account:**

The Committee noted the revised presentation format of the Appropriation Account in respect of the 2009 accounts of the Commission which arose from a Department of Finance circular.

**Value for Money and Policy Reviews:**

The Committee was informed that formal VFM and efficiency review programmes were in place and noted the Value for Money and Policy Review of the Debates Office and that action was being taken by management to implement its recommendations.

**RELEVANT DEVELOPMENTS**

The reporting period for this report is on a calendar year basis to align with the reporting period of the Commission Annual Report with which it is published. The Service increased resources to the internal audit function in 2010. A seconded internal auditor provides a dedicated resource with professional audit qualifications and experience and is responsible for internal audit and related matters in accordance with the Internal Audit Charter. Staff of the Service are assigned to work with the internal auditor for the duration of the secondment with a view to transferring relevant audit skills to the organisation and various staff across the organisation provide further support in relation to audit field work. The Internal Audit Unit participates in the Heads of Internal Audit Forum (a public service internal audit network) and in a group of Heads of Internal Audit of parliaments and assemblies in Ireland and the UK.

# APPENDIX 8

## STATEMENT OF RESOURCES (CIVIL SERVICE STAFF ONLY) 2010-11 [AT 9 MAY 2011]

### Introduction

The Commission, at its meeting on 18 June 2008 approved core numbers for the Civil Service staff of the Service. The numbers sanctioned by the Commission stood at 435 established Civil Service posts and 54 State Industrial Employees (Bar, Restaurant and Print Facility). There has been no change to the permanent sanctioned numbers although there are now a number of vacancies arising from the Commission decision in May 2009 that no public service post<sup>2</sup>, however arising, will be filled by recruitment, promotion or payment of an allowance for performance of duties at a higher grade. When vacancies arise, the Secretary General allocates or reorganises work or staff accordingly.

Exceptions to this principle, which arise in very limited circumstances only, require the prior sanction of the Commission. In its consideration of any such exceptions, the Commission may require the suppression of a post or posts within the Office, yielding an equivalent payroll saving. All delegated sanctions from the Commission to the Secretary General in relation to the creation of

(permanent) public service posts are withdrawn until end 2012.

Overall, there is a reduction of 47.93 (full-time equivalent) posts and further vacancies are expected. However, the overall level of vacancies will, in turn, be eroded as, at its meeting on 26 January, the Commission approved the filling of 5 full-time equivalent permanent but part-time ushers (to meet demand on Sitting Days only - this equates to 8 part-time ushers each working a three day week for 40 weeks in the year). At the same meeting it was also agreed to fill a further four posts which were vacant/ would fall vacant in 2011 (the Head Usher post and three specialist communications posts). The decision to fill these posts does not increase head count.

**Table 1** provides the summary numbers by Directorate including movement across Directorates since 18 June 2008.

**Table 2** details the changes in numbers across grades in the period.

**Table 1: Summary numbers by Directorate (excluding State Industrial Employees)<sup>3</sup>**

Directorate/Office	Core numbers as approved by Commission on 18/06/08	Variance subsequently approved	Full-time equivalents in place - 9 May 2011
Office of the Clerk of Dáil, Office of the Commission and the Secretary General	7	7	7.71
Office of the Ceann Comhairle and Leas-Cheann Comhairle	10	10	4
Corporate/Members Services	90	89 <sup>4</sup>	83.76
House Services	209	209	183.9
Seanad/Library and Interparliamentary Services	48	49 <sup>5</sup>	47.9
Committees/Information Services	71	71	59.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>387.07</b>

<sup>2</sup> This also applies to temporary appointments on a fixed-term basis and to the renewal of such contracts.

<sup>3</sup> Industrial civil service employees refers to the 44 staff employed in the bars/restaurants and the 10 staff employed in the Print Facility.

<sup>4</sup> Sanctioned and FTE numbers do not include 3 posts ringfenced for ICT Strategy implementation approved by the Secretary General in accordance with the delegation by the Commission approved on 30 April 2008 in its decision on ICT Strategy. The actual persons filling these posts (and only one remains) are, however, included in the final FTE numbers for completeness.

<sup>5</sup> Records Manager post not included as it can only be filled by way of suppression of an existing post.

## STATEMENT OF RESOURCES (CIVIL SERVICE STAFF ONLY) 2010-11 [AT 9 MAY 2011]

**Table 2: Summary numbers by grade (excluding State Industrial Employees)**

Grades		Numbers as approved by Commission on 18/06/08	Variance approved by the Secretary General since 18/06/08	Full Time equivalent numbers in place
Secretary General		1	1	1
Assistant Secretary		1	1 <sup>6</sup>	1
Director (PO (higher))		3	3	3
PO (standard)		17.5	16.5	16.5
AP		45.5	45.5	44.61 <sup>7</sup>
HEO		40	41	38.7
EO		52	52	47.55
CO		84	84	72.81
Superintendent Section	Ushers, Service Officers and Cleaners	81	81	68
	Team Leaders	9	9	8
	Head and Deputy Head Ushers	3	3	2
Assistant Editors		7	7	6
Assistant Librarian		5.5	5.5	6
Deputy Editor		3	3	2
Translator Grad I		2	2	2
Translator Grad II		4	4	5
Translator Grad III		14	14	10
Outreach Officer		4	4	0
Reporters		39	39	34.4
Senior Researchers		4.5	4.5	4.5
Researchers		15	15	13
<b>Total</b>		<b>435</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>386.07<sup>8</sup></b>
Records Manager post		0	1	0
3 ICT ringfenced posts		0	3	1
<b>Cumulative totals</b>		<b>435</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>387.07</b>

<sup>6</sup> The TLAC procedure for filling the second Assistant Secretary post (accepted by the Commission on 21 June 2006) to give effect to the agreed strategic apex for the Service) is underway. Any PO level posts falling vacant will not be filled.

<sup>7</sup> Includes Accountant recruited for 10 months to fill vacancy arising from extended absence.

<sup>8</sup> All redeployments for 12 months or less continue to be reflected in our "numbers in place". At 9 May, two Clerical officers are on temporary redeployment to the Passport Office and one Junior Clerk (EO) is on temporary redeployment to the Central Statistics Office. Pending the return of these officers, the numbers in place is reduced to 383.27 albeit temporarily.

# APPENDIX 9

## BILLS 2010

No.	Bill Name	Date Presented/ Introduced	Status 31/12/2010
1	Committees of the Houses of the Oireachtas (Powers of Inquiry) Bill 2010 [PMB]	13/01/2010	Defeated
2	Criminal Justice (Forensic Evidence and DNA Database System) Bill 2010	15/01/2010	Referred to Dáil Select Committee
3	Petroleum (Exploration and Extraction) Safety Bill 2010 [Seanad]	18/01/2010	Enacted
4	George Mitchell Scholarship Fund (Amendment) Bill 2010	26/01/2010	Enacted
5	Criminal Law (Insanity) Bill 2010 [Seanad]	26/01/2010	Enacted
6	Energy (Biofuel Obligation and Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2010 [Seanad]	26/01/2010	Enacted
7	Criminal Justice (Public Order) Bill 2010	27/01/2010	Order for Report Dáil
8	Whistleblowers Protection Bill 2010 [PMB]	28/01/2010	Order for Second Stage
9	Finance Bill 2010	04/02/2010	Enacted
10	Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2010 [PMB]	25/02/2010	Order for Second Stage Dáil
11	Land and Conveyancing Law Reform (Review of Rent in Certain Cases) (Amendment) Bill 2010 [PMB]	04/03/2010	Defeated at Second Stage Dáil
12	Central Bank Reform Bill 2010	26/03/2010	Enacted
13	Guardianship of Children Bill 2010 [PMB]	01/04/2010	Order for Second Stage Dáil
14	Female Genital Mutilation Bill 2010 [Seanad] [PMB]	15/04/2010	Second Stage Seanad
15	Wildlife (Amendment) Bill 2010	16/04/2010	Enacted
16	Nurses and Midwives Bill 2010	20/04/2010	Order for Report Stage Dáil
17	Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Bill 2010 [PMB]	22/04/2010	Defeated at Second Stage Dáil
18	Non-Medicinal Psychoactive Substances Bill 2010 [PMB]	28/04/2010	Order for Second Stage Dáil
19	Competition (Amendment) Bill 2010	28/04/2010	Enacted
20	Intoxicating Liquor (National Conference Centre) Bill 2010	07/05/2010	Enacted
21	Construction Contracts Bill 2010 [Seanad] [PMB]	12/05/2010	Referred to Seanad Committee
22	Euro Area Loan Facility Bill 2010	14/05/2010	Enacted
23	Electoral Representation (Amendment) Bill 2010 [PMB]	20/05/2010	Defeated at Second Stage
24	Electoral (Amendment) Bill 2010 [PMB]	20/05/2010	Order for Second Stage Dáil
25	Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2010	25/05/2010	Enacted
26	Advance Healthcare Decisions Bill 2010 [Seanad] [PMB]	26/05/2010	Order for Second Stage Seanad
27	Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2010	26/05/2010	Enacted
28	Electricity Regulation (Amendment) (Carbon Revenue Levy) Bill 2010	27/05/2010	Enacted
29	Sunbeds Regulation Bill 2010 [Seanad] [PMB]	07/06/2010	Order for Second Stage Seanad
30	Proceeds of Crime (Amendment) Bill 2010 [PMB]	03/06/2010	Order for Second Stage Dáil
31	Údarás na Gaeltachta (Amendment) Bill 2010 [Seanad]	11/06/2010	Enacted
32	Health (Amendment) Bill 2010	16/06/2010	Enacted
33	Sunbeds Regulation (No. 2) Bill 2010 [PMB]	16/06/2010	Order for Second Stage Dáil
34	Criminal Justice (Psychoactive Substances) Bill 2010 [Seanad]	16/06/2010	Enacted

No.	Bill Name	Date Presented/ Introduced	Status 31/12/2010
35	European Financial Stability Facility Bill 2010	18/06/2010	Enacted
36	Statistics (Heritage Amendment) Bill 2010 [Seanad] [PMB]	21/06/2010	Order for Second Stage Seanad
37	Health (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2010 [Seanad]	23/06/2010	Enacted
38	Immigration, Residence and Protection Bill 2010	29/06/2010	Dáil Select Committee Stage
39	Compulsory Purchase Orders (Extension of Time Limits) Bill 2010 [Seanad]	07/07/2010	Enacted
40	Mobile Phone Radiation Warning Bill 2010 [Seanad] [PMB]	09/07/2010	Order for Second Stage Seanad
41	Building Control (Amendment) Bill 2010 [PMB]	08/07/2010	Order for Second Stage Dáil
42	Criminal Law (Defence and the Dwelling) 2010	15/07/2010	Referred to Select Committee
43	Biological Weapons Bill 2010	27/07/2010	Order for Report Stage Dáil
44	Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2010	26/08/2010	Second Stage Dáil
45	Education (Amendment) Bill 2010	24/09/2010	Referred to Dáil Select Committee
46	Vehicle Immobilisation Regulation Bill 2010	05/10/2010	Order for Second Stage Dáil
47	Chemicals (Amendment) Bill 2010	07/10/2010	Enacted
48	Local Government (Mayor and Regional Authority of Dublin) Bill 2010	13/10/2010	Dáil Select Committee Stage
49	Value-Added Tax Consolidation Bill 2010	20/10/2010	Enacted
50	Communications Regulation (Postal Services) Bill 2010 [Seanad]	16/11/2010	Order for Second Stage Dáil
51	Social Welfare and Pensions Bill 2010 changed from Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Bill 2010	16/11/2010	Enacted
52	Betting, Gaming and Lotteries (Unclaimed Winnings) Bill 2010 [PMB]	18/11/2010	Order for Second Stage Dáil
53	Health and Social Care Professionals (Amendment) Bill 2010 [PMB]	01/12/2010	Order for Second Stage Dáil
54	Public Health (Tobacco) (Amendment) Bill 2010 [Seanad]	03/12/2010	Enacted
55	Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (No. 2) Bill 2010	06/12/2010	Enacted
56	Social Welfare Bill 2010	08/12/2010	Enacted
57	Welfare of Greyhounds Bill 2010 [Seanad]	08/12/2010	Order for Second Stage Dáil
58	Credit Institutions (Stabilisation) Bill 2010	14/12/2010	Enacted
59	Appropriation Bill 2010	13/12/2010	Enacted
60	Climate Change Response Bill 2010 [Seanad]	21/12/2010	Order for Second Stage Seanad
61	Climate Change Bill 2010 [PMB]	16/12/2010	Order for Second Stage Dáil

# APPENDIX 9

## ACTS 2010

No.	Act Name	Date of Signature
1	Arbitration Act 2010	08/03/2010
2	Communications Regulation (Premium Rate Services and Electronic Communications Infrastructure) Act 2010	16/03/2010
3	George Mitchell Scholarship Fund (Amendment) Act 2010	30/03/2010
4	Petroleum (Exploration and Extraction) Safety Act 2010	03/04/2010
5	Finance Act 2010	03/04/2010
6	Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) Act 2010	05/05/2010
7	Euro Area Loan Facility Act 2010	20/05/2010
8	Fines Act 2010	31/05/2010
9	Intoxicating Liquor (National Conference Centre) Act 2010	31/05/2010
10	Inland Fisheries Act 2010	01/06/2010
11	Energy (Biofuel Obligation and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2010	09/05/2010
12	Competition (Amendment) Act 2010	19/06/2010
13	Electricity Regulation (Amendment) (Carbon Revenue Levy) Act 2010	30/06/2010
14	Merchant Shipping Act 2010	03/07/2010
15	Health (Amendment) Act 2010	03/07/2010
16	European Financial Stability Facility Act 2010	03/07/2010
17	Compulsory Purchase Orders (Extension Of Time Limits) Act 2010	07/07/2010
18	Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2010	09/07/2010
19	Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2010	10/07/2010
20	Health (Amendment) (No. 2) Act 2010	13/07/2010
21	Adoption Act 2010	14/07/2010
23	Criminal Justice (Psychoactive Substances) Act 2010	14/07/2010
24	Central Bank Reform Act 2010	17/07/2010
25	Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010	19/07/2010
26	Road Traffic Act 2010	20/07/2010
27	Údarás na Gaeltachta (Amendment) Act 2010	20/07/2010
28	Criminal Procedure Act 2010	20/07/2010
29	Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2010	21/07/2010
30	Dog Breeding Establishments Act 2010	21/07/2010
31	Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2010	26/07/2010
32	Value-Added Tax Consolidation Act 2010	23/11/2010
33	Chemicals (Amendment) Act 2010	24/11/2010
34	Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Act 2010	15/12/2010
35	Social Welfare Act 2010	17/12/2010
36	Appropriation Act 2010	17/12/2010
37	Credit Institutions (Stabilisation) Act 2010	21/12/2010
38	Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2010	21/12/2010
39	Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2010	22/12/2010
40	Public Health (Tobacco) (Amendment) Act 2010	22/12/2010
41	Criminal Law (Insanity) Act 2010	22/12/2010

## OVERVIEW OF ENERGY USAGE IN THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS IN 2010

The energy needs for the House of the Oireachtas are met as part of the system for the Government Buildings complex which is managed by the Office of Public Works. The Government Buildings complex includes the Department of Finance, the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation, the Department of Tourism, Culture and Sport, the Office of the Attorney General, the Houses of the Oireachtas, Kildare House, the National Museum and the National Library.

The OPW have installed sub meters on the various different buildings in the Oireachtas as part of the "Optimising power @ work campaign" to record the fuel and electricity consumption and this is monitored through a web based reporting system.

The Houses of the Oireachtas also have a combined heat and power plant which supplies electricity to the ring electrical system and heat to the old House.

The Houses of the Oireachtas also has responsibility for Kildare House and it is also fed from the district heating system and the electricity ring.

In 2010, the Houses of the Oireachtas and Kildare House consumed 10,062 MWh of energy, consisting of:

- ◆ 6204 MWh of electricity;
- ◆ 3858 MWh of fossil fuels.

### Actions Undertaken in 2010

In 2010 the Houses of the Oireachtas undertook a range of initiatives to improve our energy performance, including:

- ◆ Participation in the "Optimising Power @ Work campaign", where staff are encouraged to be more energy efficient. This has included a full review of the heating and ventilation systems to ensure they are operating only when required and significant savings have been identified here.
- ◆ Night energy audits have been undertaken to identify areas where energy savings can be made.
- ◆ Crochet timers have been installed for the air conditioning for the party rooms.

- ◆ New wood chip boilers have recently been installed as part of the Leinster House heating scheme. Meters are currently being fitted to the boiler and annualised savings will be available next year.
- ◆ The steam distribution system was replaced with MTHW as part of the Leinster House heating scheme.
- ◆ Optimisation of the CHP.
- ◆ Reduction of the MTHW summer flow temperature.

Altogether, these and other energy saving measures are saving the Houses of the Oireachtas 252 MWh annually.

### Actions Planned for 2011

In 2011 the Houses of the Oireachtas intends to further improve our energy performance by undertaking the following initiatives:

- ◆ Monitoring the amount of energy produced by the biomass boiler.
- ◆ Continue to inform and motivate the staff in energy reduction measures.
- ◆ Review the heating times as the year progresses.
- ◆ Install more efficient lighting were possible as the current lamps fail.
- ◆ Installation of crochet timers in the committee rooms.
- ◆ Electrical immersion for summer hot water heater.
- ◆ Separate chiller for basement server room cooling.

It is expected that these measures will save 150 MWh in 2011.

# APPENDIX 11

## MEMBERS' SURVEY 2010

<b>Services</b> with which more than 85% of members were satisfied				<b>Staff</b> with whom more than 85% of members were satisfied			
	2010	2008	2007		2010	2008	2007
Salary and allowances	97.4	97.4	97.4	Procedural staff	97.3	100	97.4
L&R services	97.3	92.5	100	One Stop Shop staff	100	97.5	
Services for secretarial & Parliamentary Assistants	92.1	92.1	84.2	HR & members' services staff	100	97.4	100
Access to LH	92.1	87.2	81.6	Coffee Dock staff	100	97.4	
Accommodation Services	89.5	80	81.1	Accommodation & access staff	100	95	97.4
Non ICT services [fax, copiers etc]	87.2	87.5	94.6	Bar staff	100	94.9	
Facilities	91.4	86.8	78.4	Fitness Room staff	100	94.1	
PLA Services	88.5	86.2		Facilities staff	100	92.3	94.7
Procedural documents <sup>1</sup>	85.8	95.1	91.9	Crèche staff	100	80	
				Printing Unit	97.4	92.5	
Restaurant	92.3			Restaurant staff	97.4	92.5	
Bars	97.4			Finance & Payroll Unit staff	97.1	100	
Coffee Dock	94.9			HR and Personnel Unit staff	97.1	93.9	
Fitness Room	94.1			Administrative staff	97.1	92.7	83.8
Visitor management	92.3			L&R staff	97.1	92.5	93.9
Tours	100			ICT and Helpdesk staff	91.9	87.8	
				Training Unit staff	88.9	94.4	
				PR & communications staff	88.9	90.3	71
				PLA staff	91.3	86.2	
				Broadcasting staff	85.3	88.9	
				e-Democracy staff	85.2	84	
<b>Services</b> with which more than 75% but less than 85% of members were satisfied				<b>Staff</b> with whom more than 75% but less than 85% of members were satisfied			
	2010	2008	2007		2010	2008	2007
ICT services	79.5	80.5	59.5	Communications Unit	80	84.6	
Shop	83.8						
Parking	75.7						
<b>Services</b> with which less than 75% of members were satisfied				<b>Staff</b> with whom less than 75% of members were satisfied			
Promoting Parliament	52.6	69.2	58.3	PRO staff	70.6	88	
Crèche	50						

<sup>1</sup> Unweighted average