

Houses of the Oireachtas Commission



Coimisiún Thithe
an Oireachtais
Houses of the
Oireachtas Commission

2015

Annual Report

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*Mr Seán Ó Fearghail TD,
Ceann Comhairle*



*Senator Denis O'Donovan,
Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann*

It is our privilege to present the annual report of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission for 2015 pursuant to section 6 of the Commission Acts 2003 - 2015.

In presenting this annual report, the first since we were elected to the respective offices of Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach of the Seanad, we would like to pay tribute to the former members of the Commission for their stewardship of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service (the Service) for the 2015 reporting period, and for the past five years. We especially thank the former Chairperson, Deputy Seán Barrett, and Deputy Chairperson, Senator Paddy Burke, for their work in leading the Commission in advancing many important initiatives that will serve the Houses for many years to come.

The annual report is an important component of the Commission's public accountability framework. The Commission is accountable to the Houses of the Oireachtas in the performance of its functions. It also has a statutory obligation to ensure value for money in the use of public resources. To that end, this report provides information to the Houses and the public at large on the Commission's stewardship of public resources in undertaking its responsibilities.

The report also provides highlights of the daily work of members of both Houses of the Oireachtas in carrying out their parliamentary functions as legislators and elected representatives of the people. Additionally it provides information on the responsibilities of the Service in supporting the business and proceedings of the Houses, the parliamentary committees and all members of Dáil and Seanad Éireann.

The past year was the final year of the 31st Dáil and 24th Seanad which saw increased levels of activity across many areas of the parliamentary business, including parliamentary questions, committee meetings, and legislation initiated and passed by the Houses. The range of activities reflects the extent of the responsibilities of members of the Houses who have to balance a number of competing roles within the modern democratic process: considering legislation, scrutinising government policies and actions, representing the interest of their constituents and bringing matters of national importance to the forefront of public debate. The Service supports members in undertaking these many important roles.

As the year progressed, planning and preparation of pre and post-election responsibilities was a key priority for the Service which worked to ensure the seamless delivery of administrative, procedural and operational services and support to members in the period leading up to the dissolution of the Dáil and during the post-election period.

Engaging the public in the work of the House and enabling them to follow proceedings and receive information is one of the Commission's key objectives. The Houses have made significant efforts to increase accessibility and to promote greater awareness of the work of Parliament through a variety of formats including Oireachtas TV, social media, webcasts and outreach. Oireachtas TV began live daily broadcasts of the parliamentary proceedings on an experimental basis in November 2011 and was made permanent in September 2014. Plans to extend its reach through broadcasting on the Saorview television service are being actively pursued this year.

Leinster House is the focal point of Irish political life. This year the Georgian House will undergo a programme of essential structural and upgrade works, which will be undertaken by the Office of Public Works (OPW) as custodians of the building. The purpose of the project is to address structural deterioration and to upgrade services in the building. The work was scheduled to commence in 2009 but was put on hold due to budgetary constraints.

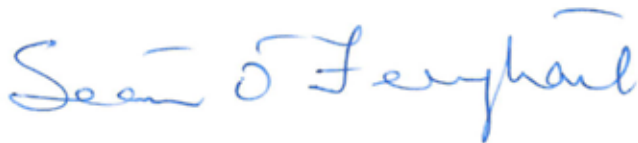
This is a complex project in particular as the work must respect the historic character of the building while simultaneously improving its structural integrity in a sustainable manner. The Commission was briefed by the OPW on the necessity for the work and has put measures in place to ensure the work of the Houses, the Committees and members, and the core parliamentary functions, can proceed uninterrupted while the work is underway. While access to the Seanad Chamber will be closed for the duration of the project, the Seanad will be temporarily relocated to alternative accommodation where its work can continue without disruption. The building must be completely vacated for the main works under the project necessitating the relocation of all offices in the building.

The main works under the project are scheduled to begin in July 2016. The project is expected to be completed in summer 2018. The Commission will continue to engage closely with the OPW throughout the project to ensure that the logistics are carefully managed and the priorities of the Houses and the requirements of members of Parliament are foremost as the work proceeds, while also having regard to the timelines for the 2019 centenary celebrations for the first Dáil.

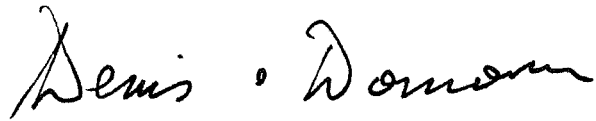
We would like to express our thanks to the Clerk of the Dáil and Secretary General and the staff of the Service for their work and significant achievements over the past year. Their commitment and dedication to delivering responsive and effective services that members require in carrying out their parliamentary functions, and in supporting the daily business of the Houses, will allow us to continue this progress over the coming year.

We are now in a changed political landscape following the general elections to both Houses. All sides of the Houses have embraced the implementation of a substantial programme of parliamentary reform. The first step in this reform was witnessed on the first sitting of the new Dáil with the election of the Ceann Comhairle based on a secret ballot of members. Importantly, this endorsement of the House underpins the authority and independence of the Ceann Comhairle.

A number of further important reforms have already been agreed and implemented which will strengthen the parliamentary procedures and practices and give more power to the Houses and their members. We are fully committed to overseeing a comprehensive programme of parliamentary reform and we look forward to working with members and staff to ensure that the Houses of the Oireachtas and their Committees can meet the challenges ahead.



Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD,
Ceann Comhairle



Senator Denis O'Donovan,
Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann



THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION

The Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (the Commission) is the body responsible for the running of the Houses of the Oireachtas and is the governing body of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service. The Commission is responsible for determining financial and administrative policy for the delivery of programmes and services to the Houses and their members to support them in carrying out their parliamentary functions. It also oversees the implementation of those policies by the Houses of the Oireachtas Service (the Service).

The Commission consists 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. The Commission is also accountable to the Houses of the Oireachtas in the performance of its functions and has responsibility for ensuring value for money.

Since its establishment, the Commission has overseen the delivery of services to both Houses and has introduced a number of significant improvements in the services provided to members and to the public. Amending legislation is enacted every three years (the most recent in 2015), the primary purpose of which is to make funding available for the running of the

Houses of the Oireachtas and the parliamentary administration for the following three-year period. The requirement to provide by statute for a new Commission budget every three years is useful not just in facilitating financial planning but also in affording an opportunity to assess the adequacy of the legislation, thereby allowing it to be updated as required.

In 2013, the legislation was amended to give the Commission responsibility for the translation into Irish of Statutory Instruments and the publication and periodic review of An Caighdeán Oifigiúil/the Official Standard of the Irish Language.

Under legislation enacted in 2015, *the Houses of the Oireachtas Act (Appointments to Certain Offices) Act 2015*, the Commission appoints the Clerk of the Dáil on the recommendation of the Ceann Comhairle from a list of names selected by Top Level Appointment Committee following an open competition. The current Clerk of the Dáil was appointed by the Commission on 13 January 2016, being the first appointment made by the Commission under the new Act. In addition, the Commission will appoint the Clerk of the Seanad, the Clerk-Assistant of the Dáil and the Clerk-Assistant of the Seanad on the recommendation of the Ceann Comhairle or the Cathaoirleach of the Seanad, as appropriate, whenever a vacancy falls to be filled in these posts.

Commission members serve in a corporate capacity and do not represent their parties, or groups, or their own interests at this forum. Commission members do however carry out a valuable role in communicating information about Commission policies and decisions through the parliamentary system.

THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS SERVICE

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service (the Service) is the public service body which provides administrative services to the Houses of the Oireachtas and their members. The Service is headed by the Clerk of the Dáil/Secretary General.

The role of the Service is to provide professional advice and administrative/procedural services and facilities to the Commission, to the Houses of the Oireachtas and their Committees and to members of the Houses. The Service is staffed by 418 civil servants of the State and 40 State industrial staff (full-time equivalents) whose terms and conditions of employment are set down in the general civil service statutory code, the *Staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Act 1959 and the Commission Acts 2003 - 2015*.

There are approximately 516 political staff working in either Leinster House or in members' constituency offices who are employed directly by the members

or the relevant political party and who are paid by the Commission.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL

The Secretary General of the Service is the Chief Executive of the Commission and Clerk of Dáil Éireann. The Secretary General has responsibility for managing the Service on a day-to-day basis and for implementing Commission policies. The Secretary General is a member of the Commission, while also being accountable to it and subject to its direction. S/he is also the Accounting Officer in respect of Commission expenditure.

THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Secretary General is assisted by the Service's Management Committee (MC).

The current top level management structure in the Service consists of two Assistant Secretaries reporting to the Secretary General as agreed by the Commission in 2006.

The Management Committee decides on issues of strategic, operational and financial importance which may then be referred 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 set

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

PRINCIPAL OFFICER NETWORK

The Management Committee is supported by the Service's Principal Officer Network. The Network provides a forum for Principal Officers to collaborate and cooperate to achieve outcomes that are in the best interest of the Service.



Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission, (l to r): Catherine Murphy TD, Senator Ned O'Sullivan, Louise O'Reilly TD, Senator Gerard P. Craughwell, Senator Denis O'Donnovan, Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann, (Deputy Chairperson), Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghall TD, (Chairperson), Timmy Dooley TD, Joe Carey TD, Senator Paudie Coffey, Martin Heydon TD, Peter Finnegan, Secretary General (Chief Executive of the Commission).



Members of the Management Committee (l to r): Mr. Martin Groves, Clerk-Assistant of the Seanad, (representing Ms. Deirdre Lane, Clerk of the Seanad) Ms. Patricia Doran, Principal Officer, Chair of People and Finance sub-Committee, Mr. Michael Errity, Assistant Secretary, Corporate and Members' Services Division, Mr. Peter Finnegan, Clerk of Dáil Éireann and Secretary General, Ms. Elaine Gunn, Assistant Secretary, Parliamentary Services Division and Clerk-Assistant of the Dáil, Mr. Paul Conway, Superintendent, Chair of Business and Strategy sub-Committee, Mr. Charles Hearne, Principal Officer, Chair of Systems sub-Committee.

THE ROLE OF THE COMMISSION

The role of the Commission under the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2015* is to provide for the running of the Houses of the Oireachtas, to act as the 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 founding Commission legislation in 2003 led, in summary, to two consequences: (i) the Commission became the sanctioning authority for expenditure and for deciding on staff numbers, provision of services and related matters (where this authority formerly rested with the Department of Finance); and (ii) the system for the allocation of budgets to the Oireachtas changed from the annual civil service Estimates and “Vote” procedure to a different procedure involving a three-year budget drawn from the Central Fund. A new budget is set in legislation every three years following negotiations with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. The budget is approved at political level by the Commission and the necessary amending legislation is passed by both Houses.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission consists of 11 members as follows:

- 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)
- one member of one of the Houses of the Oireachtas appointed by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (“the minister’s representative”)
- four ordinary members appointed by Dáil Éireann
- three ordinary members appointed by Seanad Éireann

Membership of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (2016)

Ex Officio Members

Ceann Comhairle

Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD (Chairperson)

Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann

Senator Denis O’Donovan
(Deputy Chairperson)

Secretary General of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service

Peter Finnegan

Member appointed by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform

Martin Heydon TD

Members appointed by Dáil Éireann

Joe Carey TD
Timmy Dooley TD
Catherine Murphy TD
Louise O’Reilly TD

Members appointed by Seanad Éireann

Senator Paudie Coffey
Senator Gerard P. Craughwell
Senator Ned O’Sullivan

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.

Members of the Commission (excluding ex officio members) qualify for an annual allowance. The Minister’s representative qualifies for an allowance if s/he is not a serving Minister of State.

The Commission provides services to the 218 members of both Houses of the Oireachtas and to the staff in their employment. It also provides services for Departmental officials, party staff, media and service personnel for whom Leinster House is a place of work. The Service consists of 418 civil servants of the State and 40 State Industrial staff whose terms and conditions of employment are set down in the general civil service statutory code, the *Staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Act 1959, and the Commission Acts 2003 - 2015*.

The legislation sets out certain specific functions of the Commission, including to:

- oversee ongoing expenditure – the Commission’s current three-year budget allocation is €369 million for the period 2016 to 2018
- pay salaries and expenses of members, their staff and the staff of the Service
- keep annual accounts
- perform functions in relation to civil service staff of the Commission
- produce and publish strategic plans, annual reports, annual estimates, and produce handbooks and information relevant to the business of the

- Houses of the Oireachtas for members of the Houses
- provide translation services in respect of Acts and Statutory Instruments
 - prepare and publish guidelines for members on the use of publicly funded services and facilities, and to specify charges for same, following a dissolution of the Dáil
 - exercise certain functions previously exercised by the Minister for Finance regarding secretarial facilities for members and qualifying parties, for example, the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance and the provision of ICT, printing and graphic design facilities
 - exercise certain legal functions, including participation in proceedings where necessary and arranging for legal advice
 - appoint the Clerk of the Dáil on the recommendation of the Ceann Comhairle from among the list of names selected by the Top Level Appointments Committee (TLAC), following an open competition organised by TLAC
 - appoint the Clerk of the Seanad, Clerk-Assistant of the Dáil and Clerk-Assistant of the Seanad on the recommendation of the Ceann Comhairle or Cathaoirleach, as appropriate

Matters Outside the Remit of the Commission

The Commission does not have the authority to:

- set members' salaries or allowances
- set staff pay, conditions or pensions
- appoint staff at specified senior management grades, namely, at or above Principal Officer 1 level, without the consent of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform
- control or manage any building works - this function is carried out by the Office of Public Works (OPW) for all Government Departments and Offices

In addition, the Commission does not have a role in the day-to-day management of the Service which is a matter for the Secretary General and the Management Committee.

Transparency and Accountability

The Commission is accountable to the Houses of the Oireachtas in the performance of its functions. It publishes an annual report each year which is laid before both Houses and also published on the Oireachtas website. The annual report sets out information on the work carried out by members of the Houses and the work carried out by the Service in supporting the Houses and members, as well as accounting for expenditure of public funds for the running the Houses for the particular year.

The Commission, through the Secretary General, submits its accounts to the Comptroller and Auditor General for auditing by 31 March each year. The Commission

is accountable to the Committee of Public Accounts of Dáil Éireann for the findings of the public audit and is accountable to the relevant Oireachtas committees in respect of its strategic plan and related policy matters.

Minutes of the meetings of the Commission are published to the Oireachtas website. The Commission is also subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2014.

Code of Conduct for Commission Members

The Commission is governed by a Code of Conduct which establishes ethical standards to guide the conduct of its members, both collectively and individually, in performing their functions. The principles on which the Code is based are: *responsibility, integrity, loyalty, commitment, compliance, information and administration*.

As members of the Houses of the Oireachtas, Commission members, in their capacity as Deputies and Senators, are also bound by the Codes of Conduct adopted in accordance with the Ethics Acts by Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann.

As Designated Directors under the Ethics Acts, Commission members are also required to provide a statement in writing of their registered interests in January each year to the Chair of the Commission and to the Standards in Public Office Commission.

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:

- Commission members must disclose any material interest that they or any connected person may have in any matter under consideration at a meeting, or 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 minutes of

Commission meetings which are published on the Oireachtas website when approved.

Communication between Commission and Members of the Houses

The formal mechanism for communication between the Commission and members of the Houses is via the Joint sub-Committee on Administration (Js-CA), which communicates the views of members to the Commission on matters of policy and makes recommendations on such matters as appropriate.

In addition, in certain circumstances, as an input to decision making, Commission members may decide to consult informally with other members of the Houses on an issue under consideration.

To assist members in communicating the rationale for Commission decisions, the draft minutes of meetings are circulated to Commission members as soon as practicable after each meeting.

Committees of the Commission

The Commission has two key standing advisory committees: a Finance Committee, which considers quarterly financial reports and submits them to the Commission for approval; and an Audit Committee, which oversees and advises on risk management, internal controls (including the internal audit function

and matters identified by external audit) and value for money.

The Audit Committee is 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 reports are published on the Oireachtas website. The Commission's Finance and Audit Committees meet on a quarterly basis.

Further details on the work of the Audit Committee in 2015 can be found in Appendix 6.

The Commission may also establish ad-hoc sub-Committees as necessary to assist it in carrying out its responsibilities. In the 31st Dáil the Commission established two such sub-Committees: a sub-Committee on Communications (to oversee the establishment of Oireachtas TV) and a sub-Committee on Accommodation.

Summary of Commission Activities in 2015

The Commission met on 12 occasions in 2015. The business and activities addressed included the following:

- quarterly financial reports from the Finance Committee and examination of detailed information on the monthly spending by the Houses against spending forecasts

- Commission's Annual Accounts for 2014
- Commission's Annual Report to the Houses of the Oireachtas for 2014
- Statement of Estimates for 2016
- Houses of the Oireachtas Service Annual Resource Plan for 2015
- programme of essential structural and upgrade works for Georgian Leinster House
- engagement of persons with specialist expertise to support the Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis
- consideration of quarterly reports on Banking Inquiry expenditure and project update
- defence of legal proceedings in accordance with the terms of the authorisation of the Dáil in relation to matters arising solely from the performance by members of their parliamentary functions
- increasing access to the Oireachtas TV Channel
- proposal by the Library & Research Service to carry out a survey of members to evaluate their experience of the L&RS "on-demand" enquiry service



Seán Ó Fearghail TD was elected Ceann Comhairle of the 32nd Dáil based on a secret ballot of members, the first time a secret ballot procedure was used to elect the Ceann Comhairle.

- and L&RS "Digest" service and to respond to their ongoing requirements in relation to these services
- Parliamentary Internship Programme in the Houses: recommendations presented by the Joint sub-Committee on Administration
- the Catering Services in the Houses
- preparation of Guidelines on the use of services and facilities provided out of public funds following Dissolution of Dáil Éireann in accordance with section 4(4A) of the Commission Acts
- functions assigned to the Commission under the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Appointments to Certain Offices) Act 2015*
- the Commission's three-year budget allocation under the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2015*
- operation of the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance and related policy matters
- review and updating of the Rules of Procedure governing the conduct of Commission business

Further information on the business of the Commission and the minutes of its meetings are available on the Oireachtas website www.oireachtas.ie



Senator Denis O'Donovan was elected Cathaoirleach of the 25th Seanad.

Meetings of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission and its Committees in 2015

12 Meetings of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission

5 Meetings of the Commission's Finance Committee

4 Meetings of the Commission's Audit Committee

2 Meetings of the sub-Committee on Communications





Mr. Peter Finnegan, Clerk of Dáil Éireann and Secretary General of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service

I am pleased to present this report on the work of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service (the Service) during the past year in delivering the services required to support the Houses of the Oireachtas and members of Parliament.

The role of the Service is to provide professional advice and effective and responsive services to support the Houses, their Committees and members of Parliament in the performance of their constitutional functions. The strategic objectives adopted by the Commission provide the framework for the Service in undertaking this role:

- Improving Services to Parliament
- Improving Services to Members
- Enhancing Service Capability

This report highlights the key achievements of the Service in delivering on these priorities over the past year.

2015 continued to be a busy one for the Houses, in particular as it marked the final year of the 31st Dáil and 24th Seanad. The level of activity in the core functions of legislating, oversight and scrutinising the work of government remained high with further increases in the number of Bills initiated and passed by the Houses and in the number of committee meetings held and committee reports published. The work of the Parliamentary Committees is an important feature of the

work of the Houses, providing a means for the Houses to scrutinise in detail a wide range of public policy matters, engaging members of the public and other stakeholders in the parliamentary and policy process and promoting public awareness of important matters being considered by the Houses.

During the past year:

- the Houses sat for a combined total of 224 days
- 131 Bills were initiated in the Houses
- 67 Bills were passed by the Houses
- 52,910 parliamentary questions were tabled for reply by members of the government
- 603 parliamentary committee meetings took place, over a total of 1,364 hours
- Committees of the Houses heard from 1,624 witnesses, and produced 48 committee reports
- the Banking Inquiry held 95 public hearing sessions and took evidence from 131 witness
- the Library and Research Service responded to 2,359 information and research requests
- the Service coordinated responses to 176 Freedom of Information requests
- there were 114,000 visitors to the Houses, and over 55,000 people took guided tours of the Parliament

Despite the demands of this busy period, a high level of service was delivered across all areas to support the parliamentary business. In doing so the Service worked hard behind the scenes to implement important initiatives to improve efficiency and improve its services to better meet the needs and priorities of members and the requirements of the Houses.

Over the past year, as we approached the end of the 31st Dáil and 24th Seanad, planning and preparation for the general elections for both Houses and the transition to the 32nd Dáil and 25th Seanad was an important feature of the work of the Service. In preparing for the elections, each business area of the Service prepared an election plan to identify the specific responsibilities to be undertaken in the pre and post-election period, including preparation of election writs to be issued to the returning officer for

each constituency, review and updating of dissolution guidelines to be issued by the Commission to all members of the Houses, and production of information handbooks and other information resources for members.

A particular priority post-election is to help newly elected members of the Houses to become acquainted with the national parliament setting and to ensure that they are provided with the practical support and services they need to undertake their new roles and to support the transition to the 32nd Dáil and 25th Seanad. The level of turnover of members following the elections was high with 60 new TDs and 42 new Senators joining the Houses. The *Member Liaison Officer Programme*, under which an experienced member of staff of the Service is assigned to a new member of the Houses to assist them during their first weeks in Leinster House, plays an important role in this context. Establishing the Programme was an important part of the election planning process.

The Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis, which was established 2014, continued its public hearings from January to September 2015 and presented its report to the Clerks of both Houses in January 2016. This was the first statutory inquiry conducted under the parliamentary inquiry legislation. The work of the Committee was particularly demanding by virtue of its importance, volume, complexity and strict time constraints to meet its reporting deadline. Over this period the Committee held 95 public hearing sessions, took evidence from 131 witnesses and considered a further 42 written statements submitted by non-public hearing witnesses.

In presenting its report the Committee addressed a number of recommendations to the Houses to improve the effectiveness of the inquiry process, including the establishment of a dedicated Inquiries Unit to support Committees of the Houses in developing proposals for future parliamentary inquiries. The establishment of a central Inquiries Unit, which will capture the knowledge, experience and lessons learned from the inquiry process, will be advanced in the year ahead in accordance with the recommendation of the Committee.

In furthering the Commission's objective to enhance public engagement with the parliamentary business, the Service continued to pursue initiatives to make the work of the Houses more accessible and to engage the public in the parliamentary process. Oireachtas TV, which began televising the proceedings of the Houses on a permanent basis in November 2014, completed the first year of live daily broadcasts on a dedicated Channel, providing continuous unedited coverage of the parliamentary business. Plans to have the Channel broadcast on the *Saorview* television service are being actively pursued in order to make the work of the Houses available to many more people. A sign language interpretation service was introduced on a trial basis on the Channel with a view to providing this service more broadly to enhance accessibility for the deaf and hearing-impaired community.

In addition, parliamentary committee meetings are webcast live on the website of the Houses. There is increasing public use of the Oireachtas Twitter feed with just over 20,000 followers receiving regular information updates about the parliamentary business. The Oireachtas App allows convenient access to information on the Houses on mobile devices, including access to the Oireachtas TV Channel, and facilitates greater public engagement with the parliamentary process. To further outreach efforts, a new online education programme was launched which is made available as a free educational resource to teachers, students and others who wish to learn about the parliamentary system. Work is also in progress to redevelop the Oireachtas website to make information on the site more accessible.

These are just some of the achievements over the last year. Other notable achievements are covered in more detail in this report.

2015 was the final year of the Commission's 3-year budget allocation. The Commission's appropriation account for the year ended 31 December 2015, which has been audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General, is set out in Appendix 4 of this report. The account shows that expenditure for the year was €107.4 million against a budget of €112.3 million, resulting in a saving of €4.9 million (4%).

The Commission received its new budgetary allocation of €369 million for the period 2016 to 2018 with the enactment of relevant amending legislation in December 2015. The budget shows a modest increase compared to the previous 3-year allocation, principally attributable to parliamentary reform measures, the costs associated with the elections to both Houses in 2016 and to fund investment in strategic ICT projects to improve efficiencies in operations and to meet the needs of a modern parliament. The focus will continue on delivering our services as cost-effectively as possible.

The enactment of the Oireachtas (Appointments to Certain Offices) Act in October 2015 introduced a new procedure to modernise the process for appointment to the positions of Clerk and Clerk-Assistant of both House of the Oireachtas. On a personal note, I was pleased to take up my appointment as Clerk of the Dáil and Secretary General of the Service under this new framework in January 2016. I look forward to leading the Service which is responsive to the evolving requirements the Houses and where staff are committed to providing members of the Houses and the members of the public with the best service possible in delivering on the Commission's objectives.

The key challenges in the year ahead will include putting appropriate resources in place to support Dáil reform

measures and working with the Office of Public Works in managing the accommodation plan and timescales for the programme of structural works for Georgian Leinster House.

I want to sincerely thank the staff of the Service for their valued contribution and tireless efforts in continuing to deliver high quality services to Parliament and its members. I am confident that, with the dedication and professionalism displayed by staff, the Service can adapt to meet the many new challenges it faces in the future.

I would also like to thank the former members of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission for their support over the last five years and in particular the former Ceann Comhairle and Chairperson, Deputy Seán Barrett. We will build on the achievements over the last years in supporting the incoming Commission in implementing its strategic priorities. Our focus will remain on being responsive to the ever-changing priorities of the Houses of the Oireachtas and members of Parliament.



Peter Finnegan,
Clerk of Dáil Éireann and
Secretary General of the Houses
of the Oireachtas Service



Sittings of the Houses and Committees

In 2015, the Houses sat for a combined total of 224 days, including:

- 118 Dáil sitting days (974 sitting hours)
- 106 Seanad sitting days (666 sitting hours)
- 603 Committee meetings (1,364 sitting hours)

Business of the Houses

The parliamentary business included:

- 131 Bills initiated in the Houses
- 67 Bills passed by the Houses
- 52,910 Parliamentary Questions tabled for reply by members of the Government

Parliamentary Committee Business

Committees of the Houses:

- held 603 meetings
- over 1,364 sitting hours
- with input from 1,624 witnesses, and
- presented 48 reports to the Houses:
 - 32 policy reports
 - 9 pre-legislative reports
 - 7 EU scrutiny reports/political contributions to the EU Institutions

Public Petitions Addressed to the Houses

- Members of the public addressed 35 petitions to the Houses on matters of public interest or concern
- In considering public petitions submitted to the Houses, the sub-Committee on Public Petitions received oral presentations from petitioners and other witnesses in respect of 5 petitions

Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis

The public hearings of the Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis continued over 49 days between

December 2014 and September 2015. More than 300 hours of public sessions were reported by the Debates Office, producing more than 8,000 written pages of hearings.

The Inquiry consisted of two public hearing phases:

- the *Context Phase*, from December 2014 to April 2015, involved 31 public hearing sessions and received evidence from 34 witnesses
- the *Nexus Phase*, from April 2015 to September 2015, involved 64 public hearing sessions, received evidence from 97 witnesses and received 42 written witness statements from non-public hearing witnesses

In January 2016 the Joint Committee sent its report, including findings and recommendations, to the Clerks of the Houses for circulation to members of both Houses.

Seanad Public Consultation Committee

- In March 2015, the Seanad Public Consultation Committee published a report on *Farm Safety* which was informed by written submissions received by the Committee and by public hearings with individuals and organisations held in the Seanad Chamber

Seanad Engagement with the European Commission

- In June 2015, the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr. Phil Hogan, addressed Seanad Éireann on the priorities of the European Commission Work Programme for 2016

North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association

The North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association (NSIPA) met on two occasions in 2015:

- the sixth plenary, held on 26 June in Parliament Buildings, Stormont, focussed its debate on the subjects of human trafficking and cross-border cooperation on healthcare
- the seventh plenary, held on 27 November in the Seanad Chamber, Leinster House, considered the topic of supporting women in public life and increasing participation in decision making

- the NSIPA Executive Committee met on two occasions, while the Oireachtas Executive Committee met on four occasions and also held a meeting with An Taoiseach in June 2015 to provide him with an update on the background to, and the work the Association since its inception

Official Report of the Parliamentary Proceedings

The Debates Office produced and published the official report of the parliamentary proceedings, comprising:

- 3,004 hours of parliamentary debate in the Houses and Committees
- 52,910 Parliamentary Questions

General Election Planning

A General Election Planning Steering Group was established to coordinate delivery of the Service's statutory and administrative responsibilities arising on the dissolution of the 31st Dáil and 24th Seanad.

In support of the election planning process, HR Services:

- coordinated election-related responsibilities across the Service
- consulted with Party Administrators and organised information seminars for members and their staff
- established a *Member Liaison Officer Programme* under which an experienced member of staff of the Service was assigned to a new member of the Houses to assist them during their first weeks in Leinster House
- coordinated information for dissolution guidelines, members' handbooks and other resources for members
- developed an ICT system to streamline requests for information from members and to avoid duplication of work
- undertook resource planning to ensure that sections in the Service had the necessary staff in place to

manage the increased workload arising from the dissolution of the 31st Dáil and 24th Seanad

Communications and Broadcasting

- Following the successful launch of Oireachtas TV in September 2014, plans were advanced for the launch of the Oireachtas Channel on *Vodafone TV* and on the *Saorview* television service. This will significantly enhance coverage of the Channel, making the parliamentary proceedings more accessible to the public
- A pilot project was implemented to provide sign language interpretation on Oireachtas TV. It is planned to continue the provision of sign language and subtitled programmes on the Oireachtas Channel
- The Oireachtas Broadcast Unit installed 3 new TV cameras in the Audio Visual room to optimise TV coverage of committee report launches. Ten report launches were web streamed and/or replayed on Oireachtas TV
- The number of followers of Oireachtas Twitter account, @OireachtasNews, increased by 2,500 to 20,000
- In 2015 there were 1,673,513 views of live streams on the Oireachtas website comprising 519,137 users. "Watch and Listen" section of the Houses of the Oireachtas website continues to be the most popular part of the website and is extremely important in communicating the work of the House
- The Houses of the Oireachtas website, oireachtas.ie, was included among the finalists in three categories of the Maximum Media Sockies Awards:
 - best non-profit organisation Twitter account
 - best mobile App
 - best use of social media by a state body

Parliamentary Library and Research

The Library and Research Service (L&RS):

- responded to 2,359 information and research requests from members and other users (an increase of 3% on 2014)
- published 46 *Bills Digests* (an increase of 15% on 2014)
- published 16 *Notes* (topical briefings) to the Oireachtas website
- responded to 37 elective research queries from Joint Committees of the Houses, 17 of which resulted in briefing papers which were used as the basis for committee reports
- provided research support to 7 Joint Committees of the Houses in their pre-legislative scrutiny of 11 General Schemes of Bills
- prepared two joint research papers with the research service of the Northern Ireland Assembly (RaISe) to support the two plenary sessions of the North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association
- provided research support to the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA)
- assisted the Committees' Secretariat in developing its approach to budget and performance scrutiny and contributed to the OECD report *Review of Budget Oversight by Parliament: Ireland*
- provided support for the development of a Records Management Policy for the Service

Documents laid before the Houses

- 1,800 documents were laid before the Houses by government departments and offices, presenting information on a variety of matters on the official public record

Freedom of Information

- The Service processed 176 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests. This represents a 144% increase on the number of requests processed in 2014, which was 72

Houses of the Oireachtas Service Language Scheme

- The Houses of the Oireachtas Service Irish Language Scheme was managed by Rannóg an Aistriúcháin during 2015. The Scheme sets out the Service's commitments regarding the use of the Irish language in its service delivery. A new Scheme will be prepared in 2016

An Caighdeán Oifigiúil

- The statutory review of An Caighdeán Oifigiúil (the official standard grammar for the Irish language), which was initiated in 2014 under the responsibility of Rannóg an Aistriúcháin, continued and the Advisory Committee appointed to assist the Service in progressing this work made a number of recommendations for consideration in the context of the review. It is proposed to publish the revised Caighdeán Oifigiúil in 2016

Parliamentary Legal Services

- The Office of the Parliamentary Legal Adviser (OPLA) provided approximately 420 legal advices of which 80% were in response to advice sought by the Service and 20% were in response to advice sought by Oireachtas Committees. There were 230 new files opened by the OPLA in 2015

Public Procurement

- The Procurement Unit provided public procurement advice and support services for 14 tender processes by the Service. The Procurement Unit also carried out a number of market sounding exercises to inform the procurement process

Information and Communications Technology

The ICT Unit continued to pursue new initiatives to deliver services more cost-effectively and to meet members' needs including:

- completion of a contract for managed IT services (MITS)
- introduction of a new Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS) system
- installation of a new storage area network (SAN)
- improvements in ICT security practices in line with best practice
- introduction of a managed print service (MPS)
- piloting of a system for desktop virtualisation
- introduction and piloting of a visitor management system (VMS)
- initiation of a project in respect of the process for the upgrading and replacement of technologies in the chambers
- completion of a contract in respect of the provision of software licences to the Houses of the Oireachtas Service

In 2015, the ICT helpdesks provided support for:

- 10,345 calls from the staff of the Service, and
- 25,188 calls from members and their staff

Visitors to the Houses

- The number of visitors to the Houses in 2015 exceeded 114,000. Over 55,000 visitors took guided tours of Leinster House, which included walk-up tours on non-sitting days

Catering Services in the Houses

To improve service delivery in the catering services, an electronic point of sales system (EPOS) was implemented in March 2015. Following the completion of user training, EPOS was rolled out and is now in use in all catering venues. "Tap and go" credit card facilities were also introduced. These initiatives have enhanced

customer service and efficiency.

Office Accommodation and Building Management

In 2015, a number of significant projects were advanced in cooperation with the Office of Public Works to enhance and improve services to members and to the public, including:

- installation of hearing induction loops in the committee rooms
- improvement works to Leinster House pavilion to enhance security and to improve visitor experience
- improvements to service areas, particularly in the catering service areas
- conservation, refurbishment and upgrade of 1960's steel windows
- services to improve the maintenance of Leinster House Grounds
- ongoing maintenance and building upkeep

Other significant projects undertaken include arrangements in Leinster House for meetings of the Joint Committee on Inquiry into the Banking Crisis, relocation of staff to new accommodation in Merrion Square and clear-out of the vacated accommodation.

Independent Audit of Public Representation Allowance

The fifth audit of the Public Representation Allowance (PRA) was conducted in 2015 by an independent auditor selected following a competitive tender process:

- of the 222 members who received vouched allowances in 2014, the auditor selecting 22 members (10%) by random sample
- the audit report for 2014 was considered by the Management Committee and the Audit Committee in December 2015
- recommendations made by the independent auditor and other administrative amendments were included in updated Audit Guidelines approved by the Commission in December 2015 and circulated to members in early 2016

Training for Members and Political Personnel

The Training Unit continued to provide training and information seminars to support members and their staff. Some of the key training initiatives provided include:

- constituency database training
- occupational first aid
- health and wellbeing seminars
- language courses in Irish and French
- fire warden training

People and Organisational Development

Key initiatives undertaken to support implementation of the *People and Organisational Development* (POD) Programme include:

- *Staff Networks* established for Assistant Principal and equivalent grades, and Senior Clerks and equivalent grades
- a *Leadership Standard* developed which incorporates *Our Code for Working Together*

Training for Staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service

Some of the key training and learning initiatives provided include:

- courses pursued under the *Refund/Advance of Fees Scheme*
- high performance teams modules
- coaching for managers
- performance management workshops
- health and safety training including occupational first aid
- health and wellbeing seminars
- data protection awareness

- induction training programmes
- language courses in Irish and French

Salaries Section

- Salaries Section carried out initial scoping and preparatory work to prepare the *CorePay* payroll system for upgrade to the latest version in 2016

Public Service Reform Delivery

- An Integrated Reform Delivery Plan (IRDP) for the Service was approved for 2015. The Reform Plan sets out reform actions over the key areas of public service reform. A progress report on their implementation was submitted to the Reform Delivery Office (RDO), Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

Internal Audit

The Audit Committee met on four occasions in 2015 and considered:

- six internal audit reports
- five information notes and briefings
- the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General on the 2014 accounts of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission
- the independent auditor's report of the members' Public Representation Allowance
- a draft strategic risk register and updated risk management policy for the Service
- three risk materialisation reports

Managing Financial Resources

- The annual estimate for ongoing expenditure by the Houses for 2015 was €112.3m. Actual expenditure in 2015 was €107.4m which represents an underspend of €4.9m (4%)



COMPARATIVE BENCHMARKING OF PARLIAMENTS - KEY FINDINGS

General methodology of this report

This benchmarking report is based on information gathered from the parliaments of 27 Member States of the European Union, the European Parliament, the Scottish Parliament and the parliaments of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the US. In compiling the report, international key statistics were collected through desk-based research from a variety of sources and through surveys facilitated by parliamentary contacts in other jurisdictions. Most of the information gathered was obtained following the submission of a European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) request. Not all data was available from each parliament. Data obtained from parliaments related to either the 2015 calendar year or the 2014-2015 parliamentary session, approximately 12 months.

Headline Statistics

Overall findings of the benchmarking report are as follows:

In 2015, the Houses of the Oireachtas had:

- the third-highest number of sitting days of 29 parliaments
- the second-highest number of sitting hours of 27 parliaments
- the third-highest number of parliamentary questions tabled annually across 28 parliaments and the highest number on average of parliamentary questions per member
- the fifth-highest number of visitors to parliament as a percentage of population out of 29 parliaments surveyed

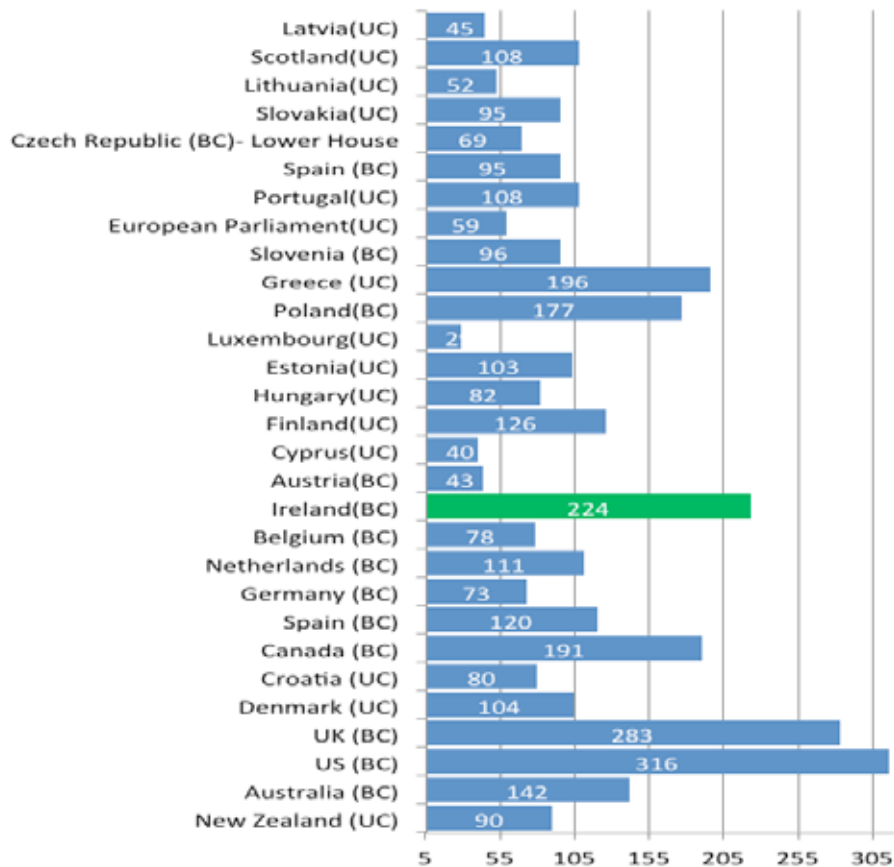
Further specific findings are included throughout this report.

Notes:

In the following graphs, BC refers to bicameral parliaments and UC refers to unicameral parliaments.

Not all data was available from each parliament and data was also sourced from the relevant Annual Report/parliamentary website where an ECPRD reply was not received.

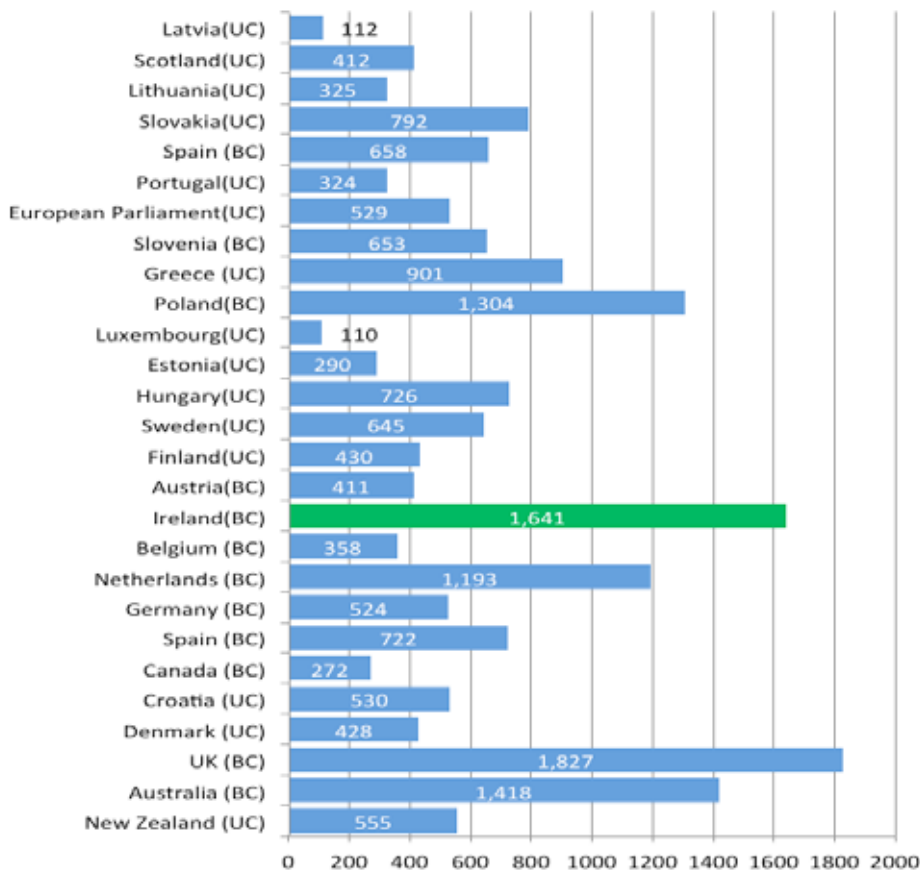
Number of Parliament Sitting Days



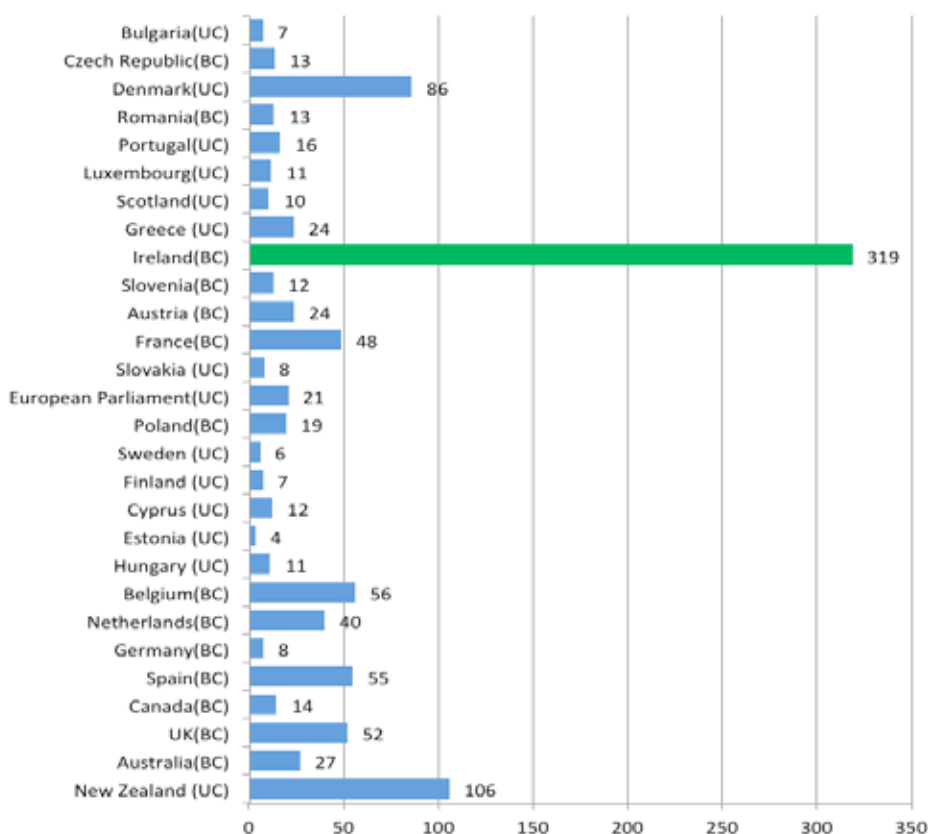
Sittings of the Houses

In 2015 the Houses of the Oireachtas sat on 224 days for a total of 1,640 hours.

Number of Parliament sitting hours



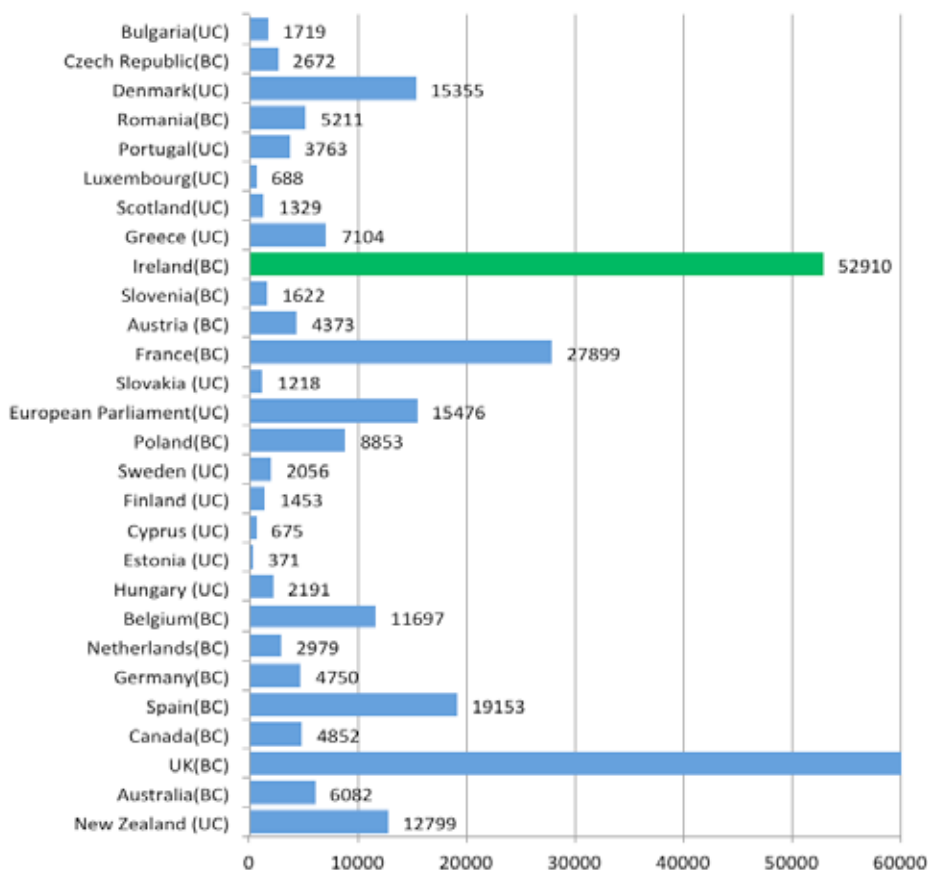
Number of Parliamentary Questions per Member



Parliamentary Questions

Comparing the number of Parliamentary Questions (PQs) tabled with the number of members of the House in which the questions were tabled, shows that Dáil Éireann had 319 parliamentary questions per member, on average, compared with the average of 37 parliamentary questions in this survey.

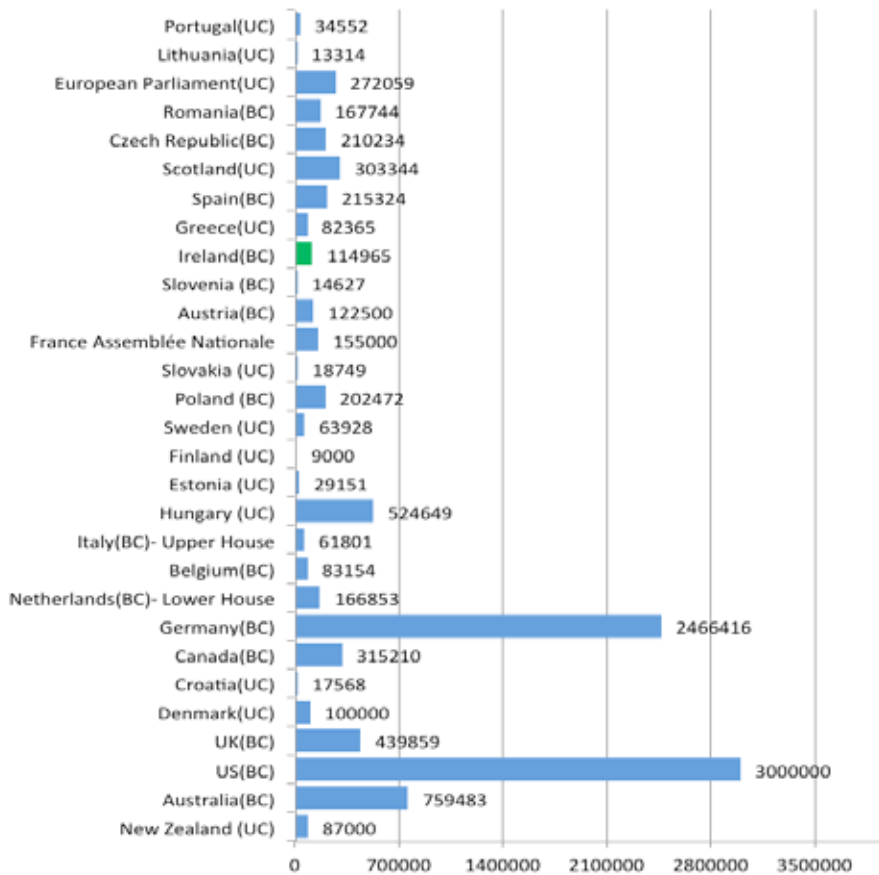
Number of Parliamentary Questions tabled



Parliamentary Questions

There were 52,910 PQs tabled in Dáil Éireann compared with the average of 10,539 in this study.

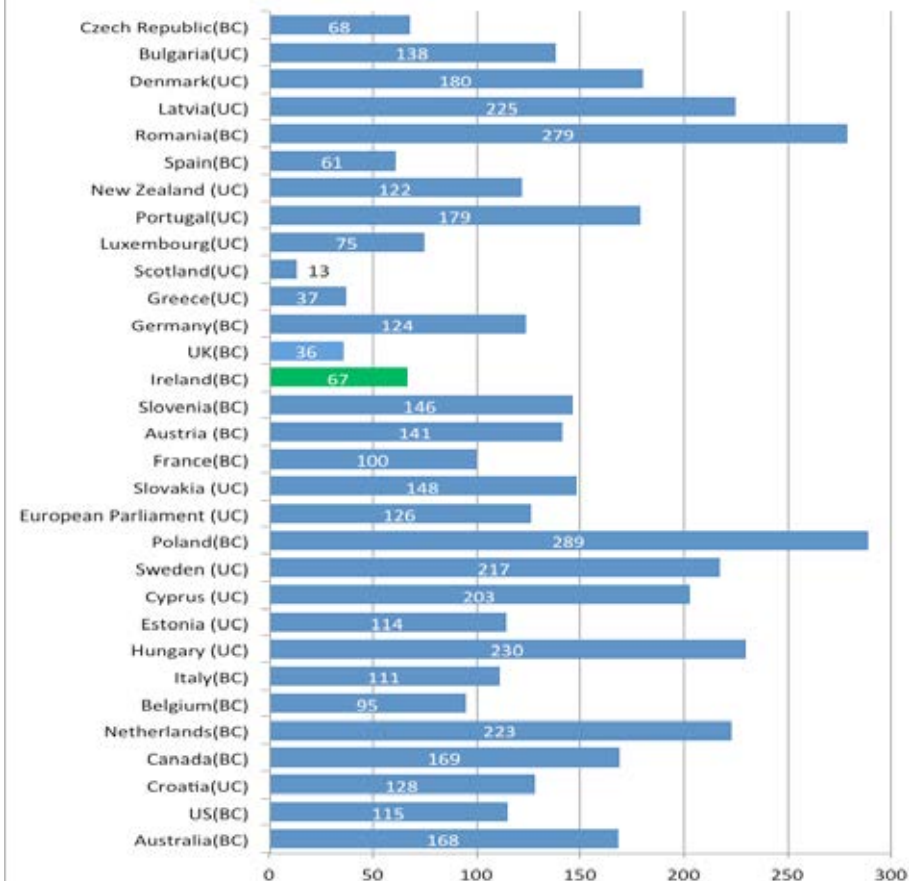
Number of Visitors



Visitors to the Houses

There were more than 114,000 visitors to the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2015.

Number of Acts



Number of Bills passed by the Houses in 2015

There were 67 Bills passed by the Houses in 2015.



Improving Services to Parliament

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

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 cooperation 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.

HOUSES AND COMMITTEE BUSINESS

Sittings and Business of the Houses

The Houses sat for a combined total of 224 days in 2015. The number of sitting hours was 1,640.

Sittings of the Houses and their Committees

118 Dáil sitting days (**974** sitting hours)

106 Seanad sitting days (**666** sitting hours)

603 Committee meetings (**1,364** hours)

Parliamentary Printing and Publishing Services

In October 2014, the Service entered a new contract for the printing and electronic publishing of parliamentary and other documents and related services. The contract has resulted in savings of over €340,000 in 2015 when compared with expenditure in 2014. Under the contract, additional services are also being delivered. One of these is a new nightly email service which was rolled out to members in September 2015 and which provides links to Dáil and Seanad agendas and Bills and amendments published overnight. This service has reduced the need for printed copies of documentation and is the first step in a move to electronic-only printing.

Legislative Drafting Service for Members

The availability of legal expertise in drafting Private Members' Bills is an important service for members of the Houses in undertaking their legislative role in Parliament. In 2015, following a request for tender, a new framework agreement was put in place for the provision of legislative drafting services. The Office of the Parliamentary Legal Adviser is currently scoping the provision of an enhanced legislative drafting service for Private Members' Bills.

Dáil Business Briefing Services

Members of the Dáil panels of Temporary Chairpersons and Temporary Clerks receive notice by e-mail of the daily schedule of business and briefing for the Chairperson on individual daily business items. They also have direct access to these and other resources in a dedicated database.

A one-to-one briefing on particular items of business is also provided to the Chairpersons, Deputy Chairpersons and members of the panel of Temporary Chairs as required and/or requested.

The Bills Office

Processing Legislation

In 2015, 131 Bills were initiated, 52 of which were Government Bills and 79 were Private Members' Bills. A notable development over the past number of years has been the marked increase in the number of Private Members' Bills initiated in both Houses, from 22 in 2010 to 81 in 2015.

The complete list of Bills initiated in the Houses is set out in Appendix 7.

The Bills Office supports both Houses in initiating, scrutinising and amending legislation. It has responsibility for undertaking the procedural tasks relating to the legislative process, from initiation of a Bill to passage through both Houses, including the printing and circulation of all Bills and amendments tabled. It examines the texts of all Bills and amendments to ensure they comply with Standing Orders, Rulings of the Chair and other matters of order. On Committee and Report Stages, the Bills Office prepares the procedural brief for the Chairpersons of both Houses, Chairpersons of Select Committees



and Clerks of the Houses and Committees. It also provides briefings on the legislative process and procedure to members, their staff and department officials.

Support for Dáil General Elections and Dáil Bye-Elections

The Bills Office also undertakes tasks arising from the statutory responsibilities of the Clerk of the Dáil under the Electoral Acts. As part of these responsibilities the Bills Office coordinated the statutory responsibility of the Clerk in respect of the bye-election for the constituency of Carlow-Kilkenny which was held in May 2015. Preparation for the Dáil general election was also undertaken by the Bills Office with the preparation of writs for each of the 40 constituencies to be issued to returning officers upon the dissolution of the 31st Dáil.

Bills Office

131 Bills were initiated (**52** government bills and **79** private members' bills)

7,187 Amendments processed

88 Bills reprinted following amendment

67 Bills passed by the Houses

The Journal Office

Support for Dáil sittings

The Journal Office provides support for the sittings and business of the Dáil. This involves the production of the daily Order Paper, including any Supplementary Order Papers, examination of all motions and amendments to motions to ensure compliance with Standing Orders, providing assistance in drafting technical motions, printing and circulation of notice of motions and updating the status of all business items.

The Journal Office also provides procedural advice to the Ceann Comhairle, Leas-Cheann Comhairle, members of the Dáil and the Clerks. It also provides material for the daily procedural briefing notes on the business to be conducted each day in the Dáil. Procedural advice is also provided to the Government Chief Whip's Office in relation to proposals for Government business.

The maintenance of an archive of procedural records and supporting documentation is a key task of the Journal Office. The preservation of this archive includes maintaining Dáil Standing Orders, drafting amendments to Standing Orders, as required, periodically re-printing the updated Standing Orders and producing Journals of the sittings.

The Journal Office administers the divisions in the Dáil Chamber. This role includes the provision of assistance to the Clerks in the Chamber for "list" or "manual" divisions, administering the e-voting system and recording the results of divisions.

Support for Dáil Committee on Procedure and Privileges

The Journal Office provides administrative support to the Dáil Committee on Procedure and Privileges (CPP), its sub-Committee on Dáil Reform and sub-Committee on Privileges.

In 2015, the CPP met on 11 occasions and considered a range of matters including a full review of the security of the Houses of the Oireachtas, Standing Orders relating to parliamentary inquiries, matters relating to members' parliamentary privileges, and Standing Orders which provide for the constitutional and statutory framework relating to members' private papers, confidential communications and official documents of the House.

Support for Seanad General Elections and Seanad Bye-Elections

The Journal Office provides support to the Seanad returning officer in the administration of Seanad general elections and Seanad bye-elections. In November 2015, the Journal Office compiled the electoral roll for the Seanad bye-election and assisted with issuing the ballot papers and counting of votes.

Journal Office

118 Order Papers produced (totaling **2,456** printed pages)

40 Supplementary Order Papers produced

11 Meetings of the Committee on Procedure and Privileges provided with secretariat support and advice

262 Dáil divisions (votes) recorded by the Journal Office

The Questions Office

Parliamentary Questions

Parliamentary Questions are the most visible aspect of the parliamentary accountability function. The Questions Office assists and advises members on the drafting of Parliamentary Questions (PQs) in accordance with Standing Orders. It also advises the Ceann Comhairle on the procedural admissibility of questions and on requests tabled for topical issue debates.

The Questions Office is responsible for processing PQs and for producing the Questions Paper for

sittings of Dáil Éireann.

In 2015, there were 52,910 Parliamentary Questions tabled for reply by members of the Government and 2,063 Topical Issues proposed for debate of which 369 were selected by the Ceann Comhairle for debate in the Dáil Chamber.

Development of a new Parliamentary Questions System

The database used for tracking and circulating PQs and the associated database for receiving and circulating replies were developed in the 1990s and have provided the required functionality to manage the PQs system since that time. However, the software platform

has not kept pace with recent innovations in system development. Coupled with this there is a growing requirement to implement business process improvements and to provide improved services to members.

The working group, which was established in 2014 to consider a number of recommendations arising from a Business Process Improvement (BPI) report on the internal PQ process, met on 5 occasions in 2015 and has, as part of its work, produced a draft document entitled "Guide to Parliamentary Questions" for consideration in 2016.

Parliamentary Questions 2011 - 2015					
	2011*	2012	2013	2014	2015
PQs Processed	37,397	56,027	50,926	54,691	52,910
Oral Replies	1,716	1,881	1,684	1,535	1,303
Written Replies	27,391	42,682	39,952	40,369	38,655
PQs Disallowed	753	1,301	1,456	1,354	1,463
% PQs Disallowed	2%	2%	2.9%	2.5%	2.8%

* there was a general election in 2011

The Seanad Office

The primary role of the Seanad Office is to support the sittings and business of the Seanad. This involves producing procedural materials (e.g. Order Papers, procedural briefing notes) used in the course of proceedings and maintaining records of the House (e.g. Journal of Proceedings).

The Seanad Office supports the Cathaoirleach, the Leas-Chathaoirleach and Temporary Chairpersons by providing procedural advice and by assisting them in preparing for and presiding over sittings of the House. It also drafts and maintains the Standing Orders of the House.

The Seanad Office also operates as the Private Bill Office for the purpose of administering procedures in relation to Private Bills.

Secretariat support is provided by the Seanad Office to the Seanad Committee on Procedure and Privileges, the Committee of Selection, the Seanad Public Consultation Committee and the Joint Committee on Standing Orders (Private Business).

The Office supports the Clerk of the Seanad in discharging her duties arising from a number of ex officio roles.

The Clerk is the Seanad returning officer for the 43 vocational panel members and, in this regard,

organises and conducts general elections and bye-elections to Seanad Éireann. The returning officer also carries out an annual revision of the Register of Nominating Bodies.

The Clerk is also a member of the Standards in Public Office Commission, the Referendum Commission and the Constituency Commission.

The annual Register of Interests of Members of Seanad Éireann is compiled and published by the Clerk of the Seanad.

Seanad Office activities in 2015

The Seanad Office activities in 2015 included the provision of administrative and procedural support for the following key events:

- a Seanad bye-election to fill the vacancy arising from the resignation of former Senator Jimmy Harte
- an address to the Seanad by Mr. Phil Hogan, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development
- completion by the Seanad Public Consultation Committee of a report on farm safety

The focus of the Seanad Office in 2016 will be on the successful conduct of the Seanad general election for the 43 vocational panel seats and on supporting the incoming Cathaoirleach and members of the 25th Seanad.

Seanad Office

106 Seanad sitting days

666 Seanad sitting hours

106 Seanad Order Papers produced

13 Supplementary Order Papers produced

100 Motions processed

16 Meetings of the Committee on Procedure and Privileges provided with secretariat support and advice

211 Seanad divisions (votes) recorded

552 Commencement Matters processed

OIREACHTAS COMMITTEE RELATED ACTIVITIES AND DEVELOPMENTS

Oireachtas Committees play a key role in scrutiny and oversight of Government policy and activities.

Role of the Committee Secretariat

The role of the Committees' Secretariat is to provide efficient and effective secretariat and ancillary support services for the Committees of the Houses in undertaking their work, and to plan and make provision for the future development of the Committee system. In line with other areas of the Service, the Committees' Secretariat seeks to ensure the highest standards in supporting Committees in undertaking their roles effectively.

Activities of Oireachtas Committees in 2015

During 2015, the Committee Secretariat continued to provide ongoing procedural and administrative support to:

- nine Joint Committees which "shadow" the work of Government Departments (one shadowing three Departments, five shadowing two Departments and three shadowing one Department) with associated Select and Select sub-Committees. These Committees are generally referred to as "sectoral

committees"

- four Joint Committees with specific subject area remits: Public Service Oversight and Petitions; Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement; European Union Affairs; and the Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis
- two Dáil Select Standing Committees: the Committee of Public Accounts; and the Committee on Members' Interests of Dáil Éireann
- one Seanad Select Standing Committee: the Committee on Members' Interests of Seanad Éireann
- one Joint Standing sub-Committee: the Joint sub-Committee on Administration

The Committees' Secretariat also has responsibility for supporting the work of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) and the North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association (NSIPA).

It also provides support to the Working Group of Committee Chairpersons (WGCC) which liaises and consults on matters affecting the work of Committees. The WGCC also determines and monitors budgetary allocations made to each Committee.

Oireachtas Committees

603 Committee meetings

1,364 Committee meeting hours

1,642 Witness appearances at committee meetings

48 Committee reports published

Activities of Sectoral Committees in 2015

There is a significant emphasis on scrutiny and oversight in the work of Committees. This is evidenced by their detailed consideration of Bills, Estimates and Motions referred to them by the Houses. In addition, Joint Committees scrutinise public policy matters, including EU legislative proposals and policies. The Committees' EU scrutiny work is reported separately by the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs in its 2015 Annual Report on the operation of the *European Union (Scrutiny) Act 2002*, available on the Oireachtas website.

For indicative purposes and to demonstrate the breadth of policy matters and the range of pre-legislative scrutiny (PLS) undertaken by Committees, key reports and engagements are listed below for each sectoral Committee.

Agriculture, Food and the Marine

- Managing Market Volatility in the Dairy Industry [Reports published March and December 2015]
- Designation of Lands as Special Protection Areas for the Conservation of Breeding Hen Harriers [Report published

October 2015]

- Organic Farming Scheme [Report published December 2015]
- Greyhound Industry [Report published January 2016]
- Irish Horse Industry [Report published January 2016]
- CAP Simplification – A contribution made in the context of political dialogue
- Submission to the public consultation on the National Strategic Plan for Sustainable Aquaculture Development, organised by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Submission to the public consultation on the Seafood Development Programme 2014 - 2020
- Political Contribution – COM(2015)177: Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council as regards the possibility for the Member States to restrict or prohibit the use of genetically modified food and feed on their territory
- Political Contribution – COM(2015)559: Proposal for a Council Regulation fixing for 2016 the fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks and groups of fish stocks, applicable in Union waters and, for Union vessels, in certain non-Union waters
- Political Contribution on the Transatlantic Trade and



The Chairman of the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Deputy Andrew Doyle, and members of the Committee, on a visit to a strawberry farm in Kecskemét, Hungary.

Investment Partnership (TTIP). [submitted jointly with the Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation and the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs]

Education and Social Protection

- The Apprenticeship System in Austria [Report published October 2015]
- General Scheme of a Retention of Records Bill 2015 [recommendations issued May 2015]
- Availability and effectiveness of employment activation measures
- Concerns relating to a number of social protection payments, including those relating to illness, family income supplement and rent supplement
- Role and remit of the Ombudsman for Children in relation to schools and School Boards of Management
- Funding and other challenges facing the third-level education sector
- Information Technology in Schools
- School Meals Programme
- Addressing deficiencies in adult literacy



The Ceann Comhairle and the Cathaoirleach of the Seanad hosted a delegation from the Islamic Consultative Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Iran.



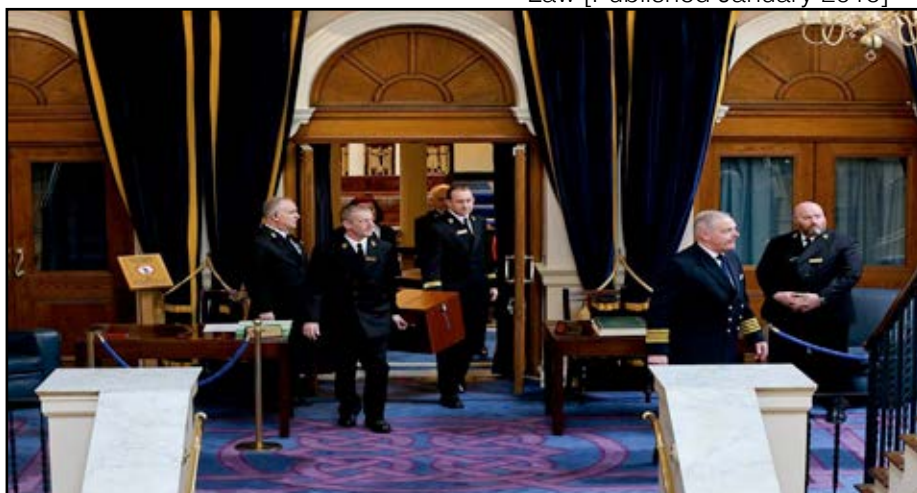
Members Joint Committee on the Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht at the launch of the Committee's report: *Flooding and Property Insurance in Ireland 2015*.

Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht

2014 [PLS report published April 2015]

- Maximising our Cultural and Genealogical Heritage [Report published April 2015]
- Developing the Seaweed Industry in Ireland [Report published May 2015]
- Flooding and Property Insurance in Ireland 2015 [Report published December 2015]
- Proposed Electoral Commission 2016 [Report published January 2016]
- General Scheme of the Official Languages (Amendment) Bill

- General Scheme of the Planning and Development (No 1) Bill 2014 [PLS report published May 2015]
- General Scheme of the Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Bill 2015 [PLS report published January 2016]
- General Scheme of the Planning and Development (No 2) Bill 2014 [PLS report published January 2016]
- Political Contribution on the proposed EU Reform of Electoral Law [Published January 2016]



Ushers take the ballot boxes from the Dáil chamber for the counting of votes in the election of the Ceann Comhairle by a secret ballot of members.

- Issues arising from the Cemetery Management Bill 2013 [Report published January 2016]
- Value for Money and Policy Review of the Arts Council
- Socio-Economic Contribution of Music in Ireland
- Pyrite Remediation Programme
- Ceisteanna Óige: Díospóireacht
- Tuarascáil Nuashonrú ar Úsáid na Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht ó 2006 go 2011: Díospóireacht; Update on the detailed linguistic study on the use of the Irish language in the Gaeltacht 2006 - 2011

Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform

- European Commission's Green Paper on Capital Markets Union [Report published May 2015]
- The Provision of insurance in areas at risk of flooding and subsistence [Report published May 2015]
- General Scheme of the Finance (Taxation Appeals Commission) Bill [PLS Report published February 2015]
- General Scheme of a Public Sector Standards Bill 2015 [PLS Report published December 2015]
- General Scheme of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Transfer and Mutualisation of Contributions to the Single Resolution Mechanism
- Future strategic direction of the banking sector in Ireland including proposed changes to bankruptcy term [Contribution

made to the Joint Committee on Justice, Equality and Defence report on the Review of the Term of Bankruptcy in Ireland]

- EU Semester Process, the Annual Growth Survey, Stability Programme Update and National Reform Programme and publication of 2015 country-specific recommendations
- Consideration of fiscal assessment reports from the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council
- Review of the credit union sector in Ireland
- Overview of the operations and functioning of National Asset Management Agency

Foreign Affairs and Trade

- The Gaelic Athletics Association (GAA) and its role with the Irish diaspora
- Issues on the agenda considered by the EU Foreign Affairs Council
- Humanitarian and aid issues generally and the humanitarian impact of conflict in Syria
- The promotion of trade particularly with ASEAN countries
- The Middle East peace process
- Policy in relation to consular cases
- Persecution of Christians [meetings with interest groups]
- The migration crisis particularly in the Mediterranean region
- Sustainable Development Goals with particular reference to the



Members of the Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality visited Forensic Science Ireland and the Garda Ballistics Section at the Garda Headquarters in the Phoenix Park, Dublin.

meetings held in Addis Ababa, New York and Paris and the challenges presented worldwide by climate change

Health and Children

- The potential benefits of an all-island approach to deep brain stimulation treatment [Report published February 2015]
- The cost of medical indemnity insurance [Report published June 2015]
- The cost of prescription drugs in Ireland [Report published October 2015]
- General Scheme of the Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015 [PLS Report published June 2015]

- General Scheme and Heads of the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2015 [PLS Report published November 2015]
- Impact of parents' alcohol consumption [engagement with the BT Young Scientist Winners]
- Minimum unit pricing of alcohol
- Infant mental health
- Patient safety and maternity services in Midlands Regional Hospital, Portlaoise
- National Drugs Strategy [Joint meeting with the Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality]



Deputy Mary Mitchell-O'Connor chairing a meeting of the Joint Committee on Health and Children on the subject Recognising Deafblindness as a Distinct Disability.



The Chairman of the Joint Committee on Justice, Equality and Defence, Deputy David Stanton, and members of the Committee on a visit to the Defence Forces Training Centre at the Curragh Camp, Co. Kildare.

Justice, Defence and Equality

- Review of firearms licensing [Interim report published April 2015]
- Review of the term of bankruptcy in Ireland [Report published July 2015]
- Harm reducing and rehabilitative approach to possession of small amounts of illegal drugs [Report published November 2015]

- Review of the Charities Act 2009 [Report published November 2015]

- General Scheme of the Amendment of the Constitution (Marriage Equality) Bill 2015

- General Scheme of the International Protection Bill 2015 [PLS Interim report July 2015]

- Hearings in relation to the Employment Equality (Abolition of Mandatory Retirement Age) Bill 2014 [Report published December 2015]

- Immigration

- General policing matters [engagement with the Commissioner of An Garda Síochána]

- 2014 Annual Report of the Courts Service and the Parole Board

Transport and Communications

- Electricity and gas prices for consumers [Report published July 2015]

Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation

- Policy options to support business growth and job creation and retention in town and village centres [Report published March 2015]
- The potential for job creation, innovation and balanced economic development in the creative economy [Report published July 2015]
- Key issues for female entrepreneurs in Ireland and for their participation in the tech sector [Report published July 2015]

- Low pay, decent work and a living wage [Report published November 2015]
- General Scheme of the National Minimum Wage (Low Pay Commission) Bill 2015 [PLS Report published April 2015]
- Political contribution on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) [submitted jointly with the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine and Joint Committee on European Union Affairs, December 2015]
- Insight Centre for Data Analytics [Report published April 2015]



The Chairperson, Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy, and members of the Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation launching the Committee's report: Key Issues for Female Entrepreneurs in Ireland and for their Participation in the Tech Sector.

- The regulation and inspection of gas installers operating in Ireland [Report published July 2015]
- General Scheme of the Road Traffic Bill 2015 [PLS report published July 2015]
- Scrutiny of alleged “petrol stretching” in Ireland
- The proposed sale of Aer Lingus
- Governance at RTÉ
- Changes to Bus Éireann Expressway services
- The North-South Electricity Interconnector

Activities of Non-Sectoral Committees in 2015

The Joint and Standing Committees considered a wide range of matters, including the following:

The Committee of Public Accounts

The Committee of Public Accounts of Dáil Éireann (PAC) held public meetings with a range of departments and public bodies to examine issues that were the subject of reports from the Comptroller and Auditor General. The PAC's main focus is ensuring that value for money is exercised across all public spending and that public services are delivered efficiently.

The PAC examined a number of matters in 2015, including:

- Access to public contracts by the Small and Medium Enterprises sector
- Sale of Siteserv by Irish Bank



The Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, Deputy John McGuinness, and members of the Committee on a visit to Howth Harbour in the context of the Committee's examination of the financial management of the Fishery Harbour Centres.

Resolution Corporation

- Investigation of Irish resident HSBC Swiss Account holders by the Office of the Revenue Commissioners
- Governance and accountability in higher education institutions
- Procurement in the Health Service Executive
- Operation of the Special Investigations Unit of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Sale of National Assets Management Agency Assets in

Northern Ireland

The Committee also published the following reports in 2015:

- Management of the Bytel Project (a cross-border broadband initiative)
- Management of the Fishery Harbour Centres
- Procurement by the Health Service Executive
- Management and Investment of Wards of Court Funds
- Dublin Docklands Development Authority



Members of the Joint Committee on Health and Children presenting the Committee's Report on Pre-legislative Scrutiny of the General Scheme of the Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr. James Reilly TD.



The Houses of the Oireachtas marked Europe Day on 9 May 2015.

- Review of Costs Associated with Undelivered Capital Projects
- Report of the visit by the Committee to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam
- Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)
- Five Presidents' Report: Completing economic and monetary union

The Joint Committee on European Union Affairs

The Joint Committee on European Affairs (JCEUA) considered a wide range of EU related matters including the following:

- United Kingdom: possible exit from the European Union ("BrExit")
- EU migration and refugee crisis
- European semester process and milestones including the National Reform Programme, Country Specific Recommendations and the Annual Growth Survey
- Pre-General Affairs Council Meetings with the Minister for European Affairs
- Migration and refugee crisis in the EU [engagement with Mr. Peter Sutherland, United Nations Special Representative



The Chairman of the Joint Committee on Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, Deputy Frank Feighan, on a visit to Strangford Integrated College.

of the Secretary General for International Migration]

- EU Presidency Priorities

Reports and Political Contributions were presented in respect of:

- The Role of National Parliaments: Post Lisbon
- UK/EU Future Relationship: Implications for Ireland ("BrExit")
- Joint political contribution on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)

From the EU institutions, the Committee engaged with the European Commissioner for Trade, Ms. Cecilia Malmström, the European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr. Phil Hogan, Members of the European Parliament and EU officials. The Committee also considered the Annual Report of the Court of Auditors 2014.

In addition to a number of bilateral and working group meetings, the Joint Committee participated in the Conference of the Committees of the National Parliaments of the European Union Member States dealing with European Affairs (COSAC), held in Riga and Luxembourg.

The Joint Committee on Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement

The Joint Committee examined a range of matters including:

- North/South cooperation in transport infrastructure and health service provision
- Outstanding legacy issues in

Northern Ireland

- Implications of repealing the UK Human Rights Act 1998
- Proposed Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland
- Integrated education and the *Fresh Start Agreement*

As part of its work programme, the Joint Committee continued its visits to Northern Ireland and the border region, meeting with local representatives and community leaders. In this context, the Chairman led a cross-party delegation from the Committee on a visit to Middletown Autism Centre, the North/South Ministerial Secretariat and the Cardinal Ó Fiaich Library in Armagh. The Chairman also launched a shared education initiative in Stormont, met with the Community Relations Council and led a delegation on a visit to two integrated schools in Northern Ireland, in Belfast and Strangford.

British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly

The 50th plenary of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) was held in Dublin, in Leinster House and Croke Park, on 22 - 24 February 2015. The main themes of the plenary focussed on sport and its contribution to community and cultural development and commemoration and reconciliation. An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD, was among those who addressed the Assembly. The Assembly also received a presentation on the importance of the BIPA as it celebrated 25 years in existence.



Members of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly at Croke Park Stadium, February 2015.

The 51st BIPA Plenary was held in Cheltenham, UK, on 15 - 17 November 2015. The main themes of the plenary were the UK's relationship with the EU, security issues and the horse racing industry in Britain and in Ireland.

The four BIPA committees continued to work on topical and important matters that affect citizens throughout both islands. Reports were adopted and published on: *Cross-border Police Cooperation and Illicit Trade; European Investment Bank; Irish Communities in Scotland; and Preventing Youth Unemployment through Education and Training.*

North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association

Following the establishment of the North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association (NSIPA) and the first plenary meeting in 2012, the Association met on two occasions in 2015 in accordance with its terms of reference. The sixth and seventh plenaries were held on 26 June 2015 in Parliament Buildings, Stormont, and on 27 November 2015 in the Seanad Chamber, Leinster House, Dublin, respectively.

The sixth plenary meeting, chaired jointly by the Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly, Mitchel McLaughlin, MLA, and An Ceann



Members of the North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association attending the sixth plenary meeting of the Association which took place in Parliament Buildings, Stormont, on 26 June 2015.



The Joint Committee on Public Service Oversight and Petitions meeting jointly with the Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality to examine matters in relation to Ireland's compliance with Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Comhairle, Seán Barrett TD, focused on the subjects of human trafficking and cross-border co-operation on healthcare.

The seventh plenary meeting, also chaired by An Ceann Comhairle, Seán Barrett, TD, and Speaker Mitchel McLaughlin, MLA, considered the topic of supporting women in public life and increasing participation in decision making. In the course of the debate, members noted the importance of diversity in decision-making structures and the role of political leadership in delivering change. The Co-Chairs reflected on the importance of political bodies being truly representative and noted that increased female participation is in the interest of political parties and changes to political structures can enable greater diversity and participation.

As this was the last plenary in the lifetime of the 31st Dáil, members noted that the Association provided an ideal forum to bring people together to debate issues of common concern in a constructive way. In

closing, the Co-Chairs drew attention to the success of the Association to date in engendering meaningful debate on topics as varied as child protection, human trafficking, European funding, education, tourism, energy, infrastructure, and public health matters. The Co-Chairs wished the Association every success for the future.

The NSIPA Executive Committee met on two occasions while the Oireachtas Executive Committee met on four occasions and also held a meeting with An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD, in June 2015 to update him on the background to, and the progress made by, the Association since its inception.

The Joint Committee on Public Service Oversight and Petitions

The Joint Committee on Public Service Oversight and Petitions seeks to focus its work on oversight of, and identifying improvements in, the delivery of public services to citizens. As part of its remit, the Committee receives and considers public petitions submitted to the

Houses of the Oireachtas, and engages with the Ombudsman and other oversight bodies.

The Joint Committee undertakes this work through two sub-Committees: the sub-Committee on Public Petitions; and, the sub-Committee on the Ombudsman.

Public Petitions

The Public Petitions System of the Houses of the Oireachtas, established in 2012, presents an important avenue for individuals to participate in the democratic process.

Through submitting petitions to the sub-Committee on Public Petitions, either online or by post, members of the public can take their policy concerns directly to the heart of the Parliament.

If a petition is in order, the sub-Committee may seek oral or written evidence from relevant organisations such as government departments and other relevant bodies and agencies. The sub-Committee has the power to invite Ministers and Ministers of State to attend meetings and answer questions about the petition and may also invite the petitioner to appear before the Committee to speak on the matter.

In 2015:

- 35 new petitions were received: this brought the number of petitions received, from the establishment of the petitions system in 2012, to 159
- The sub-committee on Public

<p>Petitions met on 31 occasions and considered 53 Petitions. Of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ 36 were considered by the Joint Committee for the first time ◦ 17 were considered by the Joint Committee on one or more occasions ◦ 15 petitions were deemed inadmissible, closed or brought to conclusion by the Committee 	<p>annual report to the Joint Committee on Public Service Oversight and Petitions.</p> <p>In the course of its public meetings, the Joint Committee and its sub-Committee on the Ombudsman had engagement with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ombudsman, Mr. Peter Tyndall [Annual Report of the Office of the Ombudsman 2014] • The Ombudsman for Children, Mr. Niall Muldoon [Role and Remit of the Ombudsman for Children's Office] • An Coimisinéir Teanga, Rónán Ó Domhnaill [Annual Report of the Office of An Coimisinéir Teanga and Special Report of An Coimisinéir Teanga relating to the Department of Education and Skills] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Joint Committee agreed to examine the Public Appointments Service recruitment procedures. A draft report was prepared for consideration in 2016 <p><i>Committees on Members' Interests of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann</i></p> <p>The Select Committees on Members' Interests of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann each have functions assigned to them in accordance with the provisions of the <i>Ethics in Public Offices Acts</i>, including the adoption and circulation of Guidelines for non-officeholding members of Dáil and Seanad Éireann.</p>
<p>In the course of 2015, the Committee received oral presentations in relation to the following petitions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Petition No. P00033/13: Equality and fairness in relation to raising of the age of eligibility for the State pension • Petition No. P00024/14: Matters relating to the tendering process for the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme • Petition No. P00072/12: US Military and CIA use of Shannon airport and Irish airspace • Petition No P00002/2015: Compliance with performance specification in relation to installation of water meter boxes used in the national domestic water metering programme • Petition No P00040/14: Disease rates linked to central heating systems 	<p>The Joint Committee also held a joint meeting with the Joint Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality to examine matters in relation to Ireland's compliance with Article 2 of the European Convention on Human Rights.</p> <p>The Joint Committee and its sub-Committees published the following reports in 2015:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension of the remit of the Ombudsman to cover all aspects and bodies associated with the Direct Provision System (DPS) and the extension of the remit of the Freedom of Information Act to include bodies associated with the DPS including the suppliers of goods and services, whether from the private or public sectors 	<p><i>Alleged contraventions of the Ethics in Public Office Acts</i></p> <p>Members of the Houses may make a complaint directly to the Select Committee of the House of which the member complained of is a member. Under the Acts, members of the public are required to direct any complaints to the Clerk of the Dáil or the Clerk of the Seanad as appropriate.</p> <p>In the course of the year each Select Committee carried out its statutory functions under the Acts as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In January 2015, guidelines were issued by each Committee in respect of the registration period 1 January to 31 December 2015 • In December 2015, each Committee considered the draft form of Statement of Registrable Interests for members of the relevant House presented to it in accordance with the consultation process under section 5 of the <i>Ethics in Public Office Acts</i>

Public Service Oversight

Each Ombudsman submits its

Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis

The Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis was empowered to conduct an Inquiry under Part 2 of the *Houses of the Oireachtas (Inquiries, Privileges and Procedures) Act 2013* ("the 2013 Act") by decisions of Dáil and Seanad Éireann on 25 and 26 November 2014 respectively. The Inquiry was the first to be carried out under the 2013 Act. The purpose of the Inquiry was to inquire into the reasons Ireland experienced a systemic banking crisis, including the political, economic, social, cultural, financial and behavioral factors and policies which impacted on, or contributed to, the crisis and the preventative reforms implemented in the wake of the crisis.

The Inquiry included two public hearing phases:

- The *Context Phase* framed the broad context for the inquiry, set out the background to the banking crisis and prepared the ground for the *Nexus Phase*. It ran from December 2014 to April 2015 and involved 31 public hearing sessions, with 34 witnesses being called
- In the *Nexus Phase* the Committee engaged with institutions and individuals who had roles relating to the crisis, focussing on three broad elements:
 - Banking Systems and Practices



The Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis conducted the first parliamentary inquiry under the *Houses of the Oireachtas (Inquiries, Privileges and Procedures) Act 2013*.

- Regulatory and Supervisory Systems and Practices
 - Crisis Management Systems and Policy Responses
- requests for clarification of evidence from some witnesses, consideration and amendment of the draft report by the Joint Committee and consideration of submissions from affected third parties as part of the statutory consultation process.

The Nexus Phase ran from April 2015 to September 2015. It involved 64 public hearing sessions, received evidence from 97 witnesses and received 42 written witness statements from non-public hearing witnesses.

On the conclusion of public hearings on 10 September 2015, the Joint Committee proceeded to draft its report. This process included

Following a 21 day statutory standstill period, the Committee's report was finalised and furnished to the Clerks of both Houses on 27 January 2016 for circulation to members of both Houses.

On approval of the necessary motions by both Houses of the Oireachtas, the Report was published in three Volumes:



The Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis presented its report to the Houses in January 2016.

- Volume 1 – presents the main report including the Joint Committee’s findings and recommendations on the evidence
 - Volume 2 – presents the inquiry framework, including how the Inquiry was conducted and presents recommendations for future inquiries
 - Volume 3 – presents evidence, including witness statements, transcripts of public hearings and core documents
- A parliamentary inquiry is a complex project requiring a dedicated support team to manage the establishment and operation of the Inquiry. Staffing was scaled up and reduced as necessary. Temporary/ fixed-term posts were sanctioned for the engagement of specialist and support staff to support the Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis, of which 39 posts were filled at the end of 2015 (15 investigation staff and 24 civil service staff). These posts were filled through reassignment of staff within the Service, redeployment of staff from other civil service organisations and, where appropriate, recruitment of additional staff.

As the first parliamentary inquiry to be conducted under the new legislation, the Banking Inquiry presented a number of challenges for the Houses of the Oireachtas Service, with the Committee and the inquiry support staff effectively testing the new legislation. The lessons learned will serve future parliamentary inquiries.

The three volumes of the report, together with full details of the work of the Inquiry, are available on www.oireachtas.ie/bankinginquiry/



Photograph courtesy of the Office of Public Works.

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY RELATIONS

International Visitors to the Houses of the Oireachtas

Each year, the Houses of the Oireachtas receive visits from members and staff of other national parliaments to discuss matters of mutual interest and to strengthen inter-parliamentary cooperation.

In 2015 the Ceann Comhairle and the Executive Committee of Cumann Parlaiminteach na hÉireann (the Irish Parliamentary Association) hosted parliamentary delegations from the following countries:

- Ukraine – a Ukrainian parliamentary delegation from the Verkhovna Rada
- France – members of France-Ireland parliamentary friendship group
- Germany – members of Germany-Ireland Parliamentary Friendship Group

The Houses, on the invitation of the Ceann Comhairle, also hosted Speaker-led visits including:

- His Excellency Dr. Ali Ardeshir Larijani, Speaker, led a parliamentary delegation from the Islamic Consultative Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Iran
- His Excellency Valeriu Zgonea, Speaker, led a parliamentary delegation from the Romanian Chamber of Deputies
- His Excellency David Carter,



Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív, Senator Paddy Burke (Cathaoirleach of the Seanad) and Deputy Pat Deering meeting with the Deputy Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament, Mr. István Jakab.

Speaker, led a parliamentary delegation from the Parliament of New Zealand

The Houses hosted other official parliamentary visits, including:

- a parliamentary delegation from the federal parliament of Saxony-Anhalt, Germany
- senior women leaders, Turkey
- students and faculty members from the University of St. Thomas, Houston, Texas
- political and civil society leaders, Turkey

Close working relationship with the Institutions of the European Union

The Houses also maintain a close working relationship with the institutions of the European Union through the 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 which are organised and chaired jointly by the parliament of the country holding the EU Presidency and the European Parliament
- Joint Sectoral Committee Meetings which are 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

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 including the:

- Inter-Parliamentary Union General Assembly
- Parliamentary Assembly of the



Cathaoirleach of the Seanad, Senator Paddy Burke, Leader of the Seanad, Senator Maurice Cummins, and members of Seanad Éireann meeting with Mr Phil Hogan, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, on the occasion of the Commissioner's address to Seanad Éireann.

Council of Europe

- Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)
- British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) and other inter-parliamentary associations
- North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association (NSIPA)

Inter-Parliamentary Union General Assemblies

Ireland has been a member of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) since 1928. This is the key international co-operation forum between parliaments of the world. It currently has 170 members and 11 associated members. The IPU Assembly meets twice a year, in March and October.

In 2015, members of the Houses attended the following IPU Assembly meetings:

- 132nd General Assembly held in Hanoi, Vietnam (28 March to 2 April)

- 133rd General Assembly held in Geneva (17 to 21 October)

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), which is based in Strasbourg, can be considered the oldest international parliamentary assembly with a pluralistic composition of democratically elected members of parliament. The Parliamentary Assembly is one of the two statutory organs of the Council of Europe, which also includes a Committee of Ministers (Minister for Foreign Affairs), usually meeting at the level of their deputies. The primary objective of the Council of Europe is to create a common democratic and legal area throughout the continent of Europe ensuring respect for its fundamental values - human rights, pluralist democracy, and the rule of law.

In 2015, members of the Houses of the Oireachtas participated in the

following PACE events:

- four plenary sessions of the Parliamentary Assembly (Strasbourg) held in January, April, June and September
- 15 Parliamentary Assembly committee meetings held throughout the year
- one Election Observation Mission in Azerbaijan to monitor the parliamentary elections on 1 November 2015

Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (PAOSCE) represents the parliamentary dimension of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), whose 56 participating States span the geographical area from Vancouver to Vladivostok. The Parliamentary Assembly is composed of 323 parliamentarians from its Member States whose primary task is to facilitate inter-parliamentary dialogue. The members of the Assembly come together three times a year to debate a wide variety of issues relevant to the ultimate goal of human security for all in the OSCE region.

In 2015, a delegation from the Houses of the Oireachtas attended the following OSCE events:

- three plenary sessions held in Vienna (Austria), Helsinki (Finland) and Ulaanbaatar (Mongolia)

- two election observation Missions, in Tajikistan in March and in Belarus in October

Speaker and Office Holder

Participation at Inter-Parliamentary Meetings and Events in 2015

Participation in inter-parliamentary office holder meetings included:

- a visit by Ceann Comhairle, Seán Barrett TD, to the Parliament of Romania at the invitation of His Excellency Valeriu Zgonea, Speaker of the Romanian Chamber of Deputies
- Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments in conjunction with the European Jewish Council and the Commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the Holocaust, Prague
- St. Patrick's Day Events, Brussels
- Conference of Speakers of Euro-Mediterranean countries, Lisbon
- Assembly of European Senates, the Hague
- Tynwald National Day, Isle of Man
- UN/IPU, Fourth World

Conference of Speakers, New York

Other inter-parliamentary visits in 2015 included:

- a visit to Iran by a delegation of the Ireland-Iran Parliamentary Friendship Group at the invitation of the Consultative Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Iran
- attendance at the EU Young Parliament Members' Forum held in Brussels
- attendance at the Women in Parliament (WIP) Summit held in Mexico City

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Communications, Broadcasting and Web

External communications, public engagement and information strategies are all led through the Communications, Broadcasting, and Information Unit of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service.



The Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Mr. Charles Flanagan TD, with the Speaker of the New Zealand House of Representatives, Right Honourable David Carter, at Leinster House.

Oireachtas TV Channel

Following the successful launch last year of a new 24-7 Parliamentary TV Channel, Oireachtas TV, preparations were advanced for the launch of the Oireachtas Channel on Vodafone TV and on the Saorview television service.

Oireachtas TV provides viewers with access to the live proceedings of both Houses of the Oireachtas and the parliamentary committees. The completion of this work will significantly enhance coverage of the Channel. The Oireachtas Channel can also be viewed on the Oireachtas website and on the Oireachtas App.

Broadcast Platforms

Oireachtas TV is currently broadcasting on:

Sky Channel 574

Virgin Media Channel 207

eirVision Channel 504

Committee Report Launches

The Oireachtas Broadcast Unit (OBU) installed 3 new TV cameras in the AV room in order to optimise the coverage of committee report launches. Ten report launches were web streamed and/or replayed on Oireachtas TV.

Archival Project

The OBU has commenced a significant project aimed at archiving the tapes of the proceedings to a digital format. This is a long-term project aimed at conserving a digital

record of the proceedings of our national parliament.

Sign Language and Subtitling

In June 2015, Oireachtas TV commenced a six-week pilot project to provide sign language interpretation of Leaders' Questions. Over the six-week pilot period, sign language interpretation was provided for 18 programmes. The pilot scheme was extended until the end of the year during which time a further 27 programmes were produced, from September to the end of November 2015. It is expected that Oireachtas TV will continue sign language programming. Additionally, the provision of subtitled programmes was the subject of discussion with the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland in 2015 with a view to commencing such programming in 2016.

Press Releases in Video Form

Committee press releases include a short video graphic sequence created by the OBU. These press releases are broadcast in advance of committee meetings in order to increase news coverage of the meetings. Other press releases are also broadcast on Oireachtas TV. In 2015 over 350 such press release videos were broadcast on the Oireachtas TV Channel.

Oireachtas TV Produced Content

Three Oireachtas TV programmes were produced in 2015. The first two programmes in the *Oireachtas in Focus* series examined topics under consideration by the Houses, as set out below. The third programme was

a documentary commissioned to mark 25 years of broadcasting the proceedings of the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Oireachtas in Focus Series

Farm Safety

This first programme in the *Oireachtas in Focus* series followed the work of the Seanad Public Consultation Committee in its examination of *Farm Safety*. The programme consisted of coverage from the Committee's public hearings, interviews with a number of members of the Committee, interviews on location with the Irish Farmers' Association, the Health and Safety Authority and a secondary school student who developed a board game on farm safety. The programme concluded with coverage from the launch of the report by the Committee.

Unveiling of a Bust of the former President of the Czech Republic

The second programme featured the unveiling of a bust of the former President of the Czech Republic,

Vaclav Havel, in the Committee Rooms' reception area in Leinster House. The Ambassador of the Czech Republic to Ireland, Her Excellency Mrs. Hana Mottlová, attended the event and presented information on the former President. The event was hosted by the Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach of the Seanad.

Through a Lens - Leinster House 25 Years on TV

This documentary, presented by broadcaster Mr. John Bowman, included a look back at a number of important debates captured in both Houses over the last 25 years and the positive impact of televising the proceedings of the national parliament.

Broadcasting Contract

The Broadcasting contract expired on 31 December 2015. A new contract was awarded through the public procurement process.

Broadcast Manager

The Houses of the Oireachtas



Ceann Comhairle, Seán Barrett TD, and Cathaoirleach of the Seanad, Senator Paddy Burke, at the unveiling of a bust of the former President of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel, in the Committee Rooms' reception area of Leinster House.

Service completed the process of engaging a new Broadcast Manager through an external competition. The new Broadcast Manager was appointed at the end 2015.

Communications and Web

Web/Social Media

In 2015 the number of followers of Oireachtas Twitter account, @OireachtasNews, increased by 2,500 to 20,000. There were 1,673,513 views of live streams on the website comprising 519,137 users. In addition, the Houses of the Oireachtas were included among the finalists in three categories of the Maximum Media Sockies Awards:

- Best Non-Profit Organisation Twitter Account
- Best Mobile App
- Best use of social media by State Body

The “Watch and Listen” section of the Oireachtas website was updated in 2015 and is now available across all devices. This has resulted in a significant reduction in the number of queries received by the Communications Unit in relation to webcasting/playback as people can access the content directly.

“Watch and Listen” continues to be the most popular part of the Houses of the Oireachtas website and is extremely important in communicating the work of the Houses.

Media Engagement

More than 700 press releases were

issued by the Press Officers in 2015 including full press coverage of the proceedings of the Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis.

The Oireachtas radio and newspaper correspondents continue to provide weekly broadcast and newspaper reports for radio stations and regional newspapers featuring contributions made by members to the parliamentary debates in both Houses in 2015.

Public Engagement and Events

Promoting the Work of Oireachtas Committees

The Communications Unit continued their promotion of the work of Oireachtas Committees beyond the gates of Leinster House. In June 2015 the Communications Unit provided support to the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs in presenting its report, *UK-EU Future Relationship: Implications for Ireland*, at the Irish Embassy in London.

Civic, Social and Political Education

In October 2015 a new online

education programme was launched at the Annual Conference of the Association of Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) teachers in Leinster House. Feedback from more than 100 teachers at the event indicated that the programme provided important educational content for use in the classroom.

Culture Night 2015

To celebrate *Culture Night* on 18 September 2015, Leinster House opened its doors to the public as part of a nationwide public event. 1,650 visitors visited the Parliament building on the night. Guided tours gave visitors the opportunity to see the historic Dáil and Seanad Chambers. Leinster House hosted a performance of traditional Irish music by Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann. Feedback on the night indicated that people welcomed the opportunity to take a guided tour of their Parliament on *Culture Night*.

National Bravery Awards

The annual National Bravery Award Ceremony took place in November 2015 with 42 bravery award



National Bravery Awards 2015

recipients honoured at the ceremony.

The honours are awarded by Comhairle na Míre Gaile - the Deeds of Bravery Council - which was established in 1947 to provide recognition by the State of deeds of bravery.

The Ceann Comhairle, Seán Barrett TD, Chair of the Council, presented the awards at the ceremony which was held in Farmleigh House.

The Council also includes the Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann, the Lord Mayor of Dublin, the Lord Mayor of Cork, the Garda Commissioner, the President of the Association of City and County Councils and the Chairman of the Irish Red Cross.

The event received excellent reviews in the national and regional media, a positive response from recipients and their families and valuable support from the Department of Justice and Equality, An Garda Síochána, the Irish Red Cross and the respective City Councils.

PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARY AND RESEARCH

The vision of the Library and Research Service (L&RS) is to contribute to a well informed parliament.

The L&RS delivers expert information and research services which are impartial, value-added, responsive and accessible to the Houses, Committees and members. The L&RS also delivers professional information and records



Oireachtas Library Reading Room

management services to the Houses of the Oireachtas Service.

The L&RS strategic plan 2013-2015 included three strategies which have guided us in achieving our vision:

- research and analysis
- value-added information
- information governance and management

In 2015, the L&RS completed this three-year strategic plan and implemented its business plan which focussed on these three areas.

Key achievements in 2015:

Research and Analysis

Legislative Analysis Service

The Legislative Analysis Service (LAS) is designed to assist members in their scrutiny of legislation at both pre-legislative stage (when undertaken by a Joint Committee) and at Second Stage of the legislative process in the Dáil and Seanad.

Pre-legislative Scrutiny

The L&RS continued to deliver a

range of products to support pre-legislative Scrutiny (PLS). In 2015, the L&RS assisted seven Joint Committees in their pre-legislative scrutiny of 11 General Schemes of Bills. This included assisting the Committees in drafting their reports and setting out their views, findings and recommendations on proposed legislation.

During 2015, to help illustrate the impact PLS had on the subsequent drafting of Bills, the L&RS incorporated a traffic light system in its *Bills Digest* publications. On receipt of observations from the relevant government department in response to Committee PLS reports, the L&RS compiled a summary table combined with a traffic light system (green, amber, red) to indicate the level of impact.

Second Stage Debate on Bills

The L&RS published 46 *Bills Digests*, which was an increase of 15% on 2014, and one LAS Note. These publications provided all members of the Houses with authoritative information to assist them in preparing for Second Stage debates on Bills in the Houses.

Typical content of a *Bills Digest* includes the policy background to the Bill, the stated policy objective, the existing legislative framework, details of the principal provisions of the Bill, a summary of stakeholder reaction/media commentary, and an examination of the potential implications of the Bill.

Provision of Information and Research Services to Committees of the Houses

In order to inform and assist the work of Committees of the Houses, the L&RS:

- produced a number of briefing papers, 17 of which were used as the basis for Committee reports
- provided an advisory service on request to members of Committees and Committee Clerks/Policy Advisors
- monitored the weekly Committee meeting schedule and provided L&RS resources to assist the Committees in their deliberations

In the context of North/South parliamentary relations, the L&RS continued its co-operation with the research service of the Northern Ireland Assembly (RaISe) in preparing joint research papers to support the two plenaries of the North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association held in June and November 2015.

The L&RS also contributed to parliamentary East/West dialogue by drafting a paper on “Youth Unemployment” to inform the work of the British-Irish Parliamentary

Assembly (BIPA). This paper formed the basis of a report published by BIPA in November 2015: *Report on Preventing Youth Unemployment through Education and Training*.

The L&RS assisted the Committee Secretariat in developing approaches to budget and performance scrutiny, including contributing to the OECD report *Review of Budget Oversight by Parliament: Ireland*.

Value Added Information Services

The L&RS continued to inform members of new and topical publications through its intranet blog and focused on providing information aligned to debates in the Houses.

An innovative approach taken by the L&RS in 2015 was the production of stand-alone infographic publications which provide simplified and accessible visual representations of secondary research conducted by L&RS researchers. A series of such infographics were provided to members in respect of parliamentary elections held in 2015 in the Member States of the European Union.

An infographic on the process of election to Seanad Éireann was also published on the Oireachtas website which generated considerable interest.

Infographics were also utilised with increasing frequency within L&RS publications such as in Bills Digests and Pre-legislative Scrutiny papers.

Information Governance and Management

Records Management

The L&RS managed the contract with the Service’s professional records management consultants. The records management consultants, in conjunction with Service staff, developed a File Plan and Retention Schedule which was adopted by the Management Committee as a formal policy document relating to the records of the Service. The file plan describes the top level structure for the Service’s records, grouped by the activities they represent. It is designed to improve productivity by ensuring that all information relating to a specific case or subject can be easily retrieved.

The Retention Schedule indicates for how long each group of records should be kept. This provides a basis for “defensible disposal” – an assurance that records have been disposed of for business reasons that are transparent and well-thought through.

The implementation of the File Plan and Retention Schedule across the Service will be the focus of the records management programme in 2016.

Documents Laid before the Houses

The L&RS processed 1,800 documents that were laid before the Houses by government departments and agencies. Members of the public can access documents laid within 24 hours of receipt by the L&RS. This access is facilitated via the L&RS’ *eDocs Laid* system.

Freedom of Information

In 2015 the L&RS processed 176

Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, which was a significant increase of 144% on 2014, and provided assistance and know-how resources to FOI decision-makers in the Service.

Contribution to Parliamentary Library and Research Networks

The L&RS recognises the importance of maintaining and developing the skills and expertise of its staff and has developed a comprehensive programme to that end. One of the outputs leveraged through the programme has been the enhanced capacity of L&RS staff members to contribute to domestic and foreign parliamentary library, research and other networks.

For example, the L&RS:

- made a series of presentations relating to pre-legislative scrutiny to an ECPRD seminar, the Public Relations Institute of Ireland and the Royal Irish Academy
- hosted a one-day study visit by the Norwegian parliamentary research service
- made a presentation to the Inter-Parliamentary Research and Information Network (IPRIN) on the use of ICT to communicate sources and research to members of Parliament
- made a presentation to the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) seminar entitled, *Libraries and Research Services Serving Openness and Transparency of Parliament*
- made a presentation entitled, *Improving Performance*

Information for Oireachtas Committees to the Inter-Parliamentary Financial Information Network (IPFIN)

- made a presentation relating to the referendum on the proposal to amend the constitution to abolish Seanad Éireann at a seminar organised by the ECPRD entitled: *The Practicalities, Advantages and Disadvantages of Unicameral and Bicameral Parliamentary Systems*

L&RS Strategic Plan 2016-2018

The L&RS has prepared its 2016-2018 strategy which will be presented to the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission in due course.

During 2016 the L&RS will redefine its core functions as follows:

- Library and Archive
- Research and Analysis Service

A new Records Management Unit will also be established in 2016 and a separate strategy will guide the development of this unit.

OFFICIAL REPORT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS

Debates Office

The Editor of Debates Office is responsible for the production and publication of the Official Report of the proceedings of the Houses of the Oireachtas and parliamentary Committees. This is an authoritative, complete and impartial record of the contributions of all speakers, in the language of the contribution (Gaeilge or English).

The official report of the proceedings of the Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis was also produced and published by the Debates Office.

The production of the official report is delivered through a team of editors, parliamentary reporters and administrative staff. In recent years, the focus has moved from a printed version of the official report to publishing electronically on Lotus Notes and in HTML, XML and PDF formats on the website. The official report of the Dáil and Seanad debates is published incrementally throughout each sitting day on the Oireachtas website.



The Minister for Finance and the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform presented their Budget Statements to Dáil Éireann on 13 October 2015.

Parliamentary questions tabled by Deputies for written reply are collated, formatted and published in the official report at the end of each day's Dáil proceedings.

The official report of each committee meeting is published on the website on the same day or within 2-3 working days, depending on number of meetings.

Debates Office Developments in 2015

In 2015 there were a total of 3,004 hours of debate and 52,910 Parliamentary Questions produced and published by staff in the Debates Office.

The public hearings of the Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis were held over 49 days between December 2014 and September 2015. More than 300 hours of the Committee's public sessions were reported by the Debates Office, producing more than 8,000 written pages of hearings. Verbatim transcripts of proceedings were reported in real time and made available online to the public within two hours of the actual proceedings. The transcripts were published in HTML, XML and PDF formats on the Oireachtas website with regular updates throughout the day. A complete, edited version of proceedings for each day was available within two hours of adjournment of the Committee's meetings. These transcripts were also provided to the Banking Inquiry secretariat for simultaneous publication on the Inquiry's own webpage.

Since 2014 the Official Report is produced and published from end to end by staff in the Debates Office, generating significant annual savings for the Service. This eliminates

dependencies on external suppliers and the report is published in a more timely manner in Lotus Notes and in HTML, XML and PDF formats on the website.

In line with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's open data initiative, the Debates Office is currently engaged in a Debates Metadata Project, the results of which will allow users to interrogate the debates data in a more flexible and user-friendly manner.

OFFICIAL REPORT OF THE PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS

5,864 Dáil takes recorded and published

3,854 Seanad takes recorded and published

6,301 Committee takes recorded and published

RANNÓG AN AISTRIÚCHÁIN – TRANSLATION SERVICE

Under the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2006*, Rannóg an Aistriúcháin provides official translations of the Acts of the

Oireachtas.

An Rannóg also produces official translations of statutory instruments, standing orders of the Houses, order papers, proceedings of the Houses, strategic plans and annual reports of the Commission and miscellaneous items for the Houses of the Oireachtas Service.

Official translations of the Acts of the Oireachtas are published and made available on the Oireachtas website and on the www.achtanna.ie website.

Rannóg an Aistriúcháin also manages and publishes An Caighdeán Oifigiúil (the official standard grammar of the Irish language) and is the national authority of the State as regards the Irish language version of EU Treaties.

As well as producing official translations of documents, Rannóg an Aistriúcháin provides a simultaneous translation service to Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann and their Committees.

Rannóg an Aistriúcháin also manages the Houses of the Oireachtas Service Language Scheme.



Members of the Advisory Committee appointed to carry out a review of An Caighdeán Oifigiúil (the official standard grammar for the Irish language).

Rannóg an Aistriúcháin Activities in 2015

Arrears Acts Translation

During 2015, as well as focusing on the production of official translations of current Acts, An Rannóg continued implementation of its Arrears Acts Clearance Strategy and significant progress was made in reducing the arrears.

Translation of Statutory Instruments

During 2015, An Rannóg provided translation services to a number of government departments in relation to statutory instruments. In particular, services were provided to the Department of Justice and Equality by processing and publishing a series of District Court Rules and a number of Supreme Court Rules.

Houses of the Oireachtas Service Irish Language Scheme

The Irish Language Scheme for the Houses of the Oireachtas Service sets out the Service's commitments regarding the use of the Irish language in its service delivery in accordance with the *Official Languages Act 2003*. A new Scheme will be prepared in 2016.

Simultaneous Translation Service

An Rannóg provided a simultaneous translation service to both Houses and to a number of Committees during 2015.

Oireachtas Order Papers

An Rannóg provided translation services for the production of bilingual Order Papers for both Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann.

Miscellaneous Translations

An Rannóg provided a range of

general translation services for various sections of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service during the year.

An Caighdeán Oifigiúil

In accordance with the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2013*, Rannóg an Aistriúcháin has statutory responsibility for An Caighdeán Oifigiúil (the official standard grammar for the Irish language).

During 2015, the statutory review of An Caighdeán Oifigiúil, which began in 2014, continued and the Advisory Committee appointed to assist the Service in progressing the review made a range of recommendations for consideration in the context of the review.

The members of the Advisory Committee are: *An Dr Éamonn Ó hÓgáin (Cathaoirleach); Áine Ní Chonghaile; Tadhg Ó hÚrdail; Oilibhéar de Búrca; Labhrás Ó Finneadha; Colm Breathnach; Máirín de Brún; An Dr Ciarán Mac Murchaidh; An Dr Deirbhile Nic Craith; Éamonn Ó Dónaill; Colmcille Ó Monacháin; An Dr Malachy Ó Néill; Eoin Ó Droighneáin; Séamas de Barra; Gráinne Ní Lúbaigh; Bríd de Staic agus Maeve Eason. Committee Advisors: Breda Ní Mhaoláin and Julie O'Farrell*. It is expected that the review will be completed in early in 2016 and a revised Caighdeán Oifigiúil will be published.

HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS BUILDINGS, ACCOMMODATION AND FACILITIES

Visitors and Events

The number of visitors to the Houses in 2015 exceeded 114,000. Over 55,000 visitors took guided tours of Leinster House which included walk-up tours on non-sitting days.

The Houses of the Oireachtas continues to receive a large number of visitors each year ranging from visiting dignitaries hosted by the Ceann Comhairle and the Cathaoirleach of the Seanad, witnesses attending Parliamentary Committee meetings, visiting parliamentary delegations, educational visits by schoolchildren, constituents meeting with members of the Houses and visits by members of the public.

The Superintendent's Section provides operational support for the sittings of the Houses and the Parliamentary Committees, including high-level parliamentary meetings and official events hosted by the Houses. It also has responsibility for managing visitor access to the Houses.

In 2015, the Superintendent's Section provided operational support for the seventh plenary of the North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association and the sixth annual seminar of the Irish Association of Former Parliamentarians which took place in Leinster House. It also coordinated

arrangements when Leinster House welcomed members of the public for guided tours on *Culture Night* and the *Open House* architectural event.

Health and Safety Policy

In 2015, the Service continued to proactively implement its health and safety management plan to protect the safety and health of all those who work in and visit Leinster House. The Service also carried out a health and safety audit throughout the complex.

An updated Health and Safety Policy Statement was drafted in 2015 with a view to its implementation in 2016.

The Health and Safety Committee meets regularly to discuss health and safety issues, to take any necessary measures and to act as a communications forum on health and safety matters.

Catering Facilities

The Catering Services are provided for members, staff and visitors to Leinster House. In 2015, the Catering Services continued to provide service to staff and members and also provided a service as required for international visitors to the Houses such as the Speaker of the Iranian Parliament, His Excellency Dr. Ali Ardeshir Larijani, and a parliamentary delegation, and meetings hosted by the Parliamentary Friendship Groups in the Houses.

Operationally, the broad focus was on implementing the use of the *Electronic Point of Sales System* (EPOS) which was installed in March 2015. Following the completion of user training for the catering and bar staff, EPOS was rolled out and is

now in use at all catering locations. “Tap and go” credit card facilities were introduced in the self-service Restaurant as part of the initial EPOS implementation which has improved customer service and efficiency. “Tap and go” credit card facilities were subsequently introduced in the Members’ Bar and Visitors Bar.

Significant progress was made throughout 2015 in managing and reducing the overall balances due to the Oireachtas Bar and Restaurant.

Oireachtas Crèche and Fitness Room

The Oireachtas Crèche provides an on-site childcare facility for children up to age five, as well as late-evening care and drop-in services. The Crèche is operated by a third-party service provider. The facility is open to the children of members and staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas as well as staff of government departments. Crèche services are paid for directly to the service provider, by those availing of the facility.

The Oireachtas Fitness Room is open to all members of the House of the Oireachtas and all staff on the payroll. In 2015 there were 4,542 individual visits to the Fitness Room. 57 people joined the Fitness Room in 2015.

Business Continuity Planning and Disaster Recovery Planning

Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Planning for the Houses of the Oireachtas, which began in 2009, has developed the capability required for ICT systems to support all critical services that are essential to ensure continuity in the sittings of

both Houses and their Committees in an alternate location to the Leinster House complex.

During 2015, ongoing review and refinement of planning documents were undertaken including a review of the overall Incident Management Plan (IMP) and the Work Area Recovery Plan (WARP). Further review and updating of specific sectional recovery plans were also completed including all procedural sections in the Service.

A simulation exercise was conducted in May 2015 where critical services were carried out by the procedural offices from the alternate location. A recovery plan was also created for the particular needs of the Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis.

Detailed work commenced to identify the technical infrastructure and accommodation requirements for members to ensure continuity of business in the event of an emergency.

An exercise was carried out in the alternate location in October 2015 to ensure adherence to health and safety guidelines. Appropriate seating arrangements were also agreed.

The Broadcasting Unit reviewed an alternate location as a potential location for business continuity in broadcasting the proceedings of the Houses and Committees. This review involved both technical and production functions, including camera positioning, shot/angle coverage, viability of cables, cable distance and routes.

Office Accommodation

In 2015, a number of significant projects were advanced in cooperation with the Office of Public

Works to enhance and improve services to members and to the public which included:

- ongoing maintenance and building upkeep of Leinster House
- installation of hearing induction loops in the Committee Rooms
- improvement works to Leinster House Pavilion to enhance security and to improve visitor experience
- conservation, refurbishment and upgrade of 1960's steel windows
- services to improve the maintenance of Leinster House grounds
- improvements to service areas, particularly in the catering facility area

Other significant projects included arrangements in Leinster House for meetings of the Joint Committee on Inquiry into the Banking Crisis, relocation of staff to new accommodation in Merrion Square and clear out of vacated accommodation.

Energy Management Overview 2015

The Office of Public Works continued a programme of installation of energy efficient lighting and motion sensors across the complex including the replacement of the lighting in the campus with energy efficient alternatives and a review of solar potential. An Energy Awareness Day was held in December for members and staff to brief them on the Leinster House *Optimising Power @ Work* energy reduction programme in the Leinster House complex and to provide advice on how to save energy on electricity, gas and water. A report on the energy usage in the

Houses of the Oireachtas in 2015 is set out in Appendix 10.

Energy Management Actions Undertaken in 2015

In 2015, the Houses of the Oireachtas undertook a number of initiatives aimed at improving energy performance, including:

- participation in the *Optimising Power @ Work* campaign, where staff are encouraged to be more energy efficient. This includes continuous review of the heating and ventilation systems to ensure they are operating only when required resulting in significant savings
- undertaking night energy audits to identify areas where energy savings can be made
- optimising alignment of heating and ventilation times to reflect the opening hours of Leinster House
- wood chip boilers were fully commissioned and are providing a portion of the complex's heating requirements
- monthly energy monitoring and reporting and regular energy team meetings
- an energy awareness day held
- upgrade of lighting systems in various parts of the complex
- additional metering added to the site
- reduction of the "Medium Temperature Hot Water" in summer
- Building Management System maintenance and adjustments
- update of the *Display Energy Certificate* on site

- review of solar options for the site
- timely reporting to Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland's monitoring and reporting systems

Energy Management Actions Planned for 2016

In 2016, the Houses of the Oireachtas plans to further improve its energy performance by undertaking the following initiatives:

- continuing to inform and engage staff in energy reduction measures with renewed focus on staff awareness, supported by further presentations, as required
- holding further Energy Awareness days
- undertaking an intensive energy campaign including quizzes, sticker and poster campaigns, as well as "walk down days" to reduce lift usage
- reviewing of heating times as the year progresses and continue to monitor and adjust Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning systems
- reviewing ICT on site
- installing more energy efficient lighting
- conducting audits of the building management system
- conducting out of hours energy audits
- updating Display Energy Certificate
- installing heat boosting timers in the committee rooms
- continuing to investigate installation of electrical immersion for summer hot water heaters in the complex
- an updated *Energy Action Plan* will be drafted and implemented



Leas-Cheann Comhairle, Michael Kitt TD, meeting H.E. Dr. Ali Ardeshir Larijani, Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Iran.



An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD, addressing the 50th plenary of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly which took place in the Seanad Chamber in February 2015.



Senator Seán D Barrett, Ceann Comhairle Sean Barrett TD, Ms Jeanne Barrett (Chair of the Association of CSPE Teachers Ireland), and Senator Jillian Van Turnhout at the launch of the online Oireachtas education programme.



Members of both Houses of the Oireachtas meeting with a delegation from the New Zealand House of Representatives.



Election of An Ceann Comhairle in 32nd Dáil.



Seanad Returning Officer, Ms. Deirdre Lane (Clerk of the Seanad), announcing the result of a count at the Seanad general election in April 2016.





Improving Services to Members

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

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

MEMBERS' SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

Joint sub-Committee on Administration

The Joint sub-Committee on Administration (Js-CA) represents the views of members on the services provided for and by the Houses and makes recommendations on these to the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission.

In 2015, the sub-Committee considered a range of matters including:

- the Parliamentary Internship Programme in the Houses
- mental health support services for members and staff
- access to Saorview free-to-view Digital Terrestrial Television platform for Oireachtas TV
- planned programme of structural and upgrade works for Georgian Leinster House, including the accommodation plan for the duration of the works
- the constituency database and data protection procedures
- ICT equipment for members who are not seeking re-election and members who are not re-elected
- maintenance of the Leinster House grounds
- designated smoking areas in the Leinster House complex

MEMBERS' SERVICES

Members' Services provides a One-Stop-Shop service giving members a single access point for information and services. The section processes resources provided to members to support them in carrying out their parliamentary functions. It also provides information to members on the policies and guidelines governing the use of such resources.

In keeping with progress made in 2014, Members' Services continued with a proactive approach, with guidance documents being further refined, clarified and circulated to members.

Conduct of Independent Audit of the Public Representation Allowance in respect of 2014

The fifth audit of the Public Representation Allowance (PRA) was conducted by an independent auditor, selected following a competitive tender process. The purpose of the audit is to provide an independent examination of expenditure to determine whether expenditure is applied in accordance

with the relevant regulations.

The auditor has responsibility, independently of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service, for preparing an audit plan and for communicating with the members selected for audit in relation to all relevant matters.

In conducting the audit, the independent auditor implemented a system to select members for audit by random sample. Of the 222 members who received the PRA in 2014, 22 (10%) of these were selected by random sample.

Those members selected for audit were invited to an information seminar conducted by the auditor prior to the commencement of the process. The purpose of the seminar was to provide clarity on the audit process. The feedback received from members on the seminar was very positive.

Information on expenditure under the PRA is published on the Oireachtas website on a monthly basis. The report of the independent auditor is published on the website on an annual basis.



The 2014 audit report was considered by the Management Committee and the Audit Committee in December 2015. The independent auditor provided the necessary certification in respect of all members audited and made recommendations relating to the expenses system. These recommendations and other administrative amendments were included in updated Audit Guidelines, approved by the Commission in December 2015 and circulated to members in early 2016.

TECHNOLOGY AND OFFICE SUPPORT

Information and Communications Technologies

ICT Strategy

The ICT Strategy 2014 - 2017 provides a framework to support high standards in ICT services and the security of data and ICT systems and infrastructure. It incorporates many of the values and vision statements of the first strategy as they remain valid. However, it differs significantly in reflecting changing business needs, the economic environment, advances in technology and the need for greater efficiency and flexibility in the workplace. The Strategy is also aligned to the other key strategies and priorities of the Service.

The ICT Strategic Plan identifies high level principles and four strategies based on a consultation process undertaken with key stakeholders.



These principles and strategies guide the development, delivery and support of efficient and innovative ICT services in support of business objectives. This will underpin the approach to the delivery of services, guiding technical and resource decisions relating to the development, support and evolution of ICT services over the course of the strategy.

Key ICT Activities Undertaken in 2015:

In support of its strategic objectives, the ICT Unit continued to pursue new initiatives to deliver services more cost-effectively and to meet members' needs, including:

- completion of a contract for managed IT services (MITS)
- introduction of a new Electronic Point of Sale (EPOS) system in the Catering Services
- installation of a new storage area network (SAN)
- improvements in ICT security practices in line with best practice
- introduction of a managed print service (MPS)
- piloting of a system for desktop

virtualisation

- introduction and piloting of a visitor management system (VMS)
- initiation of a project in respect of the process for the upgrading and replacement of technologies in the Chambers
- completion of a contract in respect of the provision of software licences to the Oireachtas Service

Objectives and Planned Activities in 2016:

- the roll-out of the managed print service to members' remote offices
- the roll-out of upgraded replacement equipment to members
- the continuation of the project for the upgrading and replacement of technologies in the Chambers
- the completion of the desktop virtualisation programme
- the finalisation of the visitor management system



Enhancing Service Capability

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

Managing People and Budgets

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.

MANAGING PEOPLE AND BUDGETS

Human Resources Services

Overview of current operating environment

At the end of December 2015, there were 435 sanctioned civil service posts in the Service of which 418 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) posts were filled. There were also non-established state employees comprising 5 civilian drivers and 7 staff of office holders. In addition, 40 staff were employed in the Catering Services and Print Facility.

Staffing Levels

418 Civil Service staff (FTE)

40 State Industrial staff (FTE)

39 Banking Inquiry support staff (Investigative Staff)

12 Staff of Office Holders

In 2015, the focus of the HR Unit was to ensure that appropriate staffing levels, within sanctioned numbers, were available to provide support to the Houses. The main reason for the increase in the staffing level was to support Dáil reform initiatives, including the provision of policy analysis and research services to support pre-legislative scrutiny by Oireachtas Committees, and engagement of specialist staff in ICT, broadcasting and legal services.

In addition, temporary/fixed-term posts were sanctioned for the engagement of specialist and



support staff to support the Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis, of which 39 posts were filled at the end of 2015 (15 investigation staff and 24 civil service staff). These posts were filled through reassignment of staff within the Service, redeployment of staff from other civil service organisations and, where appropriate, recruitment of additional staff.

Scheme for Secretarial Assistance

Under the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance (the Scheme), there were 516 staff employed in 400 full-time equivalent posts at the end of 2015. The Commission also made provision for the allocation of additional secretarial facilities under the Scheme, of one full-time Parliamentary Assistant or part-time equivalent, to each member of the Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis for the duration of the Inquiry. There were 14 persons employed in 11.5 full-time equivalent posts in this category.

Staff employed under the Scheme are the employees of the member or party concerned and are not public servants. However, they are paid by the Commission. Accordingly,

all personnel administration functions in relation to pay, leave and other employee entitlements are undertaken by the HR Unit for Members.

HR Strategy and Reform

The Service is represented at Assistant Secretary level on the Central Reform Delivery Board for the Civil Service which operates under the aegis of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. In addition to participating fully in Public Service Reform initiatives, the Service has focused on taking an integrated approach to strengthening procedural capability across the Service, upgrading systems in key procedural areas that are central to the sittings of the Houses and their Committees and providing specialist services in key support areas including ICT and legal services.

People and Organisation Development Programme

The Service also focussed on making best use of available resources and enhancing its capacity and capability through its *People and Organisation Development Programme* (POD) to

work more efficiently and increase organisational capacity, to implement change and to enable the Service to develop as a high performing organisation. The POD programme objectives are consistent with the commitments under the Public Service Reform Programme.

General Election Planning

A General Election Planning Steering Group was established to coordinate delivery of the Service's statutory and administrative responsibilities arising on the dissolution of the 31st Dáil. The Steering Group prepared an integrated, member focused, election plan including a familiarisation programme to support new members of the Houses in their new role. The Group was chaired by the Head of HR Services and included senior managers and heads of sections. It held its first meeting in February 2015 and held regular meetings throughout the year.

In support of the election planning process, HR Services:

- coordinated election-related responsibilities across the Service
- consulted with Party Administrators and organised information seminars for members and their staff
- established a *Member Liaison Officer Programme* under which an experienced member of staff of the Service was assigned to a new member of the Houses to assist them during their first weeks in Leinster House

- coordinated information for dissolution guidelines, members' handbooks and other resources for members
- developed an ICT system to streamline requests for information from members and to avoid duplication of work
- undertook resource planning to ensure that relevant sections had the necessary staff in place to manage the increased workload arising from the dissolution of the 31st Dáil and the orientation of the new members following the Dáil and Seanad general elections.

In addition to meeting operational priorities, the key activities of each unit of the HR Services are set out separately in the following sections.

HR Unit for Members

Key activities undertaken in 2015:

- review of the operation of the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance resulting in policy changes, such as the provision of staffing to office holders, and an *Employee Assistance Programme* for staff employed

under the Scheme in 2016

- review of contracts and information provided to members and their staff regarding the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance
- provision of advice in relation to employment matters including terms and conditions of employment

Objectives and planned activities and initiatives for 2016:

- management of changes in members staffing arising from the Dáil and Seanad general elections including administration of the Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme, statutory redundancy and management of administration of terms and conditions of staff employed by members
- establishment of an *Employee Assistance Programme* for staff of the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance
- administration of changes in terms and conditions of staff employed by office holders with effect from the beginning of the new Dáil and Seanad





Pensions Unit

Key activities undertaken in 2015:

- necessary work in respect of the 2016 general elections including the preparation of pension benefit statements for members on request, the provision of information seminars for members and participation in the General Election Planning Steering Group
- review of information on members' pension schemes provided on the "Plinth" Intranet site and updating of the pension information booklets provided to members

Objectives and planned activities and initiatives for 2016:

- management of the payment of termination payments and transition to pension following the elections
- implementation of the 2015 changes to Public Service Pension Reduction (PSPR) rates with effect from January 2016

Salaries Unit

Key activities undertaken in 2015:

- initial scoping and preparatory work to prepare the *CorePay* payroll system for upgrade to the latest version in 2016

Objectives and planned activities and initiatives for 2016:

- continued discussions with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in relation to the potential move to the Payroll Shared Service Centre in 2017

Training and Development

The Training and Development Unit provides a wide range of training and development opportunities for civil service staff and for members of the Houses and their staff.

Key activities undertaken in 2015:

Training for Members and their Staff

The Training Unit continued to provide training interventions and information seminars to support

members and their staff.

Some of the key training initiatives provided include:

- constituency database training
- occupational first aid
- health and wellbeing seminars
- language courses in Irish and French
- fire warden training

Training for Staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service

Training and learning interventions were provided to civil service staff across a broad range of areas encompassing technical, professional and personal development training. Training interventions were provided in-house and externally as appropriate.

Key training and learning initiatives provided include:

- high performance teams modules
- coaching for managers
- performance management workshops
- health and safety training, including occupational first aid
- health and wellbeing seminars
- data protection awareness
- induction training programmes
- language courses in Irish and French
- courses pursued under the

Refund/Advance of Fees Scheme

Under this Refund/Advance of Fees Scheme staff of the Service may apply to have the appropriate fees for designated third level courses of study or other relevant courses provided by an accredited educational institution refunded or advanced subject to certain conditions. In the academic year 2015/2016, 35 staff of the Service availed of this opportunity. The Scheme continues to play an important role in career and personal development for staff members and provides staff with the opportunity to pursue an area of study that supports the Service in delivering on its strategic objectives.

Objectives and planned activities and initiatives for 2016:

- skills gaps assessment to meet strategic goals
- development of a Leadership Training Programme
- continued implementation of the *People and Organisation Development Programme* initiatives through coaching and staff development programmes

Inter-parliamentary Staff Exchange Programmes and Study Visits

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service participates in an annual bilateral parliamentary staff exchange programme with the German Bundestag. In addition, each year the Service hosts study visits to the Houses by officials from

other parliaments.

In 2015 the Service hosted two parliamentary staff from the German Bundestag. The study visit provided an opportunity to exchange information and share knowledge and experiences.

People and Organisational Development and Reform Implementation

In addition to maintaining key support services, HR Services has a lead role in supporting the:

- the People and Organisation Development Programme
- the Reform Delivery Programme for the Service

Key activities undertaken in 2015:

- Staff Networks were established for Assistant Principal and equivalent grades, and Senior Clerks and equivalent grades
- a Leadership Standard, which incorporates *Our Code for Working Together*, was finalised

Objectives and planned activities

and initiatives for 2016:

- a Leadership Standard will be launched and training and information seminars, based on the core civil service competency framework, will be organised for all staff
- the Civil Service Engagement survey results for the Houses of the Oireachtas, which were published in April 2016, will inform further developments under the People and Organisational Development Programme
- an internal communications group has been established to develop an Internal Communications Strategy

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Financial Control, Reporting and Governance Systems

The responsibilities of the Finance Unit include:

- managing, monitoring and reporting on expenditure by the Houses



- preparation of management financial accounts for examination by the Management Committee, the Commission's Finance Committee and the Commission
- preparation of the annual Statement of Estimates for approval by the Commission and noting by the Dáil
- preparation of the Commission's Annual Account to be submitted by the Secretary General to the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) for annual audit by 31 March each year
- assisting the Comptroller and Auditor General's Office in respect of the annual audit of the Commission's annual account by the C&AG

2015 was the final year of the three-year, 2013-2015, budgetary framework for the Houses which was provided in legislation at €324m. Actual expenditure for 2015 was €107.4m which brought the total spend over the three years to €311m, resulting in a saving of €13m or 4%.

The Commission's budget for the

three years, 2016-2018, is €369m. The three-year budget allocation was provided under the *Houses of the Oireachtas (Amendment) Act 2015* which was enacted in December 2015.

Financial reporting in the Service is carefully managed. Detailed expenditure reports are examined by the Management Committee on a monthly basis. Quarterly financial reports and detailed information on the monthly spending by the Houses against spending forecasts are examined by the Finance Committee of the Commission. Following its consideration, the Finance Committee presents a report of its findings to the Commission where these matters are considered further.

A key element of governance arrangements in the Civil Service is the auditing of the annual Appropriation Accounts by the C&AG, who is an independent constitutional officer, and the scrutiny of those accounts by the Committee of Public Accounts of Dáil Éireann. Under section 14 of the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts*, the Annual Accounts of the Commission are audited by the C&AG.

A Statement of Accounting practices and principles form part of the accounts. In addition, the Accounting Officer signs a Statement on Internal Financial Control on the Commission's behalf giving reasonable assurance that an effective system of internal financial control is maintained and operated by the Service.

The Accounting Officer also sets out the position in relation to the financial control environment, the framework of administrative procedures, management reporting, internal audit and the Audit Committee. The annual account is published in the Commission's Annual Report (the annual account for 2015 is set out in Appendix 4).

TRANSFORMING THE WAY WE WORK

Development of the Budgetary Oversight Function

Budget oversight by the Houses of the Oireachtas is considered to be underdeveloped by international standards. Recognising this as a strategic challenge, in the early part of the year the Service allocated additional resources to support the scrutiny by Oireachtas Committees of the Estimates for public services. This resulted in a degree of progress being made in the course of 2015.

Support provided to Oireachtas Committees

Operations in 2015 focused on opportunities to improve the quality



of performance information made available to Committees to support scrutiny of Estimates for Public Services and concentrated on 15 of 40 Votes, involving seven of nine Sectoral Committees.

The Service also part-funded a review by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) of the Parliament's current engagement in the budget process. The OECD presented its report in November 2015, *Review of Budget Oversight by Parliament: Ireland*.

The report presented an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of Ireland's system of parliamentary engagement in the budget process. Arising from this analysis and drawing on international experience, the report made a number of proposals for reform to make this engagement more effective for consideration by the Houses of the Oireachtas and by Ireland's public administration more broadly.

Progressing the recommendations contained in the report, in cooperation with other key stakeholders, is therefore likely to be a significant challenge facing the Service in 2016.

Ongoing Reform of the Parliamentary Committee System

Key features and work of the Parliamentary Committees in 2015 included:

- adoption of structured annual work programmes by sectoral committees



- continued development of pre-legislative scrutiny by sectoral committees of the Heads of Bills, including analysis of submissions received from interested stakeholders and individuals
- engagement with Chairpersons Designate of State Bodies and Agencies
- enhanced financial scrutiny and increased focus on opportunities to improve the quality of performance information made available to the Parliamentary Committees to support the scrutiny of Estimates for Public Services
- continued development of the EU scrutiny function across all sectoral committees
- engagement with Ministers pre and post-EU Council meetings

In terms of administrative and logistical support, 2015 saw the development and implementation of a fully integrated system for generating entries on the Committee Schedule and Dáil and Seanad

Order Papers, resulting in notable efficiencies.

In terms of accessibility of the Committees, the installation of the loop system in all committee rooms enabled a deafblind witness to speak to an Oireachtas Committee for the first time. The broadcast of this meeting was also signed and accessible to the deaf community.

EU Legislation Scrutiny

The mainstreaming of EU legislation scrutiny is reported separately by the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs in its 2015 *Annual Report on the Operation of the European Union (Scrutiny) Act 2002*, available on the Oireachtas website. In summary, the sectoral committees considered 380 decisions taken on 362 proposals. 27% of these proposals were designated as 'Schedule A' proposals (deemed to be of higher priority for Ireland). Of all proposals, 10.22% were deemed to have significant implications to warrant further scrutiny. Seven political contributions were made to the European Commission, the Parliament and the Council and a further report entitled *Capital Markets Union* was submitted to the

European Commission in response to its public consultation process. 12 pre-Council meetings across five Joint Committees were held with Ministers and/or Ministers of State.

In 2015, Committees travelled abroad and within Ireland in furtherance of their respective Work Programmes. Committees participated in annual and bi-annual conferences such as the Conferences of the Committees of the National Parliaments dealing with European Union Affairs (COSAC) and Security and Defence Policy.

Key priorities in 2016 will include the continued development of the financial scrutiny function and the timely provision of all necessary supports to enable the Committees of the next Dáil and Seanad to commence their work as soon as possible following their establishment.

Partnership Committee

The Partnership Committee held two meetings in 2015. In addition to consideration of standing items, the Committee also considered the Service's *Reform Delivery Plan*, *ICT Acceptable Usage Policy*, *Strategic Statement for 2015*, *Risk Management Policy*, *Dignity at Work Policy* and *Disability Policy*.

The Committee also established a working group to consult with staff and to make recommendations on the Service's policy and guidelines for staff who wish to make a disclosure under the *Protected Disclosures Act 2015*. The group prepared and submitted a paper

to the Partnership Committee for consideration.

GOVERNANCE AND FUTURE PLANNING

Management Committee

The role of the Management Committee (MC) is to assist and advise the Clerk of the Dáil and Secretary General in carrying out the statutory responsibility for managing the Service for which the Secretary General is directly accountable to the Commission under the Commission Acts.

The MC consists of the Secretary General, the Assistant Secretary with responsibility for Corporate and Members' Services Division, the Assistant Secretary with responsibility for Parliamentary Services Division, the Clerk of the Seanad and the Chairpersons of the three sub-Committees of the MC.

Through the practice of collective decision-making, the Committee aims to ensure that the Service operates in an integrated way in delivering on the Commission's strategic objectives. In this way, the Committee contributes to efficient and effective management of the Service.

The agenda of the MC is driven to a large extent by the policies adopted by the Commission, as well as by the Commission's Strategic Plan and the Service's Corporate Business Plan.

There are a number of standing items on the meeting agenda of the MC, including:

- topical management issues update
- financial and non-financial performance reports
- human resources management reports
- risk management
- update on the MC annual work programme

The MC met on 13 occasions in 2015. The management items considered included the following:

- monthly financial reports
- annual estimates of ongoing expenditure for 2016
- annual resource plan for the Service
- review of risk materialisation reports
- review of Risk Management Policy and approval of Strategic Risk Register
- internal audit reports
- implementation of the Service's Integrated Reform Delivery Plan
- contracts awarded by the Service
- technologies in the chamber project
- Oireachtas website development project
- Oireachtas Television Channel
- disability strategy for the Service
- draft Corporate Governance Standard for the Civil Service

- business continuity planning
- records management policy
- Scheme for Secretarial Assistance

Management Committee Membership

Mr. Peter Finnegan

Clerk of the Dáil/Secretary General

Mr. Michael Errity

Assistant Secretary, Corporate and Members' Services Division

Ms. Elaine Gunn

Assistant Secretary, Parliamentary Services Division and Clerk-Assistant of the Dáil

Ms. Deirdre Lane

Clerk of the Seanad

Mr. Charles Hearne

Principal Officer, Chair of Systems sub-Committee

Ms. Patricia Doran

Principal Officer, Chair of People and Finance sub-Committee

Mr. Paul Conway

Superintendent, Chair of Business and Strategy sub-Committee

Management Committee sub-Committees

The Management Committee is assisted by three sub-Committees as follows:

- People and Finance
- Systems
- Business and Strategy

Each sub-Committee is chaired by a Principal Officer, with each Principal Officer in the Service being a member of one of the sub-Committees. The chair positions are filled on a rotating basis and the



The Irish Association of Former Parliamentarians meeting in the Seanad Chamber.

chairperson of each sub-Committee is a full participatory member of the MC. Each sub-Committee reports to the MC and/or the Secretary General, as appropriate, and reports annually to the MC on its work in general.

People and Finance sub-Committee

The People and Finance sub-Committee considers matters relating to human and financial resources for the Service as are referred to it by the MC/Secretary General. It met on two occasions in 2015 to consider:

- 2015 Annual Resource Plan
- Estimates 2016

Systems sub-Committee

The Systems sub-Committee has responsibility for oversight of the development of information and ICT services and strategies for the Service, including monitoring progress on ICT projects and expenditure, as are referred to it by the MC/Secretary General.

The sub-Committee met on six occasions in 2015. The key issues considered included:

- subscription to a fee based online media service
- appointment of an external consultant regarding the broadcasting contract
- Desktop Virtualisation Project
- Managed Print Service Project
- revision of Statutory Instrument No. 2 of 2013: *Oireachtas (Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices) (Secretarial Facilities) Regulations 2013* (in relation to members' ICT facilities following the General Elections)
- provision of ICT equipment for staff in the Committee Secretariat
- members' Data Management System
- terms of reference, membership and future work programme of the sub-Committee

Business and Strategy sub-Committee

The sub-Committee on Business and Strategy considers such matters as strategy, business operations and organisation development for the Service, as are referred to it by MC/Secretary General. It met on one occasion in 2015. The key issues considered included:

- Records Management File Plan and Retention Schedule for the Service
- Houses of the Oireachtas Service Strategy 2016 - 2018
- Decade of Centenaries: first sitting of Dáil Éireann

PRINCIPAL OFFICER NETWORK

The Principal Officer Network provides a forum for Principal Officers (POs) to:

- collaborate and cooperate to achieve outcomes that are in the best interest of the Service
- share information about Service-wide matters and section-level strategies and priorities
- share feedback from across the organisation
- learn from each other's expertise, knowledge and experience
- learn from other organisations through presentations from external senior managers

The PO Network normally meets on a bimonthly basis. In 2015, PO Network meetings provided an opportunity to share information on the work of the sub-Committees of the Management Committee and to discuss various initiatives underway in the Service including:

- implementation of the ICT strategy
- implementation of a records management programme
- redevelopment of the Oireachtas website
- maximising use of the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation service to inform the Service's policies and strategies
- freedom of information internal review process
- implementation of the People and Organisational Development Programme

The first PO Network conference was held on 23 January 2015. The theme of the conference was *Leadership Opportunities and Challenges in 2015*. The conference was addressed by a number of speakers from across the Civil Service and academia.

The PO group also completed an in-house Leadership Programme in May 2015.

Risk Management

The Risk Management Committee has responsibility for implementation and oversight of the Risk

Management Policy for the Service, including to:

- advise on policy and strategy for management of risk
- help build a risk-aware culture throughout the Service
- develop internal risk policy and structures for business units
- design and review processes for management of risk
- coordinate the various functional activities that advise on risk management across the Service
- develop risk response processes, including contingency and business continuity programmes
- prepare reports on the Service's management of risk for submission to the Management Committee
- facilitate risk identification and assessment and support staff in fulfilling the requirements of the Service's risk management policy

The Committee met on three occasions in 2015. The main focus of the Committee's work was on identifying key strategic risks for the Service and ensuring that appropriate procedures are in place to identify, assess and manage the risk.

The Committee also updated the Risk Management Policy for the Service. It also reviewed the model for reporting strategic risks put forward by the Risk Team

and recommended that strategic risk reporting should be included in the risk reporting framework and reported to the Management Committee and the Audit Committee on a quarterly basis.

Internal Audit and Oversight Functions

The Internal Audit function of the Houses of the Oireachtas contributes to the oversight and accountability of the Service.

Reporting to the Head of the Office of the Commission and Secretary General in 2015 (responsibility moved to the Head of the Office of the Parliamentary Legal Advisor in 2016), the Internal Audit Unit's functions include:

- reporting on the Service's compliance with relevant legislation, policies, circulars, regulations and guidelines
- reviewing the policies and procedures in place for the management of risk and the ongoing implementation of internal controls in the operations of the Service
- reporting on the implementation of internal audit recommendations
- supporting the Audit Committee in its work
- A work programme for 2015-2016 was agreed in Q1 2015

The Audit Committee met on four occasions in 2015 and considered:

- six Internal Audit reports
- five information notes and briefings
- the C&AG Report on the 2014 Accounts of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission
- the report of the independent audit of the members' Public Representation Allowance
- a draft strategic risk register and updated risk management policy for the Service
- three risk materialisation reports

The Audit Committee continues to monitor the implementation of internal audit recommendations and the Internal Audit Unit presents implementation reports to the Audit Committee twice yearly.

The Audit Committee carried out a review of its Charter in light of the recent Audit Committee Guidance issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

The Internal Audit Unit is represented on the Risk Management Committee, where its role includes

advising on the appropriateness, efficiency and effectiveness of the Service's procedures relating to risk management and providing assurance on the processes for the management of risk. Risk materialisation reports are presented to the Audit Committee. The Committee was also briefed during the year on a draft strategic risk register and updated risk management policy for the Service.

To help ensure that it operates in accordance with best practice, the Internal Audit Unit participates in the Heads of Internal Audit Forum (a civil service Internal Audit network) and the group of Heads of Internal Audit of Parliaments and Assemblies in Ireland and the UK.

Parliamentary Legal Services

The responsibilities of the Office of the Parliamentary Legal Advisor (OPLA) are to provide timely legal advice and services as may be required to:

- Chairs of either House of the Oireachtas in respect of the operation of the Houses



The Annual Conference of Parliamentary Lawyers of Ireland and the United Kingdom 2015 took place in Holyrood House (the Scottish Parliament Building), Edinburgh, on 5-6 November.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clerks of both Houses in respect of the performance by them of their statutory and/or mandatory functions and legal matters arising from their ex officio roles (e.g. Registrar of Political Parties; nominating bodies) Committees of the Houses in respect of legal procedure, legal matters arising from the subject matter of their hearings and the performance by them of their statutory functions, where appropriate the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission in support of its governance functions the Service and/or Commission in respect of administrative matters and the performance of statutory and/or corporate functions, including statutory interpretation, FOI, public procurement, employment matters, pensions, data protection, electoral law, copyright and review of contracts 	<p><i>Achievements and Accomplishments in 2015</i></p> <p>The advices sought from the OPLA are increasingly diverse and complex in nature. During the course of year, the OPLA produced approximately 420 legal advices, of which 230 were new files. 80% were in response to advices sought by the Service and 20% were in response to advices sought by Oireachtas Committees.</p> <p><i>UK and Ireland Parliamentary Lawyers' Conference 2015</i></p> <p>The Annual Conference of Parliamentary Lawyers of Ireland and the United Kingdom 2015 was hosted by lawyers to the Scottish Parliament. The conference was held in Holyrood House, Edinburgh on 5 - 6 November 2015. In attendance were parliamentary lawyers from the House of Commons, the National Assembly of Wales, the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Houses of the Oireachtas.</p> <p>Delegates, including the Oireachtas Parliamentary Legal Advisor, gave presentations on topics of particular relevance and interest to the Group.</p>	<p>It ensures that tendering by contract managers is carried out in compliance with national and EU legislation and in line with Office of Government Procurement (OGP) policy and procedures.</p> <p>In 2015, the Procurement Unit proactively engaged with and provided advice and support services for 14 individual tender processes across the Service. It also carried out a number of market sounding exercises to inform the procurement process.</p> <p>The Procurement Unit also liaised closely with the OGP in relation to advice on current and future procurement requirements.</p> <p>Non-compliance with procurement regulations, if any, is reported to the Comptroller and Auditor General in accordance with Department of Finance Circular 40/02: <i>Public Procurement Guidelines</i>. The matter is also referred to in the Annual Appropriation Account in the Statement of Internal Financial Control.</p>
<p>Other responsibilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> managing the conduct of litigation arising from the performance by members of their parliamentary functions/ matters relating to the Houses and the Committees thereof and/ or the Commission furnishing members and/or the Service with legal briefings on matters of general interest to the Houses to raise awareness of legal developments (e.g. court judgments) 	<p><i>Objectives and Planned Activities and Initiatives for 2016</i></p> <p>The OPLA is currently scoping the provision of an enhanced legislative drafting service for the drafting of Private Members' Bills.</p> <p><i>Procurement Unit</i></p> <p>The Procurement Unit provides best practice advice to staff of the Service in relation to public procurement.</p>	<p><i>Objectives and Planned Initiatives in 2016:</i></p> <p><i>Procurement Shared Services</i></p> <p>All new tenders for 2016 will continue to be prepared by the Service while the OGP will continue to provide support and procurement advice. A Service Level Agreement will be drawn up with OGP to ensure that the Service's business requirements and priorities are aligned with OGP operational plans and capacities.</p> <p>The Service is committed to good</p>

procurement practice and will continue to engage with OGP centralised arrangements in relation to requests for tender, contracts and central framework agreements for sourcing common goods and services where beneficial to the Service.

EFFICIENCY REVIEW PROGRAMME

Efficiency Evaluation Programme

The Service's approach to its Efficiency Evaluation Programme was reviewed by the MC in 2015. Following the review the MC agreed an Efficiency Evaluation Programme for 2015-2016. The programme uses a four pillar approach – business process improvement, efficiency reviews of discretionary spend, post-project benefits assessments, and performance measurement.

Following on from an analysis of the Service's discretionary (non-pay) and supplier spend carried out in 2015, key areas for evaluation were selected for 2016.

Business Process Improvement

Business Process Improvement (BPI) Projects are a component of the Service's efficiency evaluation programme. BPI is aimed at systematically improving the performance of a system of work by streamlining the underlying processes.

The following processes were examined in 2015:



Ceann Comhairle, Seán Barrett TD, and President of the Chamber of Deputies of the Parliament of Romania, Valeriu Ștefan Zgonea, signed a memorandum of understanding on mutual cooperation, with respect to principle of parliamentary autonomy, in the preparation of the parliamentary dimension of the Presidency of the European Union during the Romanian Presidency in 2019.

Pre-paid Envelopes Distribution Process

A BPI report on the process for the pre-paid envelopes process was finalised in 2015 and presented to the Management Committee. The report includes recommendations for the administration of the allocation of envelopes to members and on stock control processes and systems that will be implemented during 2016.

Parliamentary Question (PQ) process

The working group established in 2014 following a BPI of the PQ processes met five times during 2015 and produced a draft Guide to Parliamentary Questions. This booklet is intended as a summary guide to the Parliamentary Questions (PQs) processes and procedures.

The adoption of the Guide is on hold pending decisions on Dáil reform.

Project Management

Project management training to support the implementation of the Service's Project Management Guidelines and Toolkit was provided in early 2015.

APPENDIX 1

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

COM Documents - COM documents are working documents of the European Commission. There are three types of COM documents:

- Proposals for legislation
- Communications - these are pre-legislative consultative documents
- Reports on the implementation of policy - these reports analyse and evaluate the implementation of existing EU laws or policies

COSAC - (Conférence des Organes Spécialisés dans les Affaires Communautaires) is the Conference of the committees of the national parliaments of the European Union Member States dealing with European affairs as well as representatives of the European Parliament. Each year COSAC meets twice in plenary session usually in May and October. Each plenary session is preceded by a meeting of Chairpersons of Committees to prepare the agenda for the plenary session and usually meeting in February and July.

Commission – The Houses of the Oireachtas Commission is the body responsible for the running of the Houses of the Oireachtas and is the governing body of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service. The Commission is responsible for determining financial and administrative policy for the delivery of programmes and services to the Houses and their members to support them in carrying out their parliamentary functions. It also oversees implementation of those policies by the Houses of the Oireachtas Service (the Service).

Governance – The system by which an organisation is directed, controlled and held to account. Good governance is central to the effective operation of public bodies. It is vitally important in effectively discharging their statutory and policy obligations. It ensures that a framework of structures, policies and processes are in place to deliver on these obligations and it allows for an objective assessment of management and corporate performance.

ECPRD – The European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation. The ECPRD acts as

a channel for inter-parliamentary cooperation and information exchange for parliamentary staff.

Legislative Drafting Service – Legal drafting expertise available to members of the Houses of the Oireachtas in drafting Private Members' Bills. Legal drafters, who are qualified lawyers, act on the instructions of Members regarding the purpose and objective of a proposed Private Member's Bill.

Library & Research Service (L&RS) – the Library & Research Service delivers information and research services to support the work of the Houses of the Oireachtas and Members of the Houses. The L&RS also has a corporate information management role with responsibility for freedom of information and records management.

Management Committee The Management Committee (MC) of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service consists of the Secretary General, the Assistant Secretary, Corporate and Members' Services, the Assistant Secretary, Parliamentary Services, the Clerk of the Seanad, and the chairs of the three sub-Committees of the MC. The MC meets to consider and decide on issues of key strategic, operational or financial importance, which may then be referred to the Commission as appropriate.

Procedural Services – procedural services are those concerned with advice to the Chairpersons 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 of the Chair, Order Papers).

Risk – is defined as “the effect of uncertainty on objectives” (ISO 3000). It implies the likelihood of an event occurring and the impact if it does occur. Risk management involves proactively identifying and

mitigating the threats so that potential risk can be minimised or responded to appropriately.

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. The sectoral committees undertake scrutiny of the work of the relevant Government Department and related policy areas e.g. the Joint Committees on Transport, Foreign Affairs, etc.

Statement of Resources – the staffing resource requirements for each business unit to carry out its functions is determined following an annual review process and includes necessary adjustments to ensure that requirements are kept up to date.

The Service – The Houses of the Oireachtas Service 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

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

3 Year Budget 2013—2015 fixed by 2012 Act = €324m

Breaks down as follows:	
	€m
2013 Outturn	€101
2014 Provisional Outturn	€102.6
2015 Forecast	€107.4
Current 3 Year Projection	€311

Category	2015 Outturn	2015 Budget	Variance	
	€000	€000		
Administration and Services	45,887	48,789	-6%	Underspend
International Parliamentary Activities	372	526	-29%	Underspend
Members' Staff Pay and Pensions	21,023	20,888	1%	Overspend
Members (incl. MEPs) Pay and Pensions	30,299	30,779	-2%	Underspend
Members and Former Members Allowances and Expenses	9,689	10,999	-12%	Underspend
Committee Travel	87	130	-33%	Underspend
Other Committee Expenses	58	167	-65%	Underspend
	107,418	112,297	-4%	Underspend

Statement of Resources (Civil Service staff only) 2015 - 2016 [at 31 December 2015]*

Grades	Numbers as approved by Commission in 2008	Approved numbers in 2015 including fixed term contracts	Total numbers in place December 2015
Sec Gen	1	1	0
Assistant Secretary	1	2	2
Director (PO (higher))	3	1	1
PO (standard)	17.5	16	16
AP	45.5	50	41
Advisory Counsel Grade III			6
AO	0	6	4
Senior Clerk	40	42	41
Junior Clerk	52	53	53
Staff Officer	-	1	1
Telephonist	-	3	3
CO	84	71	70
Head Usher/Deputy Head Usher	3	3	3
Usher Grade Team Leader	9	8	8
Superintendent's Section	81	77	72
Assistant Editor	7	7	7
Deputy Editor	3	3	3
Translator Grad I	2	2	2
Translator Grad II	4	9	5
Translator Grad III	14	12	12
Outreach Officer	4	0	0
Reporters	39	39	37
Assistant Librarian	5.5	5	5
Senior Researchers	4.5	6	6
Researchers	15	21	18
Records Manager post	0	1	0
Specialist , Temporary and Other	0	2	2
3 ICT ringfenced posts	3	0	0
Total Civil Service Staff in Place (excluding Inquiry staff)	438	435	418
Oireachtas Banking Inquiry			
Support Staffing (Civil Servants)		48	24
Investigative Staff		16	15
Total		64	39
Cumulative totals		474	457

*Figures by grade have been rounded.



Comptroller and Auditor General

Report for presentation to the Houses of the Oireachtas

Houses of the Oireachtas Commission

I have audited the appropriation account of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission for the year ended 31 December 2015 under the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Act 2003. The account has been prepared under the accounting policies stated therein and in the form prescribed under Section 14 of the Act.

Responsibilities of the Commission and of the Accounting Officer

The Commission is responsible for the preparation of the account. The Accounting Officer is responsible 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 account.

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

Opinion on the account

In my opinion, the account properly presents the receipts and payments of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission for the year ended 31 December 2015.

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 money has not been applied for the purposes intended or where the transactions did not conform to the authorities governing them, or
- the statement on internal financial control does not reflect the Commission's compliance with the requirements for such statements set out in the Report of the Working Group on the Accountability of Secretaries General and Accounting Officers, 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.

Seamus McCarthy
Comptroller and Auditor General

30 June 2016



HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION

ACCOUNTS OF THE
HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION
FOR THE PERIOD FROM 1 JANUARY TO 31 DECEMBER 2015
*(kept in accordance with the Houses of the
Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2015)*

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HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION – ACCOUNTS 2015

Introduction

As Accounting Officer for the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (“the Commission”), I am required each year to prepare the 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 2015 for the salaries and expenses of the Commission, 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 2015 (“the Acts”), of the amount of moneys required by the Commission in respect of ongoing expenditure for the year ended 31 December 2015.

The Commission is funded on a three year statutory cycle under the Acts. The format of the account is specifically laid out in Schedule 1 of the Acts. In the event that there are differences between the format of the Commission Accounts and the circulars governing the rules and format of the accounts from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, I am legally obliged to adhere to the Commission Acts as this primary legislation takes precedence over administrative Department circulars.

There was a surplus for the year of €7,669,223.

The accounts of the grant-in-aid in respect of inter-parliamentary activities and the grant-in-aid to the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly are presented in Note 7.

The Statement of Accounting Policies and Principles and notes 1 to 7 form part of the account. With regard to the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform Circular 13/2014 on “The Management and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds”, the format of the Commission’s account is governed by the Acts. The changes in the circular will be implemented for the year ended 2016.

Statement on Internal Financial Control

Responsibility for system of Internal Financial Control

As Accounting Officer, I acknowledge my responsibility for ensuring that an effective system of internal financial control is maintained and operated by the Houses of the Oireachtas Service (“the Service”). This responsibility is exercised in the context of the resources available to me. Also, any system of internal financial control can provide only reasonable and not absolute assurance that assets are safeguarded, transactions are authorised and properly recorded, and that material errors or irregularities are either prevented or would be detected in a timely manner. Maintaining the system of internal financial controls is a continuous process and the system and its effectiveness are kept under ongoing review.

The position in regard to the financial control environment, the framework of administrative procedures, management reporting and internal audit is as follows:

Financial Control Environment

I confirm that a control environment containing the following elements is in place:

- financial responsibilities have been assigned at management level with corresponding accountability;
- reporting arrangements have been established at all levels where responsibility for financial management has been assigned;
- formal procedures have been established for reporting significant control failures and ensuring appropriate corrective action;

HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION – ACCOUNTS 2015

- there is an Audit Committee to advise me in discharging my responsibilities for the internal financial control system.

Administrative Controls and Management Reporting

I confirm that a framework of administrative procedures and regular management reporting is in place including segregation of duties and a system of delegation and accountability and, in particular, that -

- there is an appropriate budgeting system with an annual budget which is kept under review by senior management;
- there are regular reviews by senior management of periodic and annual financial reports which indicate financial performance against forecasts;
- a risk management system operates within the Service;
- there are systems aimed at ensuring the security of the ICT systems;
- there are appropriate capital investment control guidelines and formal project management disciplines; and
- the Service ensures that there is an appropriate focus on good practice in purchasing and that procedures are in place to ensure compliance with all relevant guidelines. The Service is compliant with all relevant guidelines regarding procurement with the exception of 13 contracts to the value of €472,669 that did not comply with the relevant procurement guidelines. Included in this figure is an amount of €450,579 details of which have been included on the 40/02 return. The Service is actively managing these contracts and reviewing procurement arrangements.

Internal Audit and Audit Committee

I confirm that the Service has an internal audit function, which operates in accordance with a written charter which the Management Committee (MC) have approved. Its work is informed by analysis of the financial and other risks to which the Service is exposed and its annual internal audit plans, approved by me and the Audit Committee, are based on this analysis. These plans aim to cover the key controls on a rolling basis over a reasonable period. The internal audit function is reviewed periodically by me and the Audit Committee.

The Audit Committee operates in accordance with the terms of reference set out in the Acts. Its work is also governed by a written charter, approved by the MC and the Audit Committee and is subject to regular review. Its responsibilities include advising on the form of accounts of the Commission as well as on risk management, internal audit and internal controls.

I have put procedures in place to ensure that all internal audit recommendations are followed up and progress on implementation is reported on regularly to both me, the MC and the Audit Committee.

PETER FINNEGAN
Accounting Officer
HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION
29th June 2016

HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION – ACCOUNTS 2015

Statement of Accounting Policies and Principles

Reporting Period

The reporting period is the year ended 31 December 2015.

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 Public Expenditure and Reform. The Acts require that the Commission keep the accounts in such form as may be approved of by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. The Minister has directed that the accounts be kept in the form of an appropriation account.

The 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 Public Expenditure and Reform in accordance with the Acts.

Receipts

Receipts of the Commission specified in Schedule 2 of the Acts are used by the Commission for the purposes of the performance of its functions.

Superannuation

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

Superannuation payments for retired civil servants and catering staff are met on a current basis from Vote 12- Superannuation and Retired Allowances. Direct provision for superannuation does not appear in the Appropriation Accounts of other Votes.

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 instruction for payment has been executed.

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 Account. In cases where payment has not been effected and matured liabilities are outstanding at year end, the amount of such liabilities are reported in a note to the Account (Note 2).

Accruals

The 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 Commission in the year.
- a balance sheet showing the Commission's assets and liabilities at year end (Note 2), and explanatory notes providing details regarding capital assets, capital assets under development, the net liability to the Exchequer and commitments.

The balance sheet includes the position at year-end in relation to the following:

- **Accrued expenses** — these represent all liabilities at the balance sheet date with the exception of 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. Travel and subsistence liabilities are recognised when travel has been completed.
- **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** — this income due to the Commission at the end of the year of account which has yet to be received.
- **Deferred Income** — this represents income received by the Commission during the year of account for goods/ services which it has yet to provide.

Capital Assets

Leinster House is vested in the Office of Public Works and is therefore not included in these accounts.

The opening and closing values of capital assets on the Commission's register and details of depreciation are shown by way of note to the balance sheet.

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.

Valuation of Assets

Equipment, Furniture and Fittings

Equipment, furniture and fittings are valued at cost.

Depreciation

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%.
- Major operational software systems — 10%.

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 note shows the funding position at the balance sheet date taking into account the issues from the Exchequer on a cumulative/rolling basis. The breakdown of that figure in terms of bank/cash balances, debtors' receipts due and current liabilities are also shown.

Commitments

A commitment is a contractual obligation to pay on delivery for goods or services which have yet to be supplied at year-end.

A note provides figures for commitments likely to materialise in subsequent years under procurement.

Contingent Liabilities

A contingent liability arises in any situation where past or current actions or events create a risk of a call on the Exchequer funds in the future. Contingent liabilities are not recognised in the account but are disclosed by way of a note unless the possibility of an outflow of resources is remote.

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 Dáil Éireann 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 Public Expenditure and Reform considers that a note should be given.

Legal Costs

In cases where cumulative legal costs incurred in the year of account exceed €50,000 a note is provided with a breakdown of the total costs into:

- Legal fees, and
- Compensation paid.

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. Severance/redundancy amounts are also disclosed where material.

Late Payments

In the case of interest payments under the Late Payment in Commercial Transactions Regulations, 2012 (as revised in 2013), information is supplied where:

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

Fraud or Suspected Fraud

In the case of losses due to fraud or suspected fraud, information is supplied where;

- The total losses during the accounting period were €100,000 or more; or
- an individual loss was €10,000 or more; or
- for losses under €10,000, a serious issue of principle arises or where the Comptroller and Auditor General or the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform considers that a disclosure should be made.

Commissions and Inquiries

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

Petty Cash

Amounts relating to petty cash are included in the PMG balance disclosure.

Bank and Cash

“Bank and Cash” include all commercial bank accounts balances (payroll and other vote related accounts) held at year-end which are funded by the Exchequer or contain receipts. The note separately identifies PMG from commercial bank accounts.

Grant-in-Aid Fund and Miscellaneous Accounts

Where relevant, accounts of grant-in-aid funds financed from this account and of other miscellaneous accounts are presented in (Note 7).

HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION – ACCOUNTS 2015

**Houses of the Oireachtas Commission
Appropriation Account 2015**

	2015* Estimate provision €000	2015 Outturn €000	2014 Outturn €000
1. Administration			
(a) Salaries, wages and allowances in respect of staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service	26,754	26,305	23,286
(b) Travel and subsistence	334	250	223
(c) Training and development and incidental expenses	3,497	1,819	1,423
(d) Postal and telecommunications services	877	747	678
(e) Office equipment and external IT services	7,070	8,419	7,240
(f) Office premises expenses	3,217	2,842	2,039
(g) Consultancy services and value for money and policy review	813	415	430
(h) Parliamentary printing	1,400	695	956
(i) Library and research services	727	550	435
(j) Public relations and communications	141	115	56
2. Other services			
(a) Payment in respect of catering and bar staff	1,635	1,509	1,587
(b) Expenses of delegates to other parliamentary assemblies	141	125	118
(c) Televising of proceedings of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann and other services	2,325	2,217	2,958
(d) Grant-in-aid in respect of inter-parliamentary activities	210	146	116
(e) Grant-in-aid to British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly	125	95	95
(f) North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association	50	12	9
(g) Termination allowances in respect of former members of the Houses of the Oireachtas	58	21	15
(h) Grant to Irish Parliamentary (former Members) Society	10	10	10
(i) Grant-in-aid in respect of "Ciste Pinsean Thithe an Oireachtais"	11,114	10,709	11,076
(j) Pension scheme for secretarial assistants	892	948	973
3. Membership of Dáil Éireann			
(a) Salaries of members (including Office Holders and Chairpersons of Committees)	14,840	14,798	14,720
(b) Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for non-office holding members	17,331	17,401	17,100
(c) Travel and Accommodation Allowance	3,328	3,180	3,199
(d) Public Representation Allowance	3,248	3,010	2,977
(e) Other allowances	2,250	1,740	1,630
4. Membership of Seanad Éireann			
(a) Salaries of members (including Office Holders and Chairpersons of Committees)	4,016	3,998	3,992
(b) Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for non-office holding members	2,665	2,616	2,663
(c) Travel and Accommodation Allowance	1,218	1,180	1,157
(d) Public Representation Allowance	734	581	516
(e) Other allowances	211	47	47
5. Membership of Oireachtas Committees			
(a) Travel expenses	130	88	69
(b) Other expenses relating to Committees	167	58	53
6. Membership of European Parliament			
(a) Salaries of members of the European Parliament	87	87	87
(b) Pensions of former members of the European Parliament	684	686	644
Gross Expenditure	112,297	107,419	102,577
DEDUCT			
Receipts of the Commission	-	(2,791)	(381)
Net Expenditure	112,297	104,628	102,196
Surplus for the year		€7,669,223	€6,146,272

* The estimate provision is as published on July 2014. Any apparent discrepancies in totals are due to rounding of constituent figures

Notes to the Appropriation Account

1 Operating Cost Statement 2015

	Note	€000	2015 €000	2014 €000
Pay			79,078	76,143
Non-Pay			<u>28,341</u>	<u>26,434</u>
Gross expenditure			107,419	102,577
Deduct				
Receipts			<u>(2,791)</u>	<u>(381)</u>
Net expenditure			104,628	102,196
Changes in capital assets	2.2			
Purchases Cash		(915)		
Depreciation		942		
Loss on disposals		<u>31</u>	58	(287)
Changes in net current assets				
Increase in closing accruals		50		
Increase in stock	2.4	<u>(50)</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>129</u>
Direct expenditure			104,686	102,038
Expenditure borne elsewhere				
Net allied services expenditure (Cash)	1.1		21,018	23,253
Notional Rents	1.2		<u>4,982</u>	<u>4,982</u>
Net Programme cost			<u><u>130,686</u></u>	<u><u>130,273</u></u>

1.1 Net Allied Services

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

			2015 €000	2014 €000
Vote 9	Office of the Revenue Commissioners	e	90	90
Vote 12	Superannuation and Retired Allowances	e	3,308	3,172
Vote 13	Office of Public Works		4,052	5,178
	Central Fund:			
	Parliamentary Activities Allowances to Leaders		7,645	7,930
	Payments to qualified parties under the Electoral Acts 1992 to 2015		5,456	5,456
	Re-imbursements of Electoral Expenses		166	1,091
	Pensions in respect of former Cinn Comhairle (No. 38 of 1938, etc.)		<u>301</u>	<u>336</u>
			<u><u>21,018</u></u>	<u><u>23,253</u></u>

"e" indicates that the number is an estimated value or an apportioned cost.

1.2

The notional rents figure above relates to the amount of rent estimated by the Office of Public Works that it could earn based on the market rental of a building of similar size to Leinster House in Dublin city centre.

HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION – ACCOUNTS 2015

2 Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2015

	Note	2015 €000	2014 €000
Capital Assets	2.2	<u>2,109</u>	<u>2,167</u>
Current Assets			
Stocks	2.4	250	200
Prepayments		2,609	2,001
Accrued income		606	583
Other debit balances	2.5	<u>633</u>	<u>224</u>
Total Current Assets		<u><u>4,098</u></u>	<u><u>3,008</u></u>
Less Current Liabilities			
Bank and cash	2.3	187	(1,514)
Net Liability due to the Exchequer	2.7	4	(1,188)
Accrued expenses		1,573	892
Other credit balances	2.6	<u>442</u>	<u>2,926</u>
Total Current Liabilities		<u><u>2,206</u></u>	<u><u>1,116</u></u>
Net Current Assets		<u>1,892</u>	<u>1,892</u>
Net Assets		<u><u>4,001</u></u>	<u><u>4,059</u></u>
Represented By:			
State Funding Account		<u><u>4,001</u></u>	<u><u>4,059</u></u>

2.1 State Funding Account

		2015 €000	2014 €000
Balance at 1 January		4,059	3,901
Disbursements by the Commission			
Estimate provision	Account*	112,297	
Surplus	Account*	<u>(7,669)</u>	
Net Vote		104,628	102,196
Expenditure (cash) borne elsewhere	Note 1	21,018	23,253
Non cash expenditure - notional rent	Note 1	4,982	4,982
Net programme cost	Note 1	<u>(130,686)</u>	<u>(130,273)</u>
Balance at 31 December		<u><u>4,001</u></u>	<u><u>4,059</u></u>

*Note: "Account" refers to the face of the Appropriation Account

2.2 Capital Assets

	IT Equipment €000	Furniture and Fittings €000	Office Equipment €000	Total* €000
Gross Assets				
Cost or valuation at 1 January 2015	7,787	2,340	16,019	26,146
Additions	532	311	72	915
Disposals	(105)		(411)	(516)
Gross assets at 31 December 2015	8,214	2,651	15,680	26,545
Accumulated Depreciation:				
Opening balance at 1 January 2015	7,013	2,129	14,836	23,978
Depreciation for the year	408	197	337	942
Depreciation on disposals	(83)	-	(401)	(484)
Cumulative depreciation at 31 December 2015	7,338	2,326	14,772	24,436
Net Assets at 31 December 2015	876	325	908	2,109
Net Assets at 31 December 2014	773	211	1,183	2,167

* Any apparent discrepancies in totals are due to rounding of constituent figures

2.3 Bank and Cash

	2015 €000	2014 €000
at 31 December		
PMG balances	(188)	1,513
Commercial Bank Account	1	1
	<u>(187)</u>	<u>1,514</u>

2.4 Stocks

	2015 €000	2014 €000
at 31 December		
Stationery	89	69
IT consumables	122	85
Other	39	46
	<u>250</u>	<u>200</u>
Catering Stock *	<u>33</u>	<u>37</u>

* Stock total in the balance sheet does not include Catering Stock

HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION – ACCOUNTS 2015

2.5 Other Debit Balances

	2015	2014
	€000	€000
at 31 December		
Recoupable salaries	13	13
Recoupment of travel schemes	211	204
Other debit items	<u>409</u>	<u>7</u>
	<u>633</u>	<u>224</u>

2.6 Other Credit Balances

	2015	2014
	€000	€000
at 31 December		
Amounts due to the State		
Income tax	-	1,099
Pay Related Social Insurance	-	574
Professional Services Withholding Tax	189	141
Value Added Tax	251	31
Pension Contributions	2	169
Pension levy	-	282
Universal Social Charge	<u>-</u>	<u>335</u>
	442	2,631
Payroll deductions held in suspense	<u>-</u>	<u>295</u>
	<u>442</u>	<u>2,926</u>

2.7 Net amount due (from) / to the Exchequer

		2015	2014
		€000	€000
at 31 December			
Surplus		7,669	6,146
Exchequer grant undrawn		<u>(6,477)</u>	<u>(7,317)</u>
Net Exchequer Funding Due		1,192	(1,171)
Balance brought forward at 1 January		<u>(1,188)</u>	<u>(17)</u>
		<u><u>4</u></u>	<u><u>(1,188)</u></u>

Represented by:**Debtors**

Bank	2.3	-	1,514
Debit balances: suspense	2.5	<u>633</u>	<u>224</u>
		633	1,738

Creditors

Bank	2.3	(187)	-
Due to State	2.6	(442)	(2,631)
Credit balances: suspense	2.6	<u>-</u>	<u>(295)</u>
		(629)	(2,926)
		<u><u>4</u></u>	<u><u>(1,188)</u></u>

2.8 Commitments

		2015	2014
		€000	€000
at 31 December			
Global commitments			
Procurement subheads		85	708
Grant subheads		-	-

HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION – ACCOUNTS 2015

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% (25% in the case of administrative subheads).

Under section 13(3)(b) of the Acts, the Statement of Estimates of the Commission, following its noting by Dáil Éireann, must be furnished by the Secretary General to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform not later than thirty days before the presentation by the Minister to Dáil Éireann of the Estimates of Receipts and Expenditure in that year. Therefore, as the Budget has now been brought forward from December to October, the practical issue here is that the Estimate for the Commission for any year must be completed as early as mid-July of the preceding year. This statutory requirement has been amended in the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Amendment Act 2015.

Description	Sub-Head	Less/(more) than provided €000	Explanation
Administration Non-Pay			
Training and development and incidental expenses	1(c)	1,678	(1) A provision of €1m had been included for the replacement of the e-voting and sound systems in the Chambers which did not happen in 2015. (2) A contingency of €300k was included to provide for election expenditure which was not required in 2015. (3) Non-pay expenditure on the Banking Inquiry was underspent by €317k.
Office Equipment and External IT Services	1(e)	(1,350)	The implementation of a number of large projects accounted for the overspend (1) Security and Event Management (€232k), (2) Visitor Management System (102k), (3) Electronic Point of Sale (€110), (4) Virtualisation (€324k), (5) Members Admin System (€264k) and (6) Managed Print Service (€47k) and a number of other smaller projects.
Consultancy Services and Value for Money and Policy Review	1(g)	398	The saving arose due to (1) a less than anticipated requirement for external legal advice and (2) provision was made for consultancy for the webcasting project which did not take place in 2015.
Parliamentary Printing	1(h)	705	The saving arose due to reduced demand and costs savings as a result of work undertaken in-house therefore reducing the level of work required by the contracted printer.
Library & Research Services	1(i)	177	The main reason for the underspend was (1) the Library & Research Service went out to tender in 2014 for a press monitoring service and the new contract was significantly less than budgeted for (2) there was no research requiring outside special subject competence in 2015 and (3) there was less once-off consultancy required than envisaged.
Other Services			
Payment in Respect of Catering and Bar Staff	2(a)	(126)	the saving arose due to an underspend in basic pay as a number of vacancies arose in 2015.
Televising of proceedings of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann and other services	2(c)	107	The underspend mainly relates to a webcasting project which did not take place and for which €270,000 was allocated. Other projects exceeded their budget allocation such as increased costs for the operations of Oireachtas TV and for the production of additional content for Oireachtas TV. This reduced the underspend.
Grant-in-aid in respect inter-parliamentary activities	2(d)	64	The saving arose as there was less travel undertaken than had been budgeted for.
Grant-in-aid in respect of "Ciste Pinsean Thithe an Oireachtais"	2(i)	405	Pensions to former Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service are paid from this sub-head. There was an unused contingency provision of €250k. This, in addition to deaths of pensioners during the year contributed to the saving.

HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION – ACCOUNTS 2015

Description	Sub-Head	Less/(more) than provided €000	Explanation
Membership of Dáil Éireann			
Public Representation Allowance	3(d)	238	The saving arose due to a requirement to make a provision for full drawdown. However, some Members did not claim their full entitlement.
Other allowances	3(e)	510	The saving arose due to a requirement to make a provision for full drawdown. However, some Members did not claim their full entitlement.
Membership of Seanad Éireann			
Public Representation Allowance	4(d)	153	The saving arose due to a requirement to make a provision for full drawdown. However, some Members did not claim their full entitlement.
Other allowances	4(e)	165	The saving arose due to a requirement to make a provision for full drawdown. However, some Members did not claim their full entitlement.
Membership of Oireachtas Committees			
Expenses relating to Committees	5(b)	108	The saving arose due to underspends on consultancy and legal advice. These amounts are provided as a contingency in the event outside advice is required. Legal advice is procured by the Parliamentary Legal Advisor on behalf of Committees where it cannot be provided, in-house, in the first instance.

HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION – ACCOUNTS 2015

4 Receipts

4.1 Receipts of the Commission

In accordance with the provisions of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2012 receipts of the Commission specified in Schedule 2 to the Act shall be used by it for the purposes of the performance of its functions.

The 2015 financial statements record total receipts of €2,795,842 retained by the Commission and offset against its gross expenditure. Receipts of €2,523,427 relate to pension related deductions on public service remuneration, receipts of €224,500 relate to Broadcasting services, receipts of €41,801 relate Catering and Bar services and the remaining €879 received in 2015 was retained by the Commission and offset against its gross expenditure. Receipts of €5,235 relate to MEP pension contributions and are off-set against Pensions of former members of the European Parliament.

	2015 * Realised €000	2014 Realised €000
1 Sales of services of Broadcasting Unit	42	30
2 Net income from catering and bar services	225	332
3 Members' contributions under the European Parliament (Irish Representatives) Pension Scheme, 1979	5	7
4 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	2,524	111
	<u>2,796</u>	<u>480</u>

- * The estimate for the receipts of the Commission was nil for the following two reasons:
- The estimate negotiated by the Commission with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) is a gross estimate only and the receipts are not part of these negotiation discussions.
 - The types of receipts being included in Note 4 is discussed on an ongoing basis with DPER and an estimate cannot be given with any degree of certainty.

4.2 Extra Receipts Payable to the Exchequer

	2015 €000	2014 €000
Balance at 1 January	12	-
Receipts in respect of superannuation associated with seconded staff	-	68
**Transferred to Vote 12 Superannuation and Retired Allowances	<u>(12)</u>	<u>(56)</u>
Balance at 31 December	<u>-</u>	<u>12</u>

**In 2015 the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform informed the Commission that receipts in respect of superannuation associated with seconded staff at 31 December 2014, along with all future receipts of this nature, should be transferred to Vote 12 Superannuation and Retired Allowances.

5 Employee Numbers and Pay

Houses of the Oireachtas Service*

	2015	2014
Number of staff at year end (full time equivalents)	<u>506</u>	<u>466</u>
	€000	€000
Pay	23,954	21,683
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	303	249
Other allowances	195	200
Overtime	1,094	1,053
Shift and roster allowances	412	392
Employer's PRSI	<u>1,937</u>	<u>1,675</u>
Total pay	<u>27,895</u>	<u>25,252</u>

Scheme of Secretarial Assistance for Non-Office Holding Members/Parties*

	2015	2014
Number of staff at year end (full time equivalents)	<u>411</u>	<u>381</u>
	€000	€000
Pay	16,679	16,470
Redundancy payments	19	96
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	1	-
Overtime and extra attendance	2,252	2,082
Employer's PRSI	<u>1,962</u>	<u>1,925</u>
Total pay	<u>20,913</u>	<u>20,573</u>

*On the payroll of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service

5.1 Allowances and Overtime Payments

	Number of recipients	Recipients of €10,000 or more	Maximum individual payment 2015 €	Maximum individual payment 2014 €
Houses of the Oireachtas Service				
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	65	6	43,982	20,111
Other allowances	133	2	38,719	34,345
Overtime	218	34	23,264	20,301
Shift and roster allowances	77	-	7,432	7,724
Number of individuals who received extra remuneration in more than one category	124	67	38,719	-
Scheme of Secretarial Assistance for Non-Office Holding Members/Parties				
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	1	-	492	-
Overtime and extra attendance	471	4	14,722	19,119
Number of individuals who received extra remuneration in more than one category	1	-	5891.93	-

HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION – ACCOUNTS 2015

5.2 Other Remuneration Arrangements

Payments totalling €67,468 were paid to retired civil servants whose services were employed on various interview boards, specialist parliamentary and governance tasks. Pension abatement rules were applied in full compliance with Department of Public Expenditure and Reform circulars.

A Voluntary Early Retirement payment of €19,202 and a statutory redundancy payment of €5,928 was paid to one secretarial assistant.

The terms of the AHCPs/IMPACT (PCW 1% Restructuring Agreement) were implemented resulting in a total payment of €58,870 in 34 instances.

5.3 Salary overpayments

In 2015, the Commission identified 73 instances of overpayments totalling €45,567. A total of €37,894 was recovered in 2015. At 31st December 2015, 13 cases remained outstanding with a balance of €63,930, 4 of which relate to 2014. The Commission is in correspondence with the persons in receipt of the overpayments in order to pursue recoupment.

	2015	2014
	€	€
Outstanding balance 1 January	56,257	-
Overpayments identified in the year	45,567	91,541
Repayments made in the year	(37,894)	(35,284)
Outstanding balance at 31 December	63,930	56,257
Number of cases at 31 December	13	4

6 Miscellaneous Items

6.1 Contingent Liabilities

The Commission is involved in a number of legal proceedings which may generate liabilities depending on the outcome but due to this uncertainty no estimate of the amount involved can be determined at this point.

6.2 Late Payment Interest and Compensation	2015	2014
	€	€
Total of interest and compensation due	1,420	1,553

6.3 Commissions and Special Inquiries

Fixed Term Commissions and Special Inquiries	Year of Appointment	Cumulative Expenditure to end 2015	2015 Outturn	2014 Outturn
		€000	€000	€000
Banking Inquiry Costs	2014	6204	5,297	907

6.4 Tax liability discharged	2015	2014
	€000	€000
	57	194

6.5 Legal Costs

Legal cost paid during the year are categorised as follows:

					2015	2014
	Number of cases	Legal costs paid by the Commission €000	Compensation awarded €000	Legal Costs awarded €000	Total €000	€000
Claims against the Commission	1	7	35	20	62	-

7 Grant-in-aid and Miscellaneous Accounts

7.1 BRITISH-IRISH PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

ACCOUNT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2015

	2015 €	2014 €
Balance at 1 January	13,460	11,214
Receipts		
Grant-in-Aid [subhead 2(e)]	95,000	95,000
Miscellaneous receipts	-	80
Total Receipts	95,000	95,080
Payments		
Plenary sessions	49,910	67,215
Committees	11,577	21,004
Miscellaneous	3,034	4,615
Total Payments	64,521	92,834
Balance as at 31 December	43,939	13,460

7.2

CUMANN PARLAIMINTEACH NA hÉIREANN

ACCOUNT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS
FOR YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2015

	2015 €	2014 €
Receipts		
Grant-in-Aid [subhead 2(d)]	145,908	116,473
Members Subscriptions	2,159	2,165
Reimbursements		917
Miscellaneous	830	19
Total Receipts	148,897	119,574
Payments		
Expenses of Irish delegations on foreign visits	7,612	19,601
Expenses of foreign delegations visiting Ireland	14,711	9,626
Inter Parliamentary Union Conference Expenses	42,381	19,886
Other Expenses	66,044	57,870
Total Payments	130,748	106,983
Surplus / (Deficit) for year	18,149	12,591
Opening Balance	32,632	20,041
Balance as at 31 December	50,781	32,632

7.3 CISTE PINSEAN THITHE AN OIREACHTAIS (COMHALTAÍ)

Grant-in-Aid funding of €10.709m in respect of Ciste Pinsean Thithe an Oireachtais is charged to subhead 2(i). The pension fund is governed by three trustees who are responsible for preparing an account and for ensuring the regularity of the transactions. The account is separately audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General.

INTRODUCTION

This Output Statement sets out the Commission's strategies and associated key outputs.

In recommending an annual output statement that links outputs, resources and strategic objectives, the intention of the department of Public Expenditure and Reform 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 annual output statement is published in its annual report .

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION'S KEY OBJECTIVES

The mission of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission is to serve the democratic interests of our main stakeholders, the Irish people, by serving Parliament through: enabling the Houses of the Oireachtas, their Committees and members to do their parliamentary business , and meeting member's' needs as public representatives in the context of parliamentary business.

Strategic Objectives and Key Outputs
<i>Improving Services to Parliament</i> - The Chairpersons and members of the Houses and their Committees can be assured of continuous, high quality parliamentary support services.
<i>Improving Services to Members</i> - Members will receive the services they need to fulfil their roles as public representatives through their parliamentary work.
<i>Enhancing Service Capability</i> - The Houses of the Oireachtas Service will achieve the highest standards in public service and parliamentary administration.

IMPROVING SERVICES TO PARLIAMENT

*Strategic Actions and Outputs:**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 cooperation 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.

Key Outputs:

- 3,004 sitting hours of Dáil, Seanad and Committee proceedings supported
- 49 days of public hearings and 300 hours of public sessions of the Banking Inquiry supported
- 131 Bills initiated in the Houses and 3,884 amendments tabled to Bills
- 66 Bills passed by the Houses
- 52,910 Parliamentary Questions processed
- 48 Committee Reports presented
- 3,004 hours of debates recorded and 51,972 takes completed in the production of the official report of the Dáil, Seanad and Committee proceedings
- 522 Commencement Matters processed for debate in the Seanad
- 2,063 requests for Topical Issue debates in the Dáil processed
- 5,037 pages of text translated into the Irish language
- 1,800 documents laid before the Houses
- 992 requests for information responded to by the Communications Unit
- 46 *Bills Digests* produced by the Library & Research Service
- necessary facilities provided to support Oireachtas TV Channel in its first year of broadcasting the parliamentary proceedings on a permanent basis
- use of sign language translations and subtitles on Oireachtas TV to enhance engagement with the parliamentary proceedings

IMPROVING SERVICES TO MEMBERS

Strategic Actions and Outputs:

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.

Key Outputs:

- ICT Unit supported 25,188 incidents logged from members, their staff and staff of the Service
- investment in strategic ICT projects to ensure ICT systems meet members' needs [projects listed on page 53]
- 10 official visits hosted and 102 foreign visits supported by Travel and Inter-parliamentary Section
- salary payments processed in respect of 226 members
- 2,998 members' allowances payments processed to support members in carrying out their parliamentary functions
- 4,855 members' pension payments processed
- 2,359 research requests from members and other users responded to by the Library & Research Service
- 114,000 visitors to Leinster House, including 55,000 visitors on guided tours
- over 3,000 meeting room bookings administered

STAFF NUMBERS AT END DECEMBER 2015

Function	Full time Equivalent Staff	% of staff by Division
OCSG and Office of the Clerk of the Dáil	11.5	2.53%
Clerk of the Seanad	5	1.10%
Corporate and Members' Services	191.98	42.24%
Parliamentary Services	245.99	54.13%
Total	454.47	100%

ENHANCING SERVICE CAPABILITY

Strategic Actions and Outputs:

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 practise 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.

Key Operational Outputs Achieved

- 39 temporary fixed-term posts filled for the engagement of specialist and support staff to support the Joint Committee of Inquiry into the Banking Crisis
- recruitment of specialist staff to support Dáil reform initiatives, including pre-legislative scrutiny by Oireachtas Committees and engagement of specialist staff in ICT, web, broadcasting and legal services
- investment in strategic ICT projects to improve the way we work, including piloting of desktop virtualisation system and installation of new storage system (SAN)
- introduction of infographic publications by L&RS to enhance accessibility of research publications
- introduction of an electronic point of sales system (EPOS) in the catering services to enhance efficiency and customer service
- adoption of a Records Management Policy for the Service
- introduction and piloting of an automated Visitor Management System (VMS)
- implementation of Services Integrated Reform Delivery Plan 2015
- 9,039 financial transactions processed by the Finance Unit
- implementation and review of FOI policy and processes - 176 FOI requests processed
- Consolidated Election 2016 plans for the Service developed and approved

FINANCIAL INFORMATION					
	Actual 2015	Actual 2014	Actual 2013	Variance	
	€000	€000	€000	€000	%
Dáil Éireann					
Pay	32,235	31,819	31,852	383	1%
Non-pay	7,873	7,806	7,594	279	4%
	40,108	39,626	39,446	662	2%
Seanad Éireann					
Pay	6,614	6,655	6,510	105	2%
Non-pay	1,807	1,720	1,811	-4	0%
	8,421	8,375	8,321	100	1%
Oireachtas Committees	146	122	652	-507	-348%
MEPs	773	731	735	39	5%
Administration & Other Services					
Pay	27,813	24,873	24,424	3,389	12%
Non-pay	18,458	16,786	15,297	3,161	17%
Pensions and Redundancy	11,699	12,063	12,112	-413	-4%
	57,970	53,723	51,833	6,137	11%
Gross Expenditure	107,418	102,577	100,986	6,431	6%
Appropriations in Aid	-2,791	-381	-21	-2,770	99%
Net Expenditure	104,627	102,196	100,965	3,662	3%

STAFF NUMBERS BY BUSINESS FUNCTION		
Function	Full time Equivalent Staff	% of staff by business function
Front Line Services	109.88	24.18%
Professional Services	126.61	27.86%
Support Services	125.91	27.70%
Security Services Function	92.07	20.26%
Total	454.47	100%

1. ESTABLISHMENT AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

The Audit Committee was placed on a statutory footing in 2010. The relevant provisions 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 Committee is composed of between five and eight members appointed by the Commission as follows:

- one member of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission
- at least one but not more than 3 other members of either House of the Oireachtas who are not members of the Commission
- at least 2 but not more than 3 external persons nominated by the Secretary General, one of whom is designated by the Commission as Chairperson of the Committee
- one member of the staff of the Service nominated by the Secretary General.

2. CURRENT MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

- Mr. Eddie Sullivan (Chairperson)
- Deputy John Browne (Commission member)
- Deputy Joe Costello
- Deputy Seán Fleming
- Deputy Peter Mathews
- Mr. Cyril Maybury (External member)
- Mr. Bryan O'Sullivan (External member)
- Mr. Charles Hearne, Principal Officer

3. ROLE OF THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

The role of the Committee is:

- to advise the Secretary General on financial matters relating to his or her functions,
- to advise the Commission on matters of corporate governance relating to its functions, and
- to meet at least 4 times annually and 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:

- the proper implementation of public service guidelines on financial matters
- 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
- 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
- the form of accounts of the Commission for approval by the Minister for Finance.

The Head of Internal Audit and the Internal Auditor attend meetings of the Committee, save where the Committee otherwise decides.

The Committee may also invite the person who has responsibility for financial matters in the Service (or any other person it considers appropriate) to attend specific meetings.

4. REPORTING PERIOD

The reporting period for this report is on a calendar year basis to align with the reporting period of the Commission's Annual Report with which it is published.

5. COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES DURING 2015

The Audit Committee met four times during 2015.

The Committee considered the following Internal Audit Reports in 2015:

(i) Internal Audit on Web Services provided by the Communications Unit

This audit was undertaken to determine the risks and controls in place with regard to website services and ascertain whether it is operating in accordance with relevant guidelines

(ii) Internal Audit of Consultancy Services engaged in the Committee Secretariat area

This audit was conducted on the systems the Service has in place to manage consultancies in the Committee Secretariat area to see whether it is operating in accordance with relevant policies

and procurement guidelines and budgets.

(iii) Internal Audit on the Processing of the Payroll for the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance

This audit was conducted on the systems in place to ensure that salaries are paid at the correct and authorised rate (based on relevant legislation), are adequately reviewed and new rates or increases are effected in a timely manner; system and manual calculations are subject to review controls and that it is operating in compliance with relevant circulars, regulations and guidelines.

(iv) Internal Audit on the administration of Members' Pensions

The audit was conducted on the systems in place to ensure that Members' pensions are paid at the correct and authorised rate (based on relevant legislation), are adequately reviewed and new rates or increases are effected in a timely manner; system and manual calculations are subject to review controls and that it is operating in compliance with relevant circulars, regulations and guidelines.

(v) Internal Audit on Stock Management and Stock Procurement in the ICT Unit

This Audit was conducted on the systems in place to ensure that systems and procedures relating to the ordering and the custody of ICT stock are subject to review controls and that it is operating in compliance with relevant circulars, regulations and guidelines.

(vi) Internal Audit on the payment of invoices for the IT Managed Service (Fujitsu)

This Audit was conducted on the control framework relating to the payment of invoices for the IT Managed Service and review its compliance with relevant circulars, regulations, guidelines and the contract in place.

Other reports considered by the Committee:

(vii) Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) Audit Reports

The Audit Committee considered the 2014 C&AG Report on the accounts of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission.

(viii) External Auditor's Report of the Public Representation Allowance (PRA) 2014

The Committee considered the fourth external audit of the Public Representation Allowance since the allowance was introduced by Regulations in March 2010.

The audit noted that all payments to members under the PRA are now fully vouched, and all members are now eligible to be selected for random audit (other than those who voluntarily waive the PRA).

(ix) Implementation of Internal Audit recommendations

The Internal Audit Unit presented reports in July and December regarding the implementation of internal audit recommendations arising from previous Internal Audit reports.

(x) Risk Management

The Committee considered three risk materialisation reports. The risk management process in the Service is monitored and controlled by the Risk Management Committee which ensures that risk management activities are carried out effectively and in a timely manner. The Committee also received a comprehensive briefing on the Service's Risk Framework approach. It approved the newly developed Strategic Risk Register for the Service. The Committee also approved the updated Risk Management Policy for the Service. It noted that strategic risks and operational risks would be reported to the Committee on a quarterly basis.

6. REPRESENTATION ON INTERNAL AUDIT NETWORKS

The Committee noted that 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 7

BILLS INITIATED IN THE HOUSES 2015

No.	Bill Title	Date Initiated
1	Consumer Protection (Regulation of Credit Servicing Firms) Bill 2015	12/01/2015
2	Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill 2015	15/01/2015
3	Teaching Council (Amendment) Bill 2015	21/01/2015
4	Universities (Development and Innovation) (Amendment) Bill 2015 [Seanad] [PMB]	22/01/2015
5	Thirty-fourth Amendment of the Constitution (Marriage Equality) Bill 2015	21/01/2015
6	Thirty-fifth Amendment of the Constitution (Age of Eligibility for Election to the Office of President) Bill 2015	22/01/2015
7	Public Services and Procurement (Social Value) Bill 2015 [Seanad] [PMB]	04/02/2015
8	Wildlife (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	04/02/2015
9	Industrial Relations (Members of the Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces) Bill 2015 [PMB]	11/02/2015
10	Companies (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	12/02/2015
11	Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	12/02/2015
12	Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2015	16/02/2015
13	Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	17/02/2015
14	Children and Family Relationships Bill 2015	17/02/2015
15	Assaults on Elderly Persons Bill 2015 [PMB]	19/02/2015
16	Thirty-fourth Amendment of the Constitution (Dáil Éireann) Bill 2015 [PMB]	11/02/2015
17	Public Health (Regulation of Electronic Cigarettes and Protection of Children) Bill 2015 [Seanad] [PMB]	24/02/2015
18	Succession (Amendment) Bill 2015 [Seanad] [PMB]	03/03/2015
19	Migrant Earned Regularisation Bill 2015 [PMB]	05/03/2015
20	Protection of Life During Pregnancy (Amendment) (Fatal Foetal Abnormalities) Bill 2015 [PMB]	05/03/2015
21	Misuse of Drugs (Amendment) Bill 2015	06/03/2015
22	Statute Law Revision Bill 2015	10/03/2015

No.	Bill Title	Date Initiated
23	Animal Protection (in relation to Hares) Bill 2015 [PMB]	11/03/2015
24	Personal Insolvency (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	11/03/2015
25	Multi-Unit Developments (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	12/03/2015
26	Road Traffic (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2015 [PMB]	12/03/2015
27	Protection of the Environment (Criminal Activity) Bill 2015 [PMB]	26/03/2015
28	Garda Síochána (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	26/03/2015
29	Firearms (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	26/03/2015
30	Health (General Practitioner Service) Bill 2015	25/03/2015
31	Water Services (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	01/04/2015
32	Universal Jurisdiction of Human Rights Bill 2015 [PMB]	02/04/2015
33	Communications Regulation (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	02/04/2015
34	Office of Fiscal Prosecution Bill 2015 [PMB]	02/04/2015
35	Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2015	02/04/2015
36	Public Electronic Communications Networks (Improper Use) Bill 2015 [PMB]	16/04/2015
37	Harmful and Malicious Electronic Communications Bill 2015 [Seanad] [PMB]	22/04/2015
38	Electoral (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	23/04/2015
39	Derelict Sites (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	23/04/2015
40	Moore Street Area Renewal and Development Bill 2015 [Seanad] [PMB]	28/04/2015
41	Rural Equality Bill 2015 [PMB]	06/05/2015
42	National Minimum Wage (Low Pay Commission) Bill 2015 [Seanad]	11/05/2015
43	Children (Amendment) Bill 2015 [Seanad]	11/05/2015
44	Industrial Relations (Amendment) Bill 2015	12/05/2015

APPENDIX 7

BILLS INITIATED IN THE HOUSES 2015

No.	Bill Title	Date Initiated
45	Dublin Docklands Development Authority (Dissolution) Bill 2015	12/05/2015
46	Communications Regulation (Postal Services) (Amendment) Bill 2015	13/05/2015
47	Garda Síochána (Policing Authority and Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2015 [Seanad]	14/05/2015
48	Central Bank (Emergency Powers) (Variable Interest Rates) Bill 2015 [Seanad] [PMB]	26/05/2015
49	Central Bank (Mortgage Interest Rates) Bill 2015 [PMB]	27/05/2015
50	Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	28/05/2015
51	Urban Regeneration and Housing Bill 2015	03/06/2015
52	National Cultural Institutions (National Concert Hall) Bill 2015	05/06/2015
53	Fiscal Responsibility (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	09/06/2015
54	Central Bank (Variable Rate Mortgages) Bill 2015 [PMB]	09/06/2015
55	Employment Equality (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	09/06/2015
56	Curragh of Kildare Bill 2015 [PMB]	10/06/2015
57	<i>Intentionally left blank</i>	
58	Disability (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	16/06/2015
59	Petroleum (Exploration and Extraction) Safety Bill 2015 [Seanad]	16/06/2015
60	Management Fees (Local Property Tax) Relief Bill 2015 [PMB]	18/06/2016
61	Parental Leave (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	18/06/2015
62	Public Transport Bill 2015	18/06/2015
63	Education (Welfare) (Amendment) Bill 2015 [Seanad] [PMB]	24/06/2015
64	Choice of Court (Hague Convention) Bill 2015 [Seanad]	24/06/2015
65	Civil Debt (Procedures) Bill 2015	26/06/2015

No.	Bill Title	Date Initiated
66	Harbours Bill 2015	29/06/2015
67	Coroners Bill 2015 [PMB]	02/07/2015
68	Defence (Amendment) Bill 2015 [Seanad]	06/07/2015
69	Minerals Development Bill 2015 [Seanad]	07/07/2015
70	Garda Síochána (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2015 [PMB]	14/07/2015
71	Finance (Tax Appeals) Bill 2015	14/07/2015
72	Child Care (Guardian Ad Litem) Bill 2015 [PMB]	15/07/2015
73	Banded Hours Contract Bill 2015 [PMB]	16/07/2015
74	Coroners (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	16/07/2015
75	Referendum (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	16/07/2015
76	Criminal Justice (Burglary of Dwellings) Bill 2015	03/09/2015
77	Credit Guarantee (Amendment) Bill 2015	16/09/2015
78	Marriage Bill 2015	15/09/2015
79	Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill 2015 [Seanad]	23/09/2015
80	Criminal Justice (Knife Possession) Bill 2015 [PMB]	23/09/2015
81	Longer Healthy Living Bill 2015 [Seanad] [PMB]	23/09/2015
82	Central Bank (Code of Conduct) Bill 2015 [PMB]	29/09/2015
83	Horse Racing Ireland Bill 2015	01/10/2015
84	Referendum and Courts (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	30/09/2015
85	1916 Quarter Development Bill 2015 [PMB]	01/10/2015
86	Ramming of Garda Vehicles Bill 2015 [PMB]	01/10/2015

APPENDIX 7

BILLS INITIATED IN THE HOUSES 2015

No.	Bill Title	Date Initiated
87	Electoral (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2015	30/09/2015
88	Planning and Development (Taking in Charge of Estates) Bill 2015 [PMB]	07/10/2015
89	Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2015	07/09/2015
90	Sentencing Council Bill 2015 [PMB]	08/10/2015
91	Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Bill 2015	07/10/2015
92	National Tourism Development Authority (Amendment) Bill 2015	13/10/2015
93	Thirty-fifth Amendment of the Constitution (Fixed Period for the Duration of Dáil Éireann) Bill 2015 [PMB]	14/10/2015
94	Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2015 [Seanad]	16/10/2015
95	Finance Bill 2015	20/10/2015
96	Electoral (Amendment) (Moriarty Tribunal) Bill 2015 [PMB]	21/10/2015
97	Education (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	21/10/2015
98	Social Welfare and Pensions Bill 2015 changed from Social Welfare Bill 2015	21/10/2015
99	National Mortgage and Housing Corporation Bill 2015 [Seanad] [PMB]	22/10/2015
100	Health Insurance (Amendment) Bill 2015	29/10/2015
101	Vulnerable Persons Bill 2015 [PMB]	11/11/2015
102	International Protection Bill 2015 [Seanad]	17/11/2015
103	Motor Vehicles (Duties and Licences) Bill 2015	18/11/2015
104	Roads (Criminal Activity) (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	19/11/2015
105	Seanad Electoral (Amendment) Bill 2015 [Seanad] [PMB]	19/11/2015
106	Gradam an Uachtaráin Bill 2015 [Seanad] [PMB]	19/11/2015
107	Postal and Telecommunications Services (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	24/11/2015
108	Rent Certainty and Prevention of Homelessness Bill 2015 [PMB]	26/11/2015
109	Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2015 [Seanad]	26/11/2015
110	Prisons Bill 2015 [Seanad]	01/12/2015
111	Courts Bill 2015 [Seanad]	01/12/2015

No.	Bill Title	Date Initiated
112	Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2015 [Seanad]	01/12/2015
113	Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Bill 2015	04/12/2015
114	Equality in Education Bill 2015 [PMB]	08/12/2015
115	Equal Participation in Schools Bill 2015 [PMB]	08/12/2015
116	Appropriation Bill 2015	07/12/2015
117	Electoral (Amendment) (Registration of Political Parties and Groups) Bill 2015 [PMB]	02/12/2015
118	Broadcasting (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	10/12/2015
119	Bankruptcy (Amendment) Bill 2015	09/12/2015
120	Public Health (Alcohol) Bill 2015 [Seanad]	10/12/2015
121	Technological Universities Bill 2015	10/12/2015
122	Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Bill 2015 [Seanad] [PMB]	14/12/2015
123	Land and Conveyancing Law Reform Bill 2015 [PMB]	08/12/2015
124	Copyright and Related Rights (Innovation) (Amendment) Bill 2015 [Seanad] [PMB]	02/12/2015
125	Dying with Dignity Bill 2015 [PMB]	15/12/2015
126	Access to Public Services and Banking other than by Electronic Means Bill 2015 [PMB]	15/12/2015
127	Planning and Development (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2015 [PMB]	15/12/2015
128	Industrial Relations (Blacklists) Bill 2015 [PMB]	16/12/2015
129	Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) (Amendment) Bill 2015 [PMB]	09/12/2015
130	Prohibition of Hydraulic Fracturing Bill 2015 [PMB]	17/12/2015
131	Suicide Prevention Authority Bill 2015 [PMB]	09/12/2015
132	Public Sector Standards Bill 2015	21/12/2015

APPENDIX 8

ACTS OF THE OIREACHTAS 2015

No.	Act Title	Date of Signature
1	Central Bank (Amendment) Act 2015	04/02/2015
2	Irish Collective Asset-management Vehicles Act 2015	04/03/2015
3	Garda Síochána (Amendment) Act 2015	09/03/2015
4	Public Health (Standardised Packaging of Tobacco) Act 2015	10/03/2015
5	Regulation of Lobbying Act 2015	11/03/2015
6	Misuse of Drugs (Amendment) Act 2015	11/03/2015
7	Betting (Amendment) Act 2015	15/03/2015
8	Redress for Women Resident in Certain Institutions Act 2015	18/03/2015
9	Children and Family Relationships Act 2015	06/04/2015
10	Valuation (Amendment) Act 2015	23/04/2015
11	Education (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2015	05/05/2015
12	Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2015	06/05/2015
13	Vehicle Clamping Act 2015	06/05/2015
14	Roads Act 2015	06/05/2015
15	Sport Ireland Act 2015	13/05/2015
16	Workplace Relations Act 2015	20/05/2015
17	Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) (Amendment) Act 2015	01/06/2015
18	Customs Act 2015	18/06/2015
19	Health (General Practitioner Service) Act 2015	24/06/2015
20	Communications Regulation (Postal Services) (Amendment) Act 2015	02/07/2015
21	Consumer Protection (Regulation of Credit Servicing Firms) Act 2015	08/07/2015
22	National Minimum Wage (Low Pay Commission) Act 2015	15/07/2015
23	Statute Law Revision Act 2015	18/07/2015
24	Defence (Amendment) Act 2015	22/07/2015
25	Gender Recognition Act 2015	22/07/2015
26	Petroleum (Exploration and Extraction) Safety Act 2015	22/07/2015
27	Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015	22/07/2015

No.	Act Title	Date of Signature
28	Civil Debt (Procedures) Act 2015	27/07/2015
29	Environment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2015	27/07/2015
30	Children (Amendment) Act 2015	27/07/2015
31	Teaching Council (Amendment) Act 2015	27/07/2015
32	Personal Insolvency (Amendment) Act 2015	28/07/2015
33	Urban Regeneration and Housing Act 2015	28/07/2015
34	Houses of the Oireachtas (Appointments to Certain Offices) Act 2015	15/10/2015
35	Marriage Act 2015	29/10/2015
36	Children First Act 2015	19/11/2015
37	Finance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2015	20/11/2015
38	Choice of Court (Hague Convention) Act 2015	25/11/2015
39	Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Act 2015	27/11/2015
40	Criminal Justice (Mutual Assistance) (Amendment) Act 2015	01/12/2015
41	Motor Vehicles (Duties and Licences) Act 2015	02/12/2015
42	Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Act 2015	04/12/2015
43	Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2015	10/12/2015
44	National Cultural Institutions (National Concert Hall) Act 2015	10/12/2015
45	Child Care (Amendment) Act 2015	10/12/2015
46	Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015	10/12/2015
47	Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2015	16/12/2015
48	Appropriation Act 2015	16/12/2015
49	Garda Síochána (Policing Authority and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2015	18/12/2015
50	Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Act 2015	20/12/2015
51	Courts Act 2015	20/12/2015
52	Finance Act 2015	21/12/2015
53	Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2015	24/12/2015
54	Health Insurance (Amendment) Act 2015	24/12/2015

APPENDIX 8

ACTS OF THE OIREACHTAS 2015

No.	Act Title	Date of Signature
55	Dublin Docklands Development Authority (Dissolution) Act 2015	24/12/2015
56	Criminal Justice (Burglary of Dwellings) Act 2015	24/12/2015
57	Prisons Act 2015	25/12/2015
58	Mental Health (Amendment) Act 2015	25/12/2015
59	Finance (Tax Appeals) Act 2015	25/12/2015
60	Bankruptcy (Amendment) Act 2015	25/12/2015
61	Harbours Act 2015	25/12/2015
62	Electoral (Amendment) Act 2015	29/12/2015
63	Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2015	29/12/2015
64	Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) Act 2015	30/12/2015
65	Legal Services Regulation Act 2015	30/12/2015
66	International Protection Act 2015	30/12/2015
	Act to Amend the Constitution	Date of Signature
	Thirty-fourth Amendment of the Constitution (Marriage Equality) Act 2015	29/08/2015

Report on Compliance with the Provisions of the Prompt Payment of Accounts Act 1997 and the European Communities (Late Payment in Commercial Transactions) Regulations 2012 (S.I. No. 580 of 2012).

This statutory instrument gives effect to Directive 2011/7/EU on Combating Late Payment in Commercial Transactions.

Period covered by this review: 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015

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 2012 (S.I. No. 580 of 2012).

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

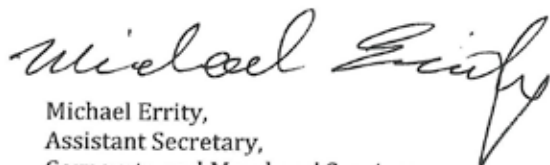
In the period under review there were a total of 30 late payments and the amount of interest (€299.50) and penalties (€1120.00) paid in respect of these late payments was €1419.50.

14 of these payments involved invoices in excess of €317; the total value of the 14 payments was €517,500.47. The average delay in making these payments was 16 days.

During the period in question the proportion of the total value of payments (€32 million in 2015) represented by payments which involved prompt payment interest was 1.6%.

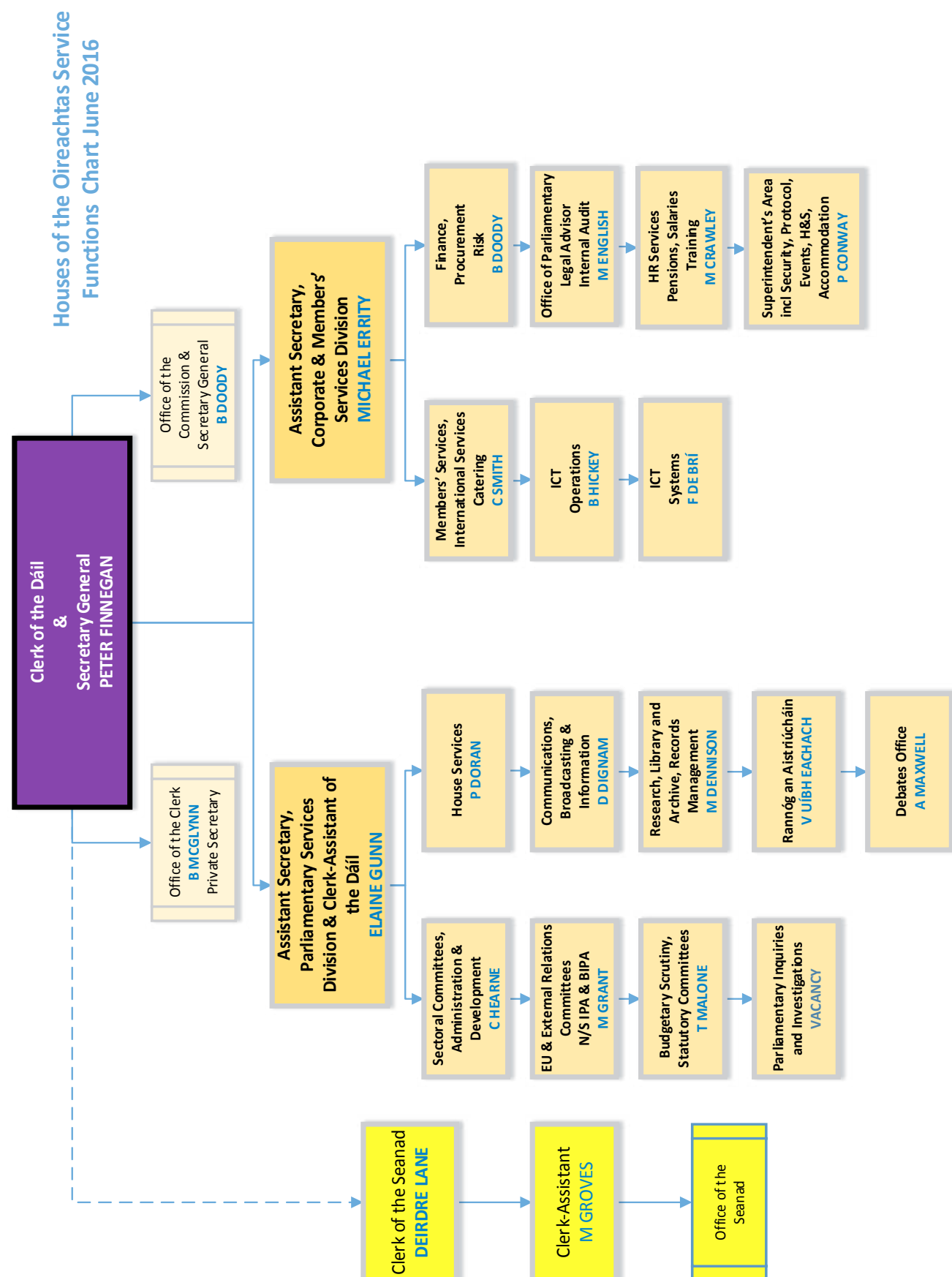
Reduction of payment period to 15 days

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 80 payments would have incurred prompt payment interest, representing 1% of the total number of payments processed from 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015.



Michael Errity,
Assistant Secretary,
Corporate and Members' Services

14 June, 2016



Protected Disclosures Annual Report 2015

Section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 (the Act) requires every public body to publish a report each year in relation to the number of protected disclosures made in the preceding year, the action (if any) taken in response to protected disclosures made, and such other information relating to those protected disclosures and the action taken as may be requested by the Minister from time to time.

Pursuant to section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act, this annual report covers the period 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2015.

Section 22 provides as follows:

Annual Report

22. (1) Every public body shall prepare and publish not later than 30 June in each year a report in relation to the immediately preceding year in a form which does not enable the identification of the persons involved containing information relating to the matters specified in subsection (2).

(2) Those matters are—

- (a) the number of protected disclosures made to the public body,
- (b) the action (if any) taken in response to those protected disclosures, and
- (c) such other information relating to those protected disclosures and the action taken as may be requested by the Minister from time to time.

Protected Disclosures in 2015

Four disclosures were made under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 and were dealt with in accordance with the interim procedures adopted by the Service for the purposes of the Act.

Disclosures nos.1 and 2 were the subject of an investigation. A copy of the report of the investigation was provided to all parties to the disclosure and published on the Oireachtas website.

Disclosure no. 3 was the subject of a screening process. Following the screening process it was determined that there was no basis for a reasonable belief that wrongdoing had occurred and that the allegations should be treated as a potential protected disclosure.

Disclosure no. 4, which was received at the end of 2015, is currently being processed in accordance with the Protected Disclosures Act 2014.

2015 ENERGY MANAGEMENT REPORT

The energy consumption figures for the Houses of the Oireachtas for 2015 are given below. Over one third of energy consumption was for space heating, while lighting, ventilation, hot water, office (IT) and catering equipment accounted for the vast majority of the remaining energy consumption.

The relevant figures for 2015 are:

Location	Electricity (MWh)	Gas (MWh)	Renewable Fuels (MWh)	Total (MWh)	% Baseline Year Comparison (2008)
Houses of the Oireachtas	5,480	3,314	284	9,078	-15.8%*

*based on floor area apportionment from Leinster House and government buildings complex

The baseline year of 2008 is the first calendar year the Oireachtas participated in the OPW Optimising Power @ Work scheme. This scheme is a staff energy awareness campaign in place in 250 buildings owned/leased by the OPW for use by Government Departments and state agencies to reduce CO₂ emissions and energy by reducing energy consumption in the public sector. The main focus of the initiative is to implement an energy awareness campaign in the participating organisation, while at the same time ensuring that the building accommodation is being operated in the most energy efficient manner possible regarding all energy consuming processes.

The first phase of the Optimising Power @ Work scheme achieved a 14% reduction in CO₂ emissions by May 2010 for the entire public sector (i.e. all participating buildings) and savings continue to rise. The current target is to surpass a reduction of 20% by end 2014. With a saving achieved of 20.15% overall, this target was surpassed.

Overall energy consumption in the Houses of the Oireachtas for the period of 2014 versus 2008 has shown a decrease of 15.8%. This is due to various actions including heating and lighting upgrade, good housekeeping and maintaining the momentum of the Optimising Power @ Work energy awareness campaign. It should be noted that sitting hours in the Houses have increased by 12% on 2014 ensuring plant equipment was operating for longer periods.

