



Coimisiún Thithe  
an Oireachtais  
Houses of the  
Oireachtas Commission

# Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Annual Report 2017



This annual report is prepared in accordance with section 6(1)(k) of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003-2015 (the Commission Acts).

Section 6(1) of the Commission Acts requires the Commission to prepare and publish an annual report on the activities of the Commission in the previous year and to lay the report before both Houses of the Oireachtas.

# Table of Contents

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Introduction by Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach  | 2   |
| Secretary General's Overview   | 4   |
| Our Governance Framework   | 6   |
| Overview of the Work of the Commission in 2017   | 12  |
| Annual Progress Report on Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2016-2018<br>– <i>A Parliament for the People</i> | 14  |
| Key Parliamentary Activities 2017  | 15  |
| Four Key Strategic Goals   | 19  |
| STRATEGY 1   Support the Houses and the Parliamentary Reform Agenda  | 25  |
| STRATEGY 2   Support Members in their Constitutional Roles   | 37  |
| STRATEGY 3   Promote Accessibility and Public Engagement   | 43  |
| STRATEGY 4   Develop our Capability and our Staff  | 50  |
| Financial Performance over the Commission's Three Year Budget Framework 2016-2018                                | 58  |
| Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Appropriation Account 2017   | 59  |
| Report on Compliance with the Provisions of the Prompt Payment Legislation                                       | 94  |
| <b>Appendices</b>  |     |
| Appendix I: Houses of the Oireachtas Service Organisation Chart  | 95  |
| Appendix II: Statement of Resources 2017   | 96  |
| Appendix III: Annual Report of the Audit Committee of the Commission 2017  | 97  |
| Appendix IV: Bills Initiated in the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2017   | 100 |
| Appendix V: Bills Passed by the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2017   | 104 |
| Appendix VI: Meetings and Reports of Parliamentary Committees in 2017  | 105 |
| Appendix VII: Annual Report under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014   | 108 |
| Appendix VIII: Commission Meetings and Attendance in 2017  | 109 |
| Appendix IX: Glossary of Terms   | 110 |



## Introduction by Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach

We are pleased to present the 2017 Annual Report of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission. This report is presented to the Houses of the Oireachtas pursuant to section 6(4) of the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003-2015* (the Commission Acts).

The report provides an overview of the work of the Commission over the past year in performing its functions, specifically in relation to the provision of services to support the work of the Houses of the Oireachtas and members of parliament. The audited financial accounts presented in Chapter 7 show expenditure incurred in running the Houses last year.

The second annual progress report on implementation of the *Strategic Plan 2016-2018*, presented to the Commission by the Secretary General in accordance with section 16 of the Commission Acts, is set out in Chapter 5. The Commission acknowledges the achievements under the Strategic Plan and the contribution of the staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service to the results achieved and progress reported.

An important focus of the Commission's work is to implement initiatives to engage the public in the work of their Parliament. Of particular note this year is the 'Vótáil 100' programme to commemorate the centenary of women's suffrage. The Houses are hosting a programme of events under the suffrage theme to raise public awareness of the women's suffrage movement and the remarkable achievements of the women of this period who

changed the course of history. Highlights of the programme include exhibitions, conferences, lectures and debates to celebrate the 100 year anniversary of the parliamentary vote for women in Ireland and the achievements of women from all sectors of Irish public life 100 years later.

We invite you to view the 'Vótáil 100' programme on the website [www.oireachtas.ie](http://www.oireachtas.ie) and to watch the events as they are broadcast on *Oireachtas TV* and live streamed on the Oireachtas website which we hope you will find interesting.

We wish to thank the members of the Vótáil 100 Steering Committee, chaired by Senator Ivana Bacik, for their work in planning this commemorative programme.

Progress was also made in advancing a number of further initiatives to strengthen public engagement with the Houses. *Oireachtas TV* is making the parliamentary proceedings accessible to many more people. The proceedings are also live streamed across the internet and on the Oireachtas app. Our social media presence continues to reach wider audiences enabling them to engage with the Houses in different ways and receive regular information updates about the parliamentary business. An Education Officer was recruited to deliver a Parliamentary Education Programme for students and teachers. To complement these efforts, the Oireachtas website has been fully redesigned allowing users to more easily access a wider range of parliamentary information.

Importantly, the Houses hosted a Parliamentary Forum on Mental Health to inform public and parliamentary debate on mental health policy and practice. The Parliamentary Committees conducted public consultations across a diverse range of public policy areas offering meaningful opportunities for members of the public to provide input on policy initiatives.

Despite the constraints imposed by the Georgian Leinster House restoration works, there were over 95,000 visitors to the Houses and 52,000 participated in guided tours.

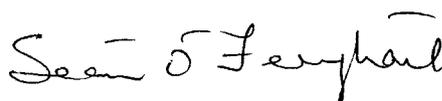
Providing oversight of the restoration project is an important focus of the Commission's work at the present time. Leinster House is the physical expression of our parliamentary system and provides the setting for the work of members of the Houses of the Oireachtas. It is also a place for all who wish to visit, explore its history, learn about the day-to-day operations of the Houses and watch their elected representatives debate matters of importance to them in the Dáil and Seanad.

The programme of restoration work is focussed on preserving the heritage building for future generations while meeting the evolving needs of parliamentarians. The Commission continues to closely monitor progress of the project at its monthly meetings. An important milestone during the past year was the relocation of the Seanad to an interim Chamber in the National Museum of Ireland. The work to prepare the interim Chamber was completed on schedule allowing the sittings and business of the Seanad to continue without interruption. We would like to thank the Office of Public Works for their work in bringing this phase of the project to completion. The Commission would also like to express its appreciation to the Board of the

National Museum for facilitating the relocation of the Seanad for the duration of the project.

Achieving efficiency savings and value for money underpin the Commission's use of public resources. The audited financial account for the year 2017 shows that expenditure for running the Houses last year was €112.7 million against a budget of €127.4 million, resulting in a net underspend of €14.75 million (12%). The Commission will continue to build on its achievements over the last year and is committed to ensuring efficient use of available resources in its ongoing work.

We wish to thank the members of the Commission and Committees of the Commission for their work towards achieving our objectives over the last year. We would also like to express our gratitude to the Secretary General, the Management Committee and the staff of the Service for their efforts and commitment to supporting the work of the Houses and their members.



**Seán Ó Fearghail TD**

*Ceann Comhairle*



**Senator Denis O'Donovan**

*Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann*



## Secretary General's Overview

I am pleased to present the 2017 Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2016-2018 – *A Parliament for the People*.

The Report was prepared in accordance with Section 16 (1)(k) of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003-2015 which require me, as Secretary General, to present a progress report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan annually to the Commission.

Overall the Service made significant progress on the goals it set for itself under four key strategies of our Strategic Plan.

In addition, the Service supported a very substantial increase in the levels of activity in both Houses and across Oireachtas Committees. In 2017, the Houses sat for a total of 190 days (or 1429 sitting hours); there were 665 meetings of Oireachtas Committees; 156 Bills were published; 41 Acts were passed and 58,820 parliamentary questions were processed.

A specific focus for the Service was the implementation of the Dáil Reform agenda. In July 2017 the first Director of the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO), Ms Annette Connolly, was appointed and under her leadership the PBO has to date recruited 13 specialist staff and produced a wide range of briefings, commentaries, analysis, and infographic publications. Going forward, the PBO will be an important part of our system of parliamentary administration and fiscal governance; particularly in relation to supporting the work of the Committee on Budgetary Oversight.

Significant progress was also achieved in enhancing the role of the Office of the Parliamentary Legal Advisor (OPLA). A Capacity Review of the OPLA, which recommended expanding its functions, was published and a review of the system for processing Private Members' Bills (PMBs) was completed. The OPLA has now put in place new arrangements to support the drafting of PMBs which will be further developed in 2018; in addition, the first Director of Parliamentary Legal Services will be appointed.

During 2017, Oireachtas Committees successfully addressed a number of complex and sensitive policy issues. The Committee on the Future of Healthcare published its report, *Sláintecare*. This provides a blueprint for the future organisation and funding of our health services. The Joint Committee on the Future Funding of Domestic Water Services published its report. This informed the provisions of the Water Services Bill 2017 which was passed by both Houses in November 2017. In addition, the Joint Committee on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution conducted a series of public hearings on the repeal of the eighth amendment of the Constitution and reported to both Houses.

The Houses and Committees also gave detailed consideration to the implications of Brexit for our economy and society. The Chief negotiator on Brexit, Mr Michel Barnier, addressed a Joint Committee of the Dáil and Seanad, and the European Parliament Brexit Coordinator, Mr Guy Verhofstadt, addressed a joint meeting of the

Committees on Foreign Affairs, European Union Affairs, and the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement. The Houses and Committees will continue their work on this important area in 2018.

A priority for the Ceann Comhairle, Mr Seán Ó Feargháil TD, is to develop a Parliament for the People – a Parliament that Irish people have confidence in, they can be proud of, and is accessible and accountable to them. I am pleased to report that the Service made substantial progress in realising this objective over the past 12 months. Over 95,000 visitors came to Leinster House on tours, school visits, and parliamentary visits. The Service launched a new website which will facilitate a much greater public engagement with the work of the Houses and their Committees. It also appointed its first Education Officer who is implementing a range of measures including on-line lesson plans, student debates, and increased school visits. Education is a key priority for the Service because the students of today will be the voters of tomorrow. We are committed to engaging with them in meaningful and innovative ways to increase their understanding of the work of the Houses.

Our social media channels are increasingly used to communicate and engage the public in the work of the Houses. This year the Service won the award for ‘Best Facebook for a State Organisation’ in the Sockies Social Media Awards 2018 and was also a finalist in the ‘Best use of Social Media by a State Body’ category. I would like to acknowledge the work of the Communications Unit in this achievement.

Giving our staff the opportunity for personal and professional development is a further priority for the Service because it will strengthen our performance as an organisation. During 2017, a

skills development programme was implemented under our Organisation Development Initiative (ODI). The ODI focussed on coaching, mentoring, high performing teams and performance improvement. In addition, 12% of our staff received support under the Refund of Fees Scheme to undertake third level courses that are aligned to the business needs of the Service, including Finance, Accountancy, Law, and Policy Analysis. We have also put in place professional development programmes in a number of areas to assist staff to develop their knowledge and skills. As an organisation, we aim to be an employer of choice and offer fulfilling and challenging work opportunities to all our staff.

Finally, I would like to express my appreciation to the members of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission for their assistance and support to me over the past year. I would also like to pay tribute to the staff of the Service for their commitment and professionalism. Collectively, we take great pride in serving the Houses of the Oireachtas and we look forward to supporting their important work in the year ahead.



**Peter Finnegan**

*Clerk of Dáil Éireann and Secretary General of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service*

## Our Governance Framework

### 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. The Ceann Comhairle serves as *ex officio* Chairperson of the Commission. The Commission was established in 2004 as a statutory corporate body, 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 a statutory obligation to oversee on-going expenditure by the Houses and to ensure value for money in the performance of its functions.

Since its establishment, the Commission has overseen the delivery of services to both Houses of the Oireachtas 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 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 facilitates financial planning and also presents an opportunity to assess the adequacy of the Commission 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 (Appointments to Certain Offices) Act 2015*, the Commission appoints the Clerk of Dáil Éireann on the recommendation of the Ceann Comhairle from a list of names selected by the Top Level Appointment Committee, following an open competition. In addition, the Commission also appoints the Clerk of Seanad Éireann, the Clerk-Assistant of Dáil Éireann, and the Clerk-Assistant of Seanad Éireann 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.

In the past year, the Commission appointed the Clerk of Seanad Éireann and the Clerk-Assistant of Seanad Éireann in accordance with the procedure laid down in the legislation.

Commission members serve in a corporate capacity and do not represent their parties, 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.

## Houses of the Oireachtas Commission



*Sitting left to right: Catherine Murphy TD, Timmy Dooley TD, Louise O'Reilly TD, Senator Gerard P. Craughwell, Martin Heydon TD, Senator Paudie Coffey, Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD (Ceann Comhairle and Chairperson of the Commission), Senator Denis O'Donovan (Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann and Deputy Chairperson of the Commission), Peter Finnegan, Clerk of Dáil Éireann and Secretary General (Chief Executive of the Commission). Not pictured: Marcella Corcoran Kennedy TD, Senator Ned O'Sullivan.*

## The Houses of the Oireachtas Service

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service (the Service) is the public service body that provides professional advice, procedural and administrative services and facilities to the Commission, to the Houses of the Oireachtas and their Committees and to members of the Houses.

The Service is headed by the Clerk of the Dáil and Secretary General. It is staffed by 495 Civil Servants of the State and 50.6 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 *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2015*.

There are 445 political staff working full time 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. The Secretary General is also the Accounting Officer in respect of Commission expenditure.

## Management Committee of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service



*Sitting left to right: Ms Elaine Gunn, Assistant Secretary, Parliamentary Services Division and Clerk-Assistant of Dáil Éireann; Mr Charles Hearne, PO, Chair of Systems sub-Committee; Ms Annette Connolly, Assistant Secretary, Director of the Parliamentary Budget Office; Mr Martin Groves, Clerk of Seanad Éireann; Mr Peter Finnegan (Chairperson), Clerk of Dáil Éireann and Secretary General; Mr Michael Errity, Assistant Secretary, Corporate and Members' Services Division; Mr Paul Conway, Superintendent, Chair of Business and Strategy sub-Committee; Mr Joe Hamill, External Member; Ms Patricia Doran, PO, Chair of People and Finance sub-Committee.*

### The Management Committee

The Secretary General is assisted in the overall management of the Service by the Management Committee (MC).

The current top level management structure in the Service consists of three Assistant Secretaries reporting to the Secretary General.

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 for the Service. Members of the Management Committee 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.

## The Role of the Commission

The role of the Commission under the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003-2015* 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 (this authority formerly rested with the Department of Finance); and (ii) the system for the allocation of budgets to the Houses of the Oireachtas changed from the annual Civil Service Estimates and “Vote” process to the provision of 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 then passed by both Houses. The Commission’s current three-year budget allocation is €369 million for the period 2016 to 2018.

## 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) (Chief Executive of the Commission)
- one member 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

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 the member appointed to this position is not a serving Minister of State.

## Functions of the Commission

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

- oversee ongoing expenditure by the Houses;
- keep annual accounts;
- pay salaries and expenses of members, their staff and the staff of the Service;
- 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 of the Oireachtas 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 regarding secretarial facilities for members and qualifying parties, for example, the allocation of resources under the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members and the provision of ICT, printing and graphic design facilities;
- exercise certain legal functions, including participation in legal proceedings where necessary and arranging for the provision of 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 the TLAC; and
- 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; and
- 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. This is the responsibility of 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 is also published on the Oireachtas website. The annual report sets out information on the work carried out by the Service in supporting the Houses and members, as well as accounting for expenditure of public funds in 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.

Commission meeting agendas and minutes 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 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 required to provide an annual statement of their registrable interests to the Chair of the Commission and to the Standards in Public Office Commission.

### *Disclosure of Interests by Commission Members*

Under its Code of Conduct, and in addition to compliance with the general requirements under 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. All disclosures of interests are recorded in the minutes of Commission meetings which are published on the Oireachtas website when approved.

## 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 2017 can be found in Appendix III. The Commission may also establish *ad hoc* sub-Committees as necessary to assist it in carrying out its responsibilities.

**Table 1: Current Membership of the Commission**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl,<br>Ceann Comhairle             | Chairperson<br><i>ex officio</i> member        |
| Senator Denis O'Donovan,<br>Cathaoirleach of the Seanad | Deputy Chairperson<br><i>ex officio</i> member |
| Mr Peter Finnegan,<br>Secretary General of the Service  | Chief Executive<br><i>ex officio</i> member    |
| Deputy Martin Heydon                                    | Minister's<br>representative                   |
| Senator Paudie Coffey                                   | Seanad member                                  |
| Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy                        | Dáil member                                    |
| Senator Gerard P. Craughwell                            | Seanad member                                  |
| Deputy Timmy Dooley                                     | Dáil member                                    |
| Deputy Catherine Murphy                                 | Dáil member                                    |
| Deputy Louise O'Reilly                                  | Dáil member                                    |
| Senator Ned O'Sullivan                                  | Seanad member                                  |

## Overview of the Work of the Commission in 2017

The Houses of the Oireachtas Commission is the statutory body responsible for the running of the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Commission oversees ongoing expenditure by the Houses and provides direction on the provision of services to the Houses and their members. It also has responsibility for the employment of staff of the Service.

The Commission normally meets at least once a month when the Houses are sitting or as may be necessary for the effective performance of its functions. Commission meeting agendas and minutes are published on the Oireachtas website [www.oireachtas.ie](http://www.oireachtas.ie). Attendance at meetings in 2017 is set out in Appendix VIII of this report.

The Commission met nine times during 2017. In addition it held one incorporeal meeting to conduct unforeseen business requiring a decision before the next ordinary meeting. The Commission dealt with financial, strategy, policy and other matters falling within the scope of its functions during the year including the following:

### *Financial Performance*

- Quarterly financial reports from the Finance Committee and examination of detailed information on the monthly spending by the Houses against spending forecast
- Commission's Annual Accounts for 2016
- Commission's Statement of Estimates for 2018

### *Strategy*

- Oversight of the programme of essential structural and upgrade works for Georgian Leinster House including the accommodation plan for the duration of the works
- Communications Strategy for the Houses of the Oireachtas
- ICT Strategy Implementation for the Houses
- Library and Research Service: Strategic Plan and Statement of Services
- EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR): Implementation Strategy for the Houses of the Oireachtas
- Irish Language Strategy including 'Bliain na Gaeilge 2018' programme for the Houses

### *Business Case Approval*

- Broadcast Equipment Replacement Project
- Print Equipment Replacement Project

### *Policy Review*

- Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members
- Guidelines for members of the Houses on allowable expenditure under the Public Representation Allowance (PRA)
- Official Travel Policy for members of the Houses and staff of the Service
- Visitor Access and Security Policy
- Internship Programme in the Houses of the Oireachtas
- Catering Services in the Houses of the Oireachtas

### *Annual Reporting*

- Commission's 2016 Annual Report to the Houses of the Oireachtas
- Audit Committee's 2016 Annual Report to the Commission
- Secretary General's 2016 Annual Report to the Commission on implementation of the Strategic Plan



### *Human Resource Strategy for the Service*

- Annual Resource Plan for the Houses of the Oireachtas Service for 2017-2018
- Appointment of the Clerk of Seanad Éireann, the Clerk-Assistant of Seanad Éireann and the Director of the Parliamentary Budget Office in accordance with the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003-2015*
- Capacity Review of the Office of the Parliamentary Legal Adviser



*Members of the Commission on a site visit to Georgian Leinster House to view the structural work underway to preserve the historic building. Mr Ciarán O'Connor, State Architect, briefed members on the full extent of the restoration project.*

### *Legal*

- Legal proceedings involving the Houses of the Oireachtas

### *Committees of the Commission*

- Appointment of external members to the Audit Committee pursuant to section 14A(3)(c) of the Commission Acts

# Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2016-2018 – A Parliament for the People

## Our Vision

*A Parliament for the People*

## Our Mission

*To provide high quality parliamentary services to the Houses of the Oireachtas, their Committees, their Members, and to the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission*

## Our Values

*Leadership*

*Integrity and Impartiality*

*Excellence*

*Accountability*

*Accessibility*

## Key Parliamentary Activities 2017

| <b>Table 2: Key Parliamentary Activities 2017</b>         |              |
|---|--------------|
| <b>Sittings of the Houses</b>                             |              |
| Dáil sitting days   | 104          |
| Seanad sitting days                                       | 86           |
| Dáil sitting hours  | 923          |
| Seanad sitting hours                                      | 506          |
| <b>Meetings of Parliamentary Committees</b>               |              |
| Committee meetings  | 665          |
| Committee sitting hours                                   | 1,498        |
| Committee witnesses                                       | 2,179        |
| Reports presented by Committees                           | 80           |
| <b>The Legislative Process</b>                            |              |
| Bills initiated in both Houses                            | 156          |
| <i>Government Bills</i>                                   | 33           |
| <i>Private Members' Bills</i>                             | 123          |
| Bills initiated in the Dáil                               | 123          |
| <i>Government Bills</i>                                   | 27           |
| <i>Private Members' Bills</i>                             | 96           |
| Bills initiated in the Seanad                             | 33           |
| <i>Government Bills</i>                                   | 6            |
| <i>Private Members' Bills</i>                             | 27           |
| Bills passed by both Houses                               | 41           |
| <i>Government Bills</i>                                   | 37           |
| <i>Private Members' Bills</i>                             | 4            |
| Amendments proposed to Bills                              | 3,166        |
| <b>Parliamentary Questions</b>                            |              |
| Parliamentary Questions Processed <sup>1</sup>            | 58,820       |
| <i>Questions for Written Answer</i>                       | 48,641       |
| <i>Questions for Oral Answer</i>                          | 1,958        |
| <b>Official Debate</b>                                    |              |
| Hours of parliamentary debate                             | 2,927        |
| <b>Divisions recorded (votes in the Houses)</b>           |              |
| Dáil Divisions  | 194          |
| Seanad Divisions  | 94           |
| <b>Staff of the Service at Year End (FTEs)</b>            | 495          |
| <b>Members' Staff at Year End (FTEs)</b>                  | 445          |
| <b>Expenditure incurred in running the Houses in 2017</b> | €113 million |

<sup>1</sup> Includes disallowed, withdrawn and composite PQs.

## Houses and Committee Business

In 2017, the Houses sat for a combined total of 190 sitting days over 1,429 sitting hours. The Dáil sat on 104 days and the Seanad sat on 86 days. The Parliamentary Committees held 665 meetings over 1,498 sitting hours and heard from 2,179 witnesses over this time, including key stakeholders and independent experts across a range of public policy areas. The Committees presented 80 reports setting out findings and recommendations in their respective policy areas to the Houses.

Figure 1: Sittings Days and Hours of the Houses in 2017

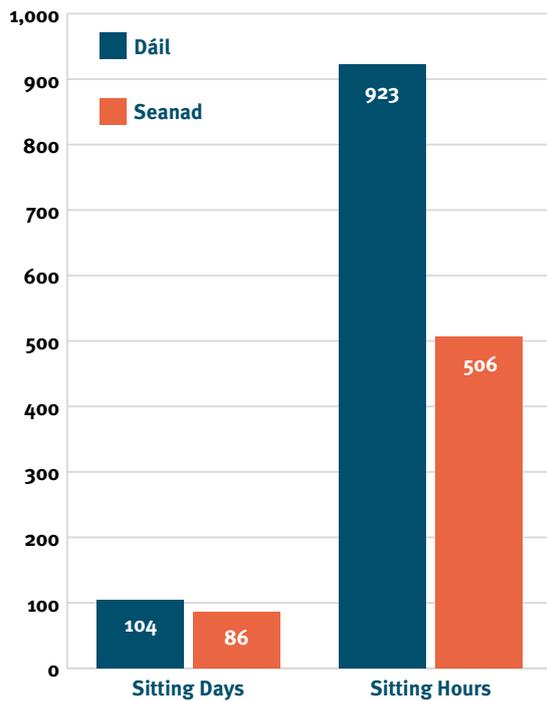
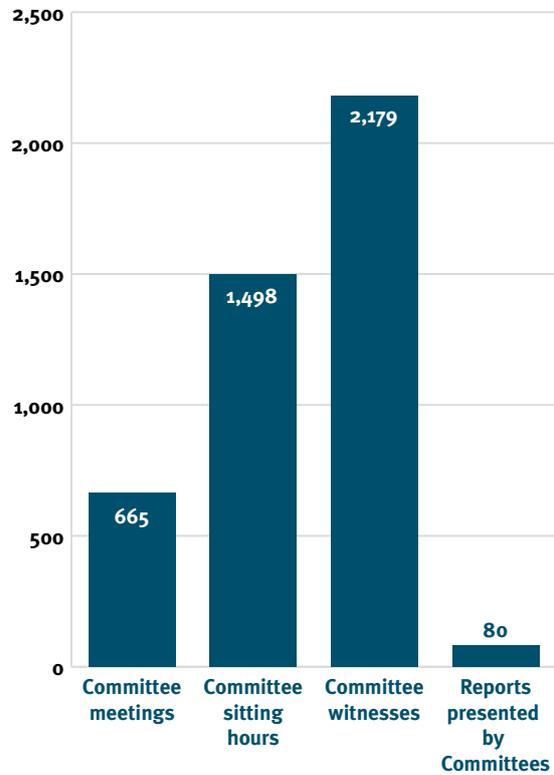


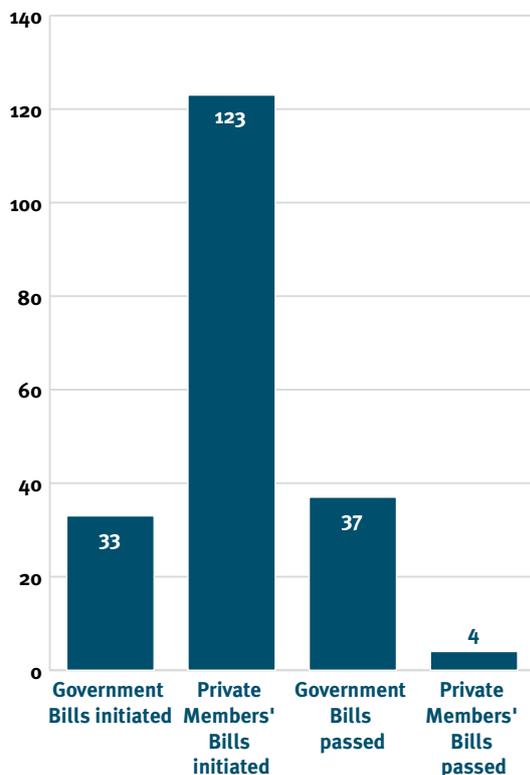
Figure 2: Meetings and Parliamentary Committees in 2017



## Support for the Legislative Process

In 2017, there were 156 Bills initiated in the Houses, of which 33 were Government Bills and 123 were Private Members' Bills (PMBs). There were 41 Bills passed, of which 37 (90%) were Government Bills and four (10%) were PMBs. There were 3,166 amendments tabled to Bills at amending stages as they progressed through the legislative process.

**Figure 3: Bills Initiated and Bills Passed in the Houses in 2017**



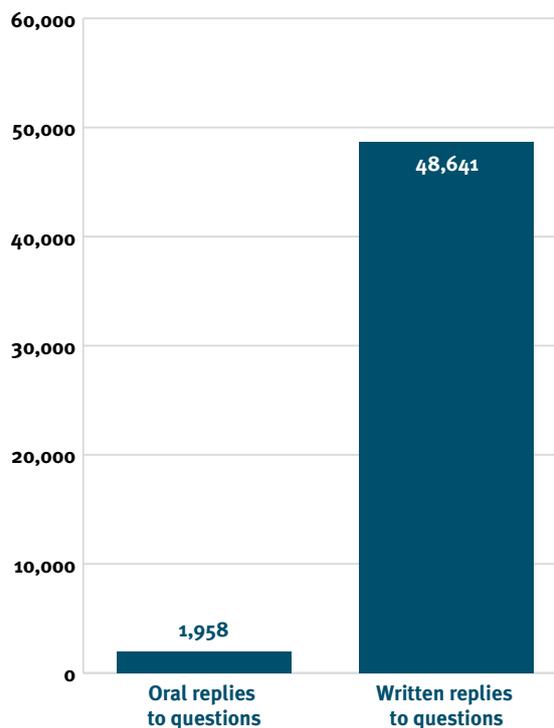
Between 2014 and 2017, the number of PMBs increased from 72 to 123, an increase of 71%. PMBs constitute the majority of Bills initiated in the Houses in recent years, representing 79% of all Bills in 2017. The increase in PMBs can be attributed to the increase in the time provided for the consideration of private members' business each sitting week, introduced in the current Dáil, from three hours to four hours, and members being provided with increased support for drafting PMBs.

## Parliamentary Questions

In 2017, there were 58,820 Parliamentary Questions (PQs) processed. There were 48,641 written replies and 1,958 oral replies to questions. This compares with 44,942 PQs processed in 2016. This increase is partly attributable to a reform introduced in the current Dáil, allowing PQs to be tabled for written answers during the summer recess periods.

The Dáil approved a motion on 9 June 2016 to change Standing Orders to implement these reforms as recommended by the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform.

**Figure 4: PQs Addressed to Members of the Government in 2017**



# Secretary General's Report

## Annual Report on Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2016-2018 – A Parliament for the People

*This report is prepared in accordance with section 16(1)(k) of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003-2015 (the Commission Acts), which require me, as Secretary General, to present a progress report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2016-2018 – A Parliament for the People (Strategic Plan) annually to the Commission.*

*The current Strategic Plan is being delivered against a background of the need to implement the recommendations contained in the Report of the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform; accommodate the expansion of the Committees' system in the Houses, increase public accessibility and engagement with the Houses of the Oireachtas, invest in modernising our key ICT processes and systems and in developing in-house ICT expertise, execute the structural and restoration work programme for the Georgian Leinster House building, and meet the relevant public service and civil service reform initiatives, while maintaining the key support services for the Houses of the Oireachtas and their members.*

*In 2017, the Service made progress in achieving the 12 goals as set out under the four key strategies presented in our Strategic Plan.*

## Four Key Strategic Goals

The Service is focusing during the 2016-2018 period on the achievement of the following Strategic Goals:

### *Strategy 1: Support the Houses and the Parliamentary Reform Agenda*

- Goal 1:** The sittings of the Houses and their Committees are continuously and effectively supported
- Goal 2:** High quality procedural capacity in place across the Service
- Goal 3:** Parliamentary reform agenda implemented, including, members being provided with increased support for Private Members' legislation and budgetary scrutiny by Parliament
- Goal 4:** To provide the Houses of the Oireachtas with the infrastructure and logistical services it needs for sittings and members' and staff accommodation

### *Strategy 2: Support Members in their Constitutional Roles*

- Goal 1:** To provide members with the high quality services they need to perform their parliamentary and representational duties
- Goal 2:** To provide members with more flexible and effective ICT services to enable them to do their work

### *Strategy 3: Promote Accessibility and Public Engagement*

- Goal 1:** Greater public understanding, trust and pride in the Houses of the Oireachtas
- Goal 2:** An Open Parliament that strengthens its engagement with the people

### *Strategy 4: Develop our Capability and our Staff*

- Goal 1:** High performing, engaged and motivated staff
- Goal 2:** Good corporate governance
- Goal 3:** Development of innovative ICT solutions to support our work
- Goal 4:** Economic, efficient and effective use of resources

This Implementation Report outlines the main achievements and developments during 2017 under each of the four strategic objectives presented in the Strategic Plan.

## Strategy 1: Support the Houses and the Parliamentary Reform Agenda

**Outcome:** Office Holders<sup>2</sup>, Chairpersons and members receive high quality advice and support services

### Our Goals

#### Goal 1:

The sittings of the Houses and their Committees are continuously and effectively supported

#### Goal 2:

High quality procedural capacity in place across the Service

#### Goal 3:

Parliamentary reform agenda implemented, including, members being provided with increased support for Private Members legislation and budgetary scrutiny by Parliament

#### Goal 4:

To provide the Houses of the Oireachtas with the infrastructure and logistical services it needs for sittings and members' and staff accommodation

### Our Key Achievements 2017

1,429 sitting hours of Dáil and Seanad were continuously and effectively supported and reported.

260 Order Papers were translated into Irish and simultaneous translation was provided for Dáil, Seanad and Committee proceedings.

156 Bills were initiated in the Houses. 79% were Private Members' Bills (PMBs).

194 Divisions (formal count of member's votes) were taken in the Dáil.

94 Divisions were taken in the Seanad.

58,820 Parliamentary Questions (PQs) were processed.

2,054 Topical Issues were submitted for Dáil debate with 340 selected.

622 Commencement Debates were tabled in the Seanad.

665 Parliamentary Committees meetings were held with 2,179 witnesses contributing to the proceedings.

543 legal advices were provided. Almost 40% of those related to the work of the Parliamentary Committees.

34 Public Petitions were considered by the Joint Committee on Public Petitions.

The move of Seanad Éireann to a temporary Seanad Chamber in the National Museum of Ireland was completed successfully.

Enhanced security measures were implemented at the main entrance to the parliamentary precinct.

Dáil Reform recommendations are being implemented, and refined where necessary, including the following:

- The Dáil Business Committee met 50 times during 2017;
- The new Committees' structure is in place and is fully resourced and accommodated;
- 22 Committees are supported by the Committees' Secretariat;

<sup>2</sup> Office Holders include the Ceann Comhairle and temporary Chairpersons of the Dáil, the Cathaoirleach and temporary Chairpersons of the Seanad, Chairpersons of Parliamentary Committees and Commission members.

### Strategy 1: Support the Houses and the Parliamentary Reform Agenda

**Outcome:** Office Holders<sup>2</sup>, Chairpersons and members receive high quality advice and support services

#### Our Goals

#### Our Key Achievements 2017

- Three Special Committees, established to examine specific public policy matters and propose recommendations, as appropriate, to the Houses, completed their work and reported to the Houses in 2017—
  - (i) the Joint Committee on Future Funding of Domestic Water Services reported in April,
  - (ii) the Committee on the Future of Healthcare published its report, *Sláintecare*, in May, and
  - (iii) the Joint Committee on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution reported in December;
- A Seanad Special Select Committee on the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union was established and published a report entitled *Brexit: Implications and Potential Solutions*;
- A PMB research team was established by the Library and Research Service (L&RS). This team supported both individual members with PMB research and also Committees with detailed scrutiny of PMBs;
- 30 PMBs were assigned to the new PMB Drafting Service;
- 15 PMBs were subject to detailed scrutiny by relevant Committees; and
- The L&RS published an in-depth research paper, *Spotlight*, for members titled *Post-Enactment Scrutiny by Parliament*.

Following the recruitment of a Director of the Parliamentary Budget Office at Assistant Secretary level in August 2017, the independent Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) was established. A total of nine staff was recruited to the PBO by the end of 2017. This increased to 12 staff by Q1 2018. The PBO produced 11 briefing, commentary and analysis publications in 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Office Holders include the Ceann Comhairle and temporary Chairpersons of the Dáil, the Cathaoirleach and temporary Chairpersons of the Seanad, Chairpersons of Parliamentary Committees and Commission members.

## Strategy 2: Support Members in their Constitutional Roles

**Outcome:** Members of the Houses are provided with the advice and support services they need to enable them to perform their parliamentary and public representative duties efficiently and effectively

### Our Goals

#### Goal 1:

To provide members with the high quality services they need to perform their parliamentary and representational duties

#### Goal 2:

To provide members with more flexible and effective ICT services to enable them to do their work

### Our Key Achievements 2017

A Members' Feedback Group (MFG) was established to provide members with a forum to provide feedback on the services they need to perform their duties.

A Workplace Support Programme was established to support the health and wellbeing of members and their staff.

An Administrator and Group Coordinator Forum was established to facilitate consultation with members' staff.

Members and political staff were provided with information, advice and seminars on employment matters under the *Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members* and on pension arrangements and application of changes to the PSPR rates and abatement rules.

Members and their staff were provided with information and training sessions on the implementation in May 2018 of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

The 2016 *Seanad General Election Results Handbook* was published in 2017.

44 parliamentary delegations attended Inter-parliamentary fora and 15 incoming parliamentary delegations were hosted by the Houses.

The Parliamentary Committees' Secretariat supported a total of 28 outgoing delegations in 2017.

There were 18 informal meetings of parliamentary delegations hosted by the Joint Committee on European Affairs. There were six visits to the Houses by European Commissioners.

Convenors were appointed to Parliamentary Friendship Groups.

The L&RS responded to 1,724 information and research requests, published 121 research briefings for members including 35 *Bills Digests*, produced approximately 400 blog posts, and over 2,000 documents were laid before the Houses.

8,828 ICT Service Desk requests from members and their staff were supported.

3,198 print orders were completed by the Print Facility.

196 ICT Managed Print Service printers were provided to members' off-site offices.

### Strategy 3: Promote Accessibility and Public Engagement

**Outcome:** A public that is well informed and more engaged with its Parliament

#### Our Goals

**Goal 1:**

Greater public understanding, trust and pride in the Houses of the Oireachtas

**Goal 2:**

An Open Parliament that strengthens its engagement with the people

#### Our Key Achievements 2017

The *Commission's Communications Strategy 2017-2019* was published and focuses on five supporting strategies: media; broadcasting; web and social media; education; and branding, marketing and public events.

*Oireachtas TV* is producing its own broadcasting content, including a monthly review of events in Leinster House. The channel is relaying the business of the Houses to over 1.1 million homes and delivering increased public access to the work of the Dáil, Seanad and Committees.

The new [www.oireachtas.ie](http://www.oireachtas.ie) website was launched in Beta testing mode in preparation for its full release in May 2018. There were 1.9 million visits to the website.

The Houses achieved greater public engagement through best practice use of social media and the live streaming of parliamentary debates. Social media engagement on the work of the Houses continues to increase. In 2017, there were 2.7million views of live streams of debate.

A Parliamentary Education Officer was recruited to develop a Parliamentary Education Programme.

A programme for the centenary of the introduction of the parliamentary vote for women in Ireland, 'Vótáil 100', was developed and launched in early 2018.

A Working Group of the Commission was established to have responsibility for political oversight of the commemorative programme for 2019 to commemorate the centenary of the first sitting of the Dáil.

95,336 people visited Leinster House on tours, school visits and on parliamentary business.

### Strategy 4: Develop our Capability and our Staff

**Outcome:** An organisation with a focus on continuous improvement, high performance and learning

#### Our Goals

**Goal 1:**  
High performing, engaged and motivated staff

**Goal 2:**  
Good corporate governance

**Goal 3:**  
Development of innovative ICT solutions to support our work

**Goal 4:**  
Economic, efficient and effective use of resources

#### Our Key Achievements 2017

A new Role Profile Database was developed detailing the responsibilities, competencies, knowledge, and skills for all staff roles in the Service.

The Civil Service Mobility Programme and internal mobility was utilised to identify people with the required skills and experience to fill posts where necessary.

Staff induction training, performance management and the professional development of staff was supported with a strong focus on quality engagement throughout the Service through the revised Performance Management Development System (PMDS).

The L&RS implemented a High Performance Team Framework and Professional Development Programme to meet the development needs of L&RS staff.

The Commission, its Audit and Finance Committees, and the Management Committee and its sub-Committees met regularly to ensure good corporate governance in the performance of their functions.

A Records Management Unit was established as part of the library and research function. The Unit delivers records management services and coordinates FOI and data protection requests. The Unit is also actively planning for the implementation of the GDPR in the Service.

Investment in our key business processes, systems, and in-house ICT expertise has resulted in over 1,000 business processes mapped, the phased delivery of a Parliamentary Procedural project, and the recruitment of ICT specialists during 2017. ICT Operations staff are ITIL (Information Technology Infrastructure Library) trained.

Virtual Desktop Infrastructure, which provides the ability to access virtual desktops anytime, from anywhere, on any device, was provided to 427 (83%) of Service staff.

61 public procurement processes were supported by the Procurement Unit during 2017.

## STRATEGY 1: Support the Houses and the Parliamentary Reform Agenda

**OUTCOME: Office Holders, Chairpersons and Members receive high quality advice and support services**

*We have four strategic goals to achieve this outcome.*

### STRATEGY 1: GOAL 1

The sitting of the houses and their committees are continuously and effectively supported

The Service provided support and advisory services to the Dáil on each of its 104 sitting days, to the Seanad on each of its 86 sitting days, and for 1,498 hours of Parliamentary Committees meetings.

Figure 5: Sitting Days of the Houses

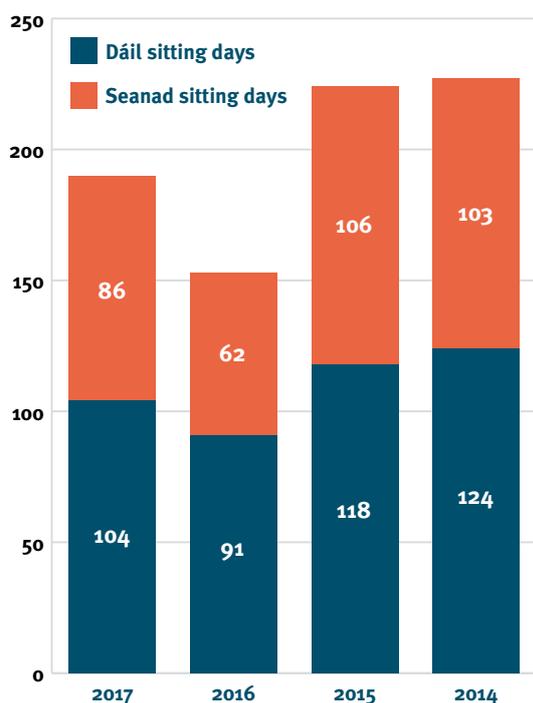
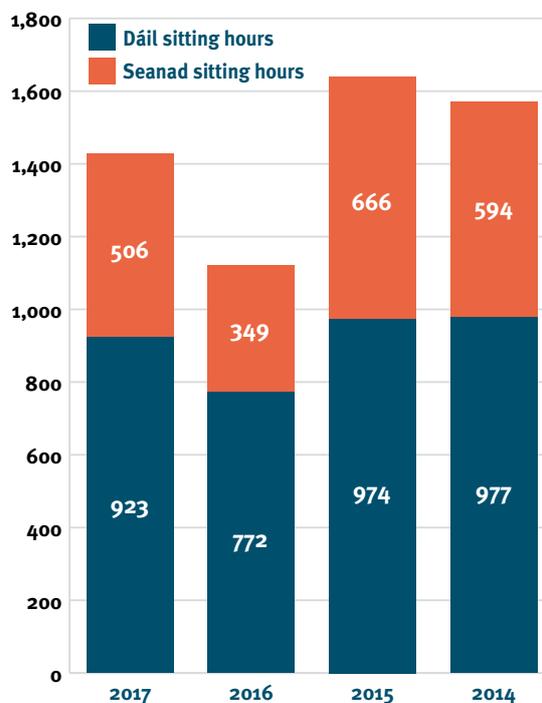


Figure 6: Sitting Hours of the Houses



The **new committee structure** established for the current Dáil and Seanad is fully resourced and supported. Extra resources to meet the demand for support services, particularly for additional Committees established, including Special Committees, were assigned.

The results of the independent review of the provision of services to Office Holders, conducted by the Institute of Public Administration in 2018, recorded a strong degree of satisfaction among Committee Chairs with the arrangement and organisation of Committee

**Goal 1: The sittings of the Houses and their Committees are continuously and effectively supported**

work. This was particularly the case in areas such as the Committee Work Programme and quality of advice from the Clerk in the application of Standing Orders, organisation of meetings and the production of reports.

Three new Special Committees were established during 2017: the Joint Committee on the Future of Mental Health Care; the Joint Committee on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution (which was dissolved following the publication of its report in December 2017); and the Seanad Special Select Committee on the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union. A new sectoral Committee, the Joint Committee on Rural and Community Development, was also established in September 2017.

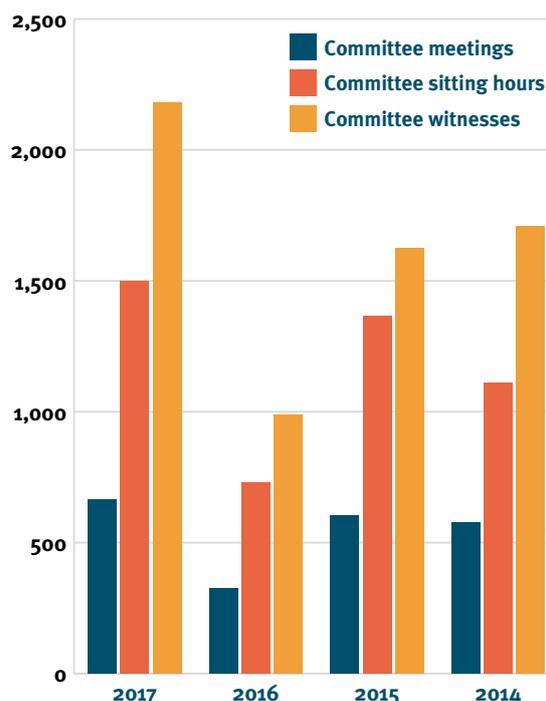


*The Joint Committee on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution.*



*Junior Cert students from Loreto College Dublin submitted a petition to the Joint Committee on Public Petitions on extending the time allocated to the Junior Cert English exam.*

**Figure 7: Paliamentary Committees**



Two Special Committees established in 2016 – the Committee on the Future of Healthcare and the Joint Committee on the Future Funding of Domestic Water Services – concluded their work following publication of their final reports in 2017.

**The Seanad Office** supported 10 meetings of the Seanad Committee on Procedure and Privileges and two meetings of the Seanad Committee of Selection. The Seanad Committee on Procedure and Privileges adopted three reports and the Seanad Committee of Selection adopted two reports.

**Goal 1: The sittings of the Houses and their Committees are continuously and effectively supported**

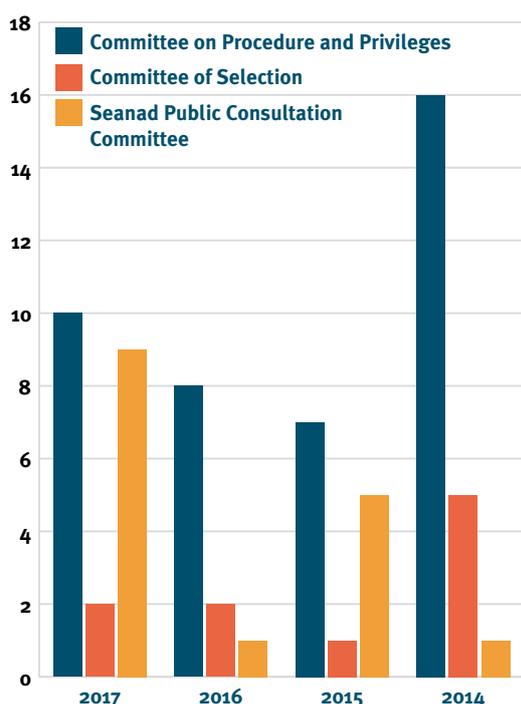
There were nine meetings of the Seanad Public Consultation Committee. The role of the Committee is to provide a structure for direct engagement and consultation between members of the public and the Seanad through a process that involves requesting submissions from members of the public on specific issues related to the Seanad’s legislative powers, or an issue of public policy, and inviting contributors to present on the topic at public hearings of the Committee in the Seanad Chamber.

The Cathaoirleach chairs the Committee on Procedure and Privileges in an *ex officio* capacity and expressed full satisfaction in the Office Holders Satisfaction Survey (2018), in relation to the supports provided by the Seanad Office. When it came to assessing satisfaction with the timeliness and comprehensiveness of advice on Commencement Matters, as it applies to the Seanad, the Cathaoirleach was also very positive about this area.



*The Seanad Public Consultation Committee held public hearings on Children’s Mental Health Services in Ireland. The Committee appointed Senator Joan Freeman as rapporteur for this phase of its work.*

**Figure 8: Meetings of Seanad Committees**



The Seanad Public Consultation Committee examined a range of broad socio-economic issues since it was established. In 2017, it undertook two public consultations. The first one was on Children’s Mental Health Services. It received a significant response to its invitation for submissions and held two days of public hearings in the Seanad Chamber on 29 June and 6 July 2017. The Committee’s report on this topic was published in October 2017.

The second public consultation undertaken by the Committee was on the Status, Treatment and Use of the National Anthem. The Committee received a good response to its request for submissions and held one day of public hearings in the Seanad Chamber, on 5 December 2017. The Committee is currently finalising its report on this topic.

**Goal 1: The sittings of the Houses and their Committees are continuously and effectively supported**

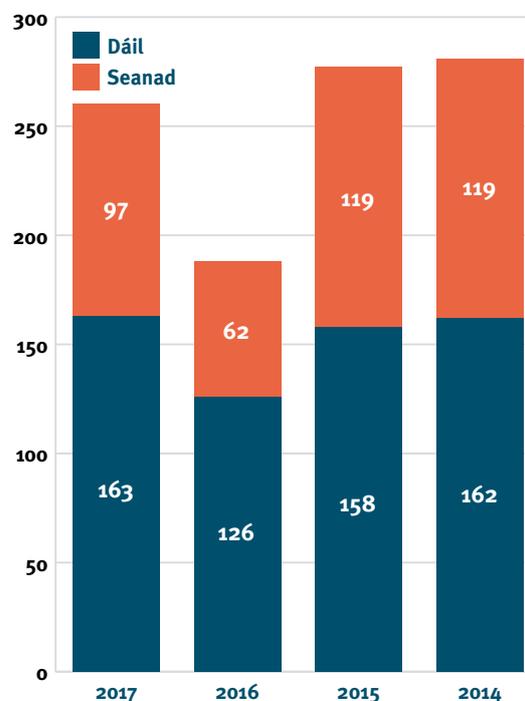
The **L&RS** delivered a range of services to support the sittings of the Houses and their Committees. It provided legislative analysis services to all members, including publication of 35 Bills Digests and 44 Bill Trackers to support the parliamentary debate on the Bills concerned. It completed 527 research briefings for individual members, many of which related directly to proceedings in the Chambers. The librarians and researchers are available to assist members in the library reading room.

The **Debates Office** provided reporting services, in the language of the contribution (Irish or English) for 2,927 hours of parliamentary debate and for replies in respect of 58,820 PQs. These reports were published on the Oireachtas website. The Debates Office is also responsible for the sound and recording of proceedings and for managing the contract for the service provider. Following a public tender process in 2017, a new contract was agreed to include an automated rostering system that simplifies the preparation of rosters for Parliamentary Reporters.

**Rannóg an Aistriúcháin** provided simultaneous translation services for the sittings of the Houses and produced 260 bilingual Order of Business Papers for the Dáil and Seanad sitting days.

It also provided simultaneous translation services to Committees when requested. Simultaneous translation facilities will be made available in all Committee Rooms. A new initiative under *Straitéis Ghaeilge Sheirbhís Thithe an Oireachtais* is to prepare and publish terminology lists extracted from the Bills before the Houses to support and enhance the use of Irish during proceedings.

**Figure 9: Bilingual Order Papers**



| Table 3: Translation Services   | 2017 | 2016 | 2015 | 2014 |
|---|------|------|------|------|
| Simultaneous translation provided on sitting days for the parliamentary proceedings | 107  | 93   | 122  | 127  |
| Bilingual Order Papers produced <sup>3</sup>  | 260  | 188  | 277  | 281  |
| <i>Dáil</i>   | 163  | 126  | 158  | 162  |
| <i>Seanad</i>   | 97   | 62   | 119  | 119  |
| Bilingual Titles of Bills <sup>4</sup>  | 156  | 121  | 132  | 118  |
| <i>Government Bills</i>   | 33   | 36   | 52   | 46   |
| <i>Private Members' Bills</i>   | 123  | 85   | 80   | 72   |

3 includes supplementary Order Papers.

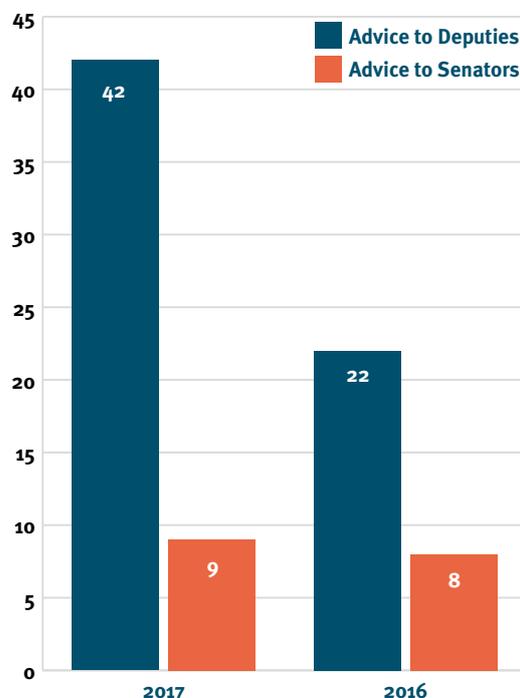
4 includes long and short titles of Bills initiated in the Houses.

**Goal 1: The sittings of the Houses and their Committees are continuously and effectively supported**

Capacity planning reviews of the Debates Office and Rannóg an Aistriúcháin were undertaken to help ensure that the Service optimises its resources to best meet parliamentary reform, key organisational changes and statutory obligations. The results of these reviews will be presented in 2018.

The **Office of the Parliamentary Legal Adviser (OPLA)** provided 543 legal advices to support the work of the Service, the Houses and their Committees. It also managed 13 legal proceedings, some ongoing in 2018. The OPLA also provided advice and legislative drafting services to members in respect of PMBs. A capacity review of the OPLA recommended the resources required for its expanded role, including the provision of legal advice on PMBs. The recruitment processes to fill the new posts commenced during 2017 and will continue in 2018.

**Figure 10: Legal Advice on Private Members' Bills**



| Table 4: Legal and Legislative Services <sup>5</sup>                | 2017 | 2016 | 2015 | 2014 |
|---|------|------|------|------|
| Legal advices issued  | 543  | 517  | 420  | 463  |
| <i>advice to the Service</i>  | 339  | 433  | 336  | 289  |
| <i>advice to Parliamentary Committees</i>                           | 204  | 84   | 84   | 174  |
| Legal advice on Private Members' Bills                              |      |      |      |      |
| <i>advice to Deputies</i>   | 42   | 22   | -    | -    |
| <i>advice to Senators</i>   | 9    | 8    | -    | -    |
| Private Members' Bills assigned to the legislative drafting service | 30   | 9    | 4    | 6    |
| <i>PMBs sponsored by Deputies</i>                                   | 26   | 5    | 3    | 4    |
| <i>PMBs sponsored by Senators</i>                                   | 4    | 4    | 1    | 2    |

<sup>5</sup> The legislative drafting service was managed by the Bills Office prior to its transfer to the OPLA in May 2016. The data provided for 2016 is for the period May-December of that year. The Bills Office did not provide legal advice on Private Members' Bills in 2014 and 2015.

## Goal 2: High quality procedural capacity in place across the service

### STRATEGY 1: GOAL 2

#### High quality procedural capacity in place across the service

Providing high quality **procedural support** and advice to Office Holders and to the Chairs of the Parliamentary Committees is an essential function of the Service.

The Clerk of each House is responsible for the provision of procedural services to the respective House and is the principal adviser to the House, Chair of each House, and members on the procedures and practices of the House.

Office Holders, by and large, have a high-degree of regard for, and satisfaction with, the services and procedural support provided by the Service. The feedback from The Office Holders Satisfaction Survey (2018) is more about refinements and improvements than substantive change or underlying discontent. Commission members were possibly the most satisfied of the Office Holder cohorts, particularly with reporting on the implementation of the strategic plan.



*The Chairman, Senator Neale Richmond, and members of the Seanad Special Select Committee on the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union at the launch of the Committee's report: **Brexit: Implications and Potential Solutions**.*

The effectiveness of the **Parliamentary Committees** depends significantly on the support they receive from the Committees' Secretariat's team of Clerks, Policy Advisers and committee staff. Following a period of recruitment and rapid change in the Committees' Secretariat, a structure was put in place for the regular sharing of knowledge, information, and experiences to strengthen the capability of the newly appointed Committee Clerks to provide procedural support and advice to Committees and Chairpersons. The need for additional staff arose from the increase in the number of Parliamentary Committees and the establishment of Special Committees in the current Dáil and Seanad. The Committees produced 80 reports during 2017, including 15 PMB scrutiny reports, which represented a 67% increase on 2015 and a 158% increase on 2016 (an election year).

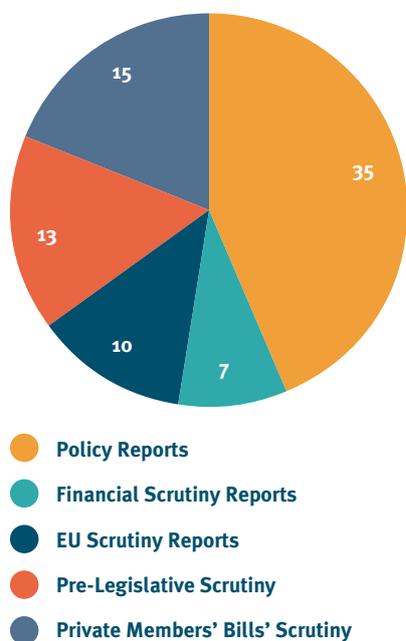


*European Commissioner for Transport and Mobility, Ms Violeta Bulc, addressed the Joint Committee on Transport, Tourism and Sport on: **EU Transport Policy**.*

Updated consolidated Standing Orders of the Dáil are published on an ongoing basis to take account of parliamentary reform initiatives and other procedural change requirements. The Seanad Standing Orders were also updated, re-indexed, and reprinted during 2017.

## Goal 2: High quality procedural capacity in place across the service

Figure 11: Committee Reports Presented in 2017



The Seanad Office and the Journal Office provided procedural advice and support to Senators, Deputies and Office Holders, and for sittings of the Houses throughout the year.

The ICT Unit continued to work on **updating procedural systems across the Service**. The mapping of all procedural business processes was completed in early 2017 and the information gathered from this project, and the Enterprise Architecture Project, resulted in the development of a Procedural Systems Project. Phase one of the project was approved and delivered during the year with a view to go live in the first half of 2018. This phase of the project will provide an integrated technology system for the processing and publication of parliamentary records and procedural documents. The new system will replace a number of existing stand-alone procedural systems.



*The Chairman, Patrick Deering TD, and members of the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine at the launch of the Committee's report: Future of the Tillage Sector in Ireland.*

**Developing procedural knowledge and capacity** is a strategic priority for the Service. A focus for the final year of the Strategic Plan will be to develop and implement an integrated medium-to-long-term strategy for parliamentary procedural knowledge management and training, including in the Dáil and Seanad Chambers.

**Goal 3: Parliamentary reform agenda implemented, including, members being provided with increased support for private member's legislation and budgetary scrutiny by Parliament**

### STRATEGY 1: GOAL 3

Parliamentary reform agenda implemented, including, members being provided with increased support for private member's legislation and budgetary scrutiny by Parliament

The **Dáil Business Committee**, comprising of Government and Opposition TDs, met 50 times during the year to plan Dáil business on a weekly, sessional, and yearly basis. It produced 88 reports on the business arrangements for Dáil sitting days. The establishment of the Committee has given the Dáil more power to plan and make arrangement for its own business and has contributed to the achievement of greater consensus and transparency in relation to the legislative planning process.

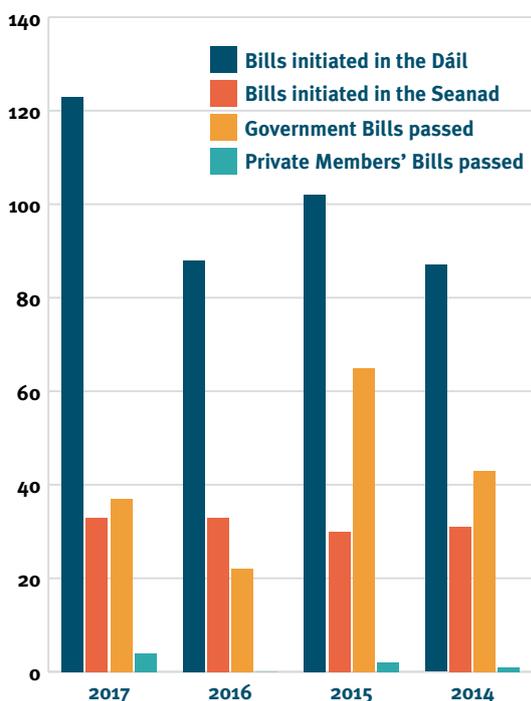


*The Dáil Business Committee. Standing left to right: Catherine Murphy TD, Michael Moynihan TD, Maria Bailey TD, Brendan Ryan TD. Seated left to right: Richard Boyd Barrett TD, Joe McHugh TD (Government Chief Whip and Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht), Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD (Ceann Comhairle and Chairperson of the Committee), Michael Harty TD, Seán Canney TD. Not pictured: Clare Daly TD, Aengus Ó Snodaigh TD.*

**Goal 3: Parliamentary reform agenda implemented, including, members being provided with increased support for private member's legislation and budgetary scrutiny by Parliament**

The assistance available to members for **drafting PMBs** to the same standard as Government Bills has been increased. There were 123 PMBs initiated in the Houses: 30 were assigned to the legislative drafting unit and four were passed by the Houses. The impact of the 45% increase in the number of PMBs extended beyond core parliamentary procedural activities and created new demands on support functions such as those services provided by the OPLA, Rannóg an Aistriúcháin and the L&RS. A Private Member's Bills Drafting Unit will be formally established and resourced in 2018 headed by a newly recruited Parliamentary Legislative Drafter.

**Figure 12: Bills Initiated in Both Houses and Bills Passed**

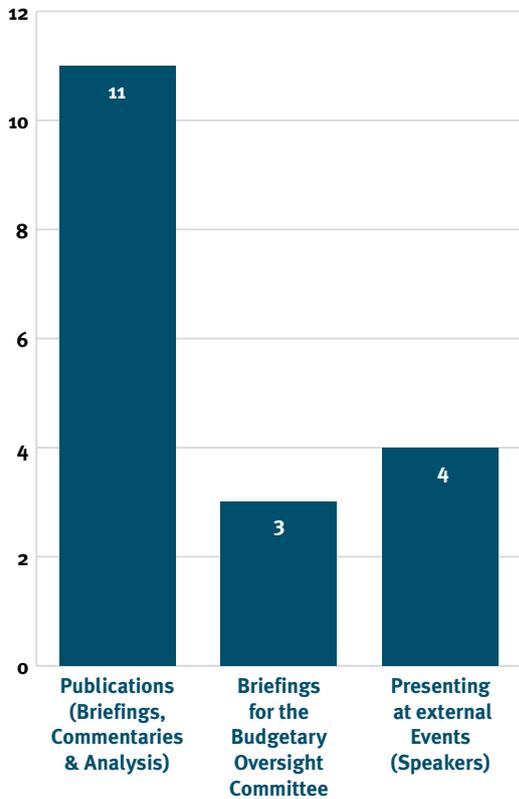


The L&RS responded to the changing demands arising from the parliamentary reform programme. Their new PMB team provides **PMB-related research** for individual members and Committees, and is liaising with the OPLA to enhance and streamline PMB services for members. The research provided to Committees focusses on legislative scrutiny, including pre-legislative scrutiny and detailed scrutiny of PMBs. The L&RS published an in-depth research paper *Spotlight* for members entitled *Post-Enactment Scrutiny by Parliament*.

Increased support for better scrutiny of the annual budgetary cycle by the Houses has progressed. A key development in this regard was the **establishment of the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO)** in August 2017 and the recruitment of a Director of the PBO at Assistant Secretary level. The establishment of the PBO was a key recommendation of the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform. The Office is an independent specialist unit within the Service. It provides independent and impartial information, analysis and advice to the Houses. It is a key source for financial and budgetary intelligence for members and in particular for the Committee on Budgetary Oversight. The Committee met 30 times during 2017 and presented three policy reports, including the *Pre-Budget 2018* report, to the Dáil. The PBO produced and published 11 briefing, commentary, and analysis reports during 2017 and gave four presentations at external events, including to the Foundation for Fiscal Studies (FFS) and the Interparliamentary Financial Information Network (IPFIN). The further resourcing and development of the PBO work programme is a priority for 2018.

**Goal 3: Parliamentary reform agenda implemented, including, members being provided with increased support for private member's legislation and budgetary scrutiny by Parliament**

**Figure 13: Parliamentary Budget Office (August – December 2017)**



The Service has supported the implementation of **reform of the parliamentary question process**, in particular the opportunity for Deputies to submit written PQs for answer during the summer recess period. There were 3,887 questions submitted during the 2017 summer recess.

| Table 5: Parliamentary Questions (PQs) | 2017   | 2016   | 2015   | 2014   |
|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| PQs Processed                          | 58,820 | 44,942 | 52,910 | 54,691 |
| Questions for Written Answer           | 48,641 | 28,963 | 38,655 | 40,369 |
| Questions for Oral Answer              | 1,958  | 1,071  | 1,303  | 1,535  |

**Goal 4: To provide the Houses of the Oireachtas with the infrastructure and logistical services they need for sittings and members' and staff accommodation**

### STRATEGY 1: GOAL 4

To provide the Houses of the Oireachtas with the infrastructure and logistical services they need for sittings and members' and staff accommodation



*Construction work underway to prepare the temporary Seanad chamber in the National Museum of Ireland and the first sitting of the Seanad in the temporary chamber on 26 September 2017.*

Following extensive investigative and evaluation works during 2016 and 2017, the main contract for the **Georgian Leinster House restoration project** was signed. The House was handed over to a main contractor following the relocation of the Seanad to a temporary Chamber in the National Museum of Ireland. The pace and scope of the work has increased significantly and will continue to 2019. The works will be captured and documented to provide an important record on this historic building of national significance.

A significant challenge during the year was to provide alternative suitable office accommodation for Office Holders and staff who were required to vacate their offices to facilitate the restoration works, and to provide accommodation for staff recruited to support parliamentary reform and key organisational initiatives. Work was carried out on developing an accommodation strategy to meet current and future requirements. A proposal for new purpose-built office accommodation within the Leinster House complex was approved in principle and included in the *National Development Plan 2018-2027* to be considered in the context of available resources.

**Goal 4: To provide the Houses of the Oireachtas with the infrastructure and logistical services they need for sittings and members' and staff accommodation**



*Georgian Leinster House structural project.*

There was a renewed focus on general security that resulted in an investment in security upgrades across the precinct. This included upgrading the security arrangements at the main entrance to Leinster House, strengthening internal access control measures, and updating the Oireachtas CCTV code of practice.

The pilot scheme for the electronic **Visitor Management System** was completed successfully and the system will be rolled out to all reception areas during 2018. There were 95,336 visitors to the Houses in 2017.

A key task in the current strategy for the Service is to **update the ICT infrastructure that supports the sittings in the Dáil and Seanad Chambers and Committee Rooms**. The *Integrated Technology in the Dáil Chamber Project* was completed in 2016, followed by the installation of new technology for the temporary Seanad Chamber in the National

Museum of Ireland. Following the mapping of all procedural processes and workflows in 2016, phase one of the *Parliamentary Procedural Programme of Projects* incorporating Bills, the weekly Committee Schedule and Translation Services (Bill titles and committee agenda items) was approved and progressed during 2017 with a view to go live in 2018.



*A new simultaneous interpretation console for Committee Rooms was installed.*

The **Catering Services** continued to provide quality in-house food and beverage dining and functions' services to members, staff, and visitors to the Houses. There was a renewed focus on the catering services during the year following the appointment of a new Catering Manager in April 2017, and on the continued development and implementation of good catering governance and management.

## STRATEGY 2: Support Members in their Constitutional Roles

**OUTCOME:** Members of the Houses are provided with the advice and support services they need to enable them to perform their parliamentary and public representative duties efficiently and effectively.

*We have two strategic goals to achieve this outcome.*

### STRATEGY 2: GOAL 1

To provide members with the high quality services they need to perform their parliamentary and representational duties

Providing accurate and timely advice and support **services to Oireachtas Office Holders** is essential to the smooth and effective running of the Houses and their Committees. The level of satisfaction of Office Holders with the overall quality of service provided to them is a key measure of how the Service is fulfilling its role in supporting the Houses and their members.

The Office Holders Satisfaction Survey (2018) provides evidence of satisfaction across many areas of the Service's work. The results show positive and affirming feedback and largely consistent views in areas such as advice (to relevant House Chairs) on PQs/Topical Issues/Commencement Matters, in-chamber/meeting support, access to legal advice, support functions such as the L&RS, the organisation of Committee work, the reporting of Committee work and the general functioning of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission.



*The Chairman, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin TD, and members of the Joint Committee on Justice and Equality with representatives of the Irish Traveller Movement and the National Traveller Women's Forum. The Committee presented a report to the Houses on the Recognition of Traveller Ethnicity.*

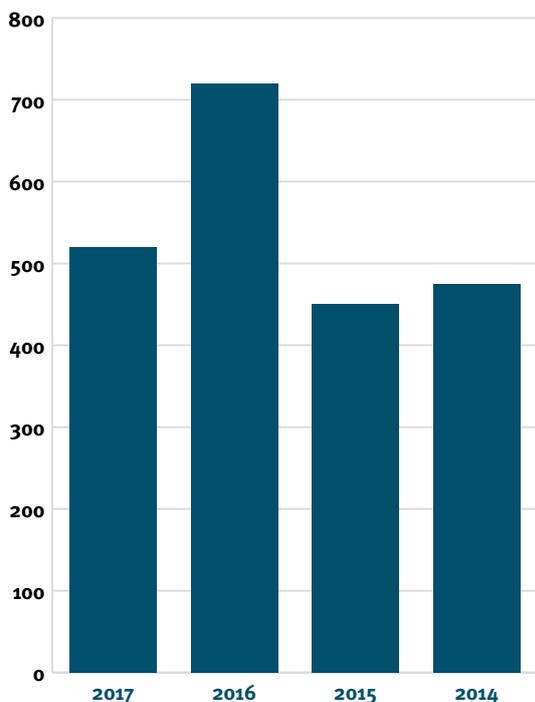
Services to members continue to be the primary focus of the **L&RS**. The Commission approved the member-focused *L&RS Strategy* and related *Statement of Services 2017-2018*. The L&RS invited members to provide input into the L&RS's staff *Learning at Work Day* and this informed the development of its services.

During 2017, 81% of members or their staff requested an information or research briefing from the L&RS, and over 300 research briefings were

**Goal 1: To provide members with the high quality services they need to perform their parliamentary and representational duties**

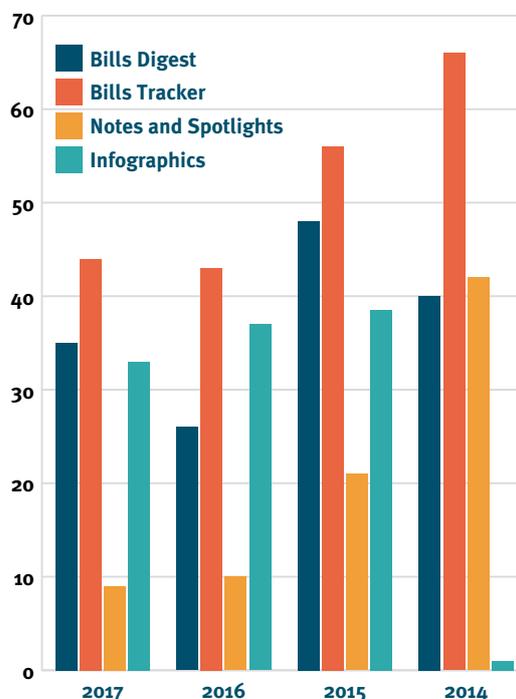
written for individual members. In addition to this on demand service, all members received 121 research publications, including 35 *Bills Digests* and nine *Notes and Spotlights*. Members were also kept up to date with 391 blog posts. An L&RS *Information Skills Programme* for members' staff was also implemented. The programme draws on both internal and external expertise.

**Figure 14: Parliamentary Library & Research Service Research Briefings**



The L&RS processed 2,034 documents laid before the Houses and made these available to members and to the public. It also developed a collections management framework, *Connecting to Content: A New Approach to Collection Management at the Parliamentary Library*, to enhance access to its print and electronic collections. This framework will be implemented during 2018.

**Figure 15: Parliamentary Library & Research Service Research Publications**



The **Human Resources (HR) Services** continued to provide HR, training, pension and payroll services to the members of the Houses and their staff employed under the *Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members*. As political staff who are employed by members under the Scheme are paid by the Commission, the Service's HR Unit administers certain functions in relation to pay, leave, and other employment services. There were 540 staff (445 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) posts) employed by members and political parties under the Scheme at the end of 2017. In addition, pensions were payable to 192 former political staff and 423 former members by the end of 2017.

**Goal 1: To provide members with the high quality services they need to perform their parliamentary and representational duties**

The focus in 2017 was on streamlining **Members' HR Services** and reviewing compliance with the relevant legislation and schemes. Additional activities undertaken included the establishment of a *Workplace Support Programme* to support the health and wellbeing of members and their staff, and establishing an Administrator and a Group Co-ordinator Forum to facilitate consultation with members' staff and information sharing. Information and advice seminars were held on the terms of employment matters under the Scheme and on pension arrangements following the 2016 general elections.

Members' HR Services also implemented the provision of the *Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) Act 2012*, including the provision of annual statements to members who are members of the Single Scheme and related rules.

Training programmes and information seminars delivered for members and their staff included IT systems support training, health and safety training, health and well-being seminars, and Irish language courses.

The **Oireachtas Print Facility**, which is available for the use of members and qualifying parties in connection with their parliamentary duties, completed 3,198 print orders during the year. A clear need for an upgrade of equipment in the print facility was identified and a business case was approved for replacement equipment that will provide improved service efficiencies, product range and quality, turnaround times and a cleaner work environment. It is planned to install the new equipment during 2018.

In supporting **members' interparliamentary work**, a focus during 2017 was to expand the role of the Parliamentary Friendship Groups to strengthen relations between countries on a parliamentary level. Parliamentary Friendship Group Convenors are currently being appointed by the Ceann Comhairle and the relevant embassies will be consulted in order to ensure quality engagement on matters of common interest. This work will continue into 2018 and beyond.



*Inaugural meeting of the Ireland-Nepal Parliamentary Friendship Group in Leinster House. 27 June 2017.*

**Goal 1: To provide members with the high quality services they need to perform their parliamentary and representational duties**

The Houses hosted 15 incoming parliamentary delegations, including five Speaker-led delegations in 2017. A total of 44 outgoing parliamentary delegations represented the Houses at meetings of Interparliamentary Associations.

The Ceann Comhairle led six delegations at interparliamentary meetings abroad, including to the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments held in Bratislava, Slovak Republic, where he presented a paper on *Bringing the Parliamentary Agenda Closer to Citizens in the Modern Era – Sharing Best Practices*.

The Cathaoirleach of the Seanad led five delegations abroad, including to the 136th Inter-Parliamentary Union General Assembly in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and to the Islamic Republic of Iran.



*Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann, Senator Denis O'Donovan, with the Iranian President, Dr Hassan Rouhani, during a visit by a parliamentary delegation to Tehran.*

| <b>Table 6: International and Interparliamentary Functions</b> | <b>2017</b> | <b>2016</b> | <b>2015</b> | <b>2014</b> |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Outgoing Parliamentary Delegations</b>                      |             |             |             |             |
| IPU General Assembly and related meetings                      | 5           | 1           | 4           | 2           |
| PACE plenary and committee meetings                            | 24          | 13          | 22          | 20          |
| Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE                             | 6           | 5           | 5           | 5           |
| Speaker-led delegations and bilateral meetings                 | 9           | 8           | 8           | 11          |
| <b>Incoming Parliamentary Delegations</b>                      |             |             |             |             |
| Speaker-led delegations  | 5           | 2           | 3           | 3           |
| Bilateral meetings   | 10          | 8           | 11          | 8           |
| <b>Friendship Groups</b>                                       |             |             |             |             |
| Incoming Parliamentary Friendship Groups                       | 1           | 1           | 2           | 1           |
| Outgoing Parliamentary Friendship Groups                       | 1           | —           | 1           | 0           |

**Goal 1: To provide members with the high quality services they need to perform their parliamentary and representational duties**

In addition to the inter-parliamentary activity summarised in Table 6, there was significant interparliamentary engagement led by the Parliamentary Committees. There were 28 outgoing delegations in 2017, including to the European Parliament and the Parliaments of Member States of the European Union.

Similarly, there were numerous incoming delegations involved in formal and informal meetings with the Parliamentary Committees. By way of example, the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs hosted 12 parliamentary delegations in 2017. Across all the Committees there were meetings with six European Commissioners, including First Vice President of the European Commission, Mr. Frans Timmermans. In September 2017 there was a special meeting of three Joint Committees for the purpose of engaging with Mr. Guy Verhofstadt, MEP, Brexit Coordinator for the European Parliament, in relation to the negotiations

for the withdrawal of the UK from the EU. The anticipated impact of Brexit was also discussed during the 54th Plenary of the British-Irish Interparliamentary Assembly which took place in Kilkenny in July 2017.

The **Oireachtas Travel Policy** governing official travel by members and staff was reviewed, updated and published during the year.

A **Members' Feedback Group (MFG)** was established to provide members with a forum to provide feedback on the services they receive to support them in carrying out their parliamentary duties. Feedback received from the Group assists the Service in identifying the expectations and changing needs of members as users of those services, where changes or improvements may be required and, as appropriate, to receive input from members on the design and introduction of new services.



*Members of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly attending the 54th plenary of the Assembly, held in Kilkenny in July 2017.*

*Goal 2: To provide members with more flexible and effective ICT services to enable them to do their work*

## STRATEGY 2: GOAL 2

To provide members with more flexible and effective ICT services to enable them to do their work

**Information and Communications Technology** is an important component in the delivery of services to support members and their staff. In order to provide members with the operational technology support that they require, the Service has focussed on anytime, anywhere access to information and resources on a range of devices, the development of platforms to support managing, sharing, and protecting information, and on providing ICT support service to members and their staff.

Investment in ICT services to members and their staff is a priority during the period of the current strategy. The roll out of a Managed Print Service, updating operating systems, and a review of the members' ICT Helpdesk service were initiatives undertaken to support the achievement of this goal.

The Managed Print Service offers greater security and improved efficiency and productivity for printing requirements. It was rolled out to members' Leinster House offices and to members' off-site offices. A review of the options to update the current operating systems and the possibility of moving to a new email service was carried out in 2017. The migration to new systems will proceed in 2018.

The requirements for the members' ICT Helpdesk Management System were reviewed and a new Call Management System was implemented with effect from 1 January 2018. ICT provided support for 8,828 service-desk calls from members and their staff during the year.

## STRATEGY 3: Promote Accessibility and Public Engagement

**OUTCOME: A public that is well informed and more engaged with its Parliament**

We have two strategic goals to achieve this outcome

### STRATEGY 3: GOAL 1

Greater public understanding, trust and pride in the Houses of the Oireachtas

increase public knowledge and understanding of the work of the Houses. We continue to seek innovative and interactive ways of engaging with the public and we are promoting a 'digital first' approach, combined with improved education tools and a proactive media approach.



*Members of the expert panel participating in the Parliamentary Forum on Mental Health in Dublin Castle.*

A high level priority for the Service is to strengthen the engagement between the Houses of the Oireachtas and the public. Our intention is to further develop the concept of an Open Parliament to inform and engage with the public and to



*Mr Michel Barnier, European Commission Chief Brexit Negotiator, addressed a Joint Sitting of the Houses of the Oireachtas in May 2017.*

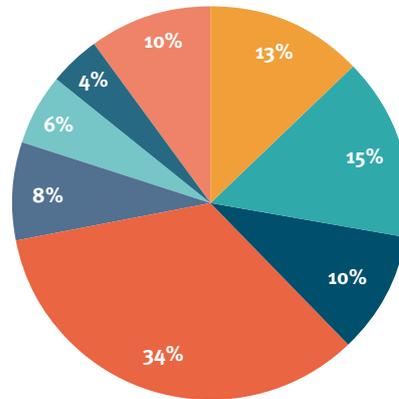
**Goal 1: Greater public understanding, trust and pride in the Houses of the Oireachtas**



*The Chairman, Hildegard Naughton TD, and members of the Joint Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment with Denis Naughten TD (Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment) at the Forum on the Future Funding of Public Service Broadcasting, hosted by the Committee. 7 July 2017.*

During 2017, the Service focused on further developing and refreshing the **Oireachtas TV** brand from a start-up to a fully rounded parliamentary television channel. Oireachtas TV produces its own broadcasting content, including documentaries, panel discussions, and historical talks, and also televises Oireachtas events of public interest. Over the last year these included the National Bravery Awards 2017, the election of the Taoiseach, Mr Leo Varadkar TD, the Parliamentary Forum on Mental Health, the address by Mr Michel Barnier, European Commission Chief Negotiator for the United Kingdom Exiting the European Union, to a joint sitting of both Houses of the Oireachtas, the Forum on the Future of Broadcasting which took place in Dublin Castle, and *Budget 2018*. A monthly roundup programme of Oireachtas events, *Around the Houses*, was first broadcast in November 2017. Documentaries, including *House of Art*, were broadcast and further documentaries are in production for broadcasting in 2018.

**Figure 16: Content of Oireachtas TV, 2017**



- Live broadcasts of Oireachtas proceedings
- Replay of Dáil Proceedings
- Replay of Seanad Proceedings
- Replay of Committee Proceedings
- European Parliament TV Proceedings
- Oireachtas TV Proceedings
- Oireachtas TV Historical Series
- Other \*

\* includes Oireachtas studio debates, Leinster House historical talks, daily press releases, Oireachtas reports, Bills and parliamentary debates, UK Parliament content and EU Parliament content.



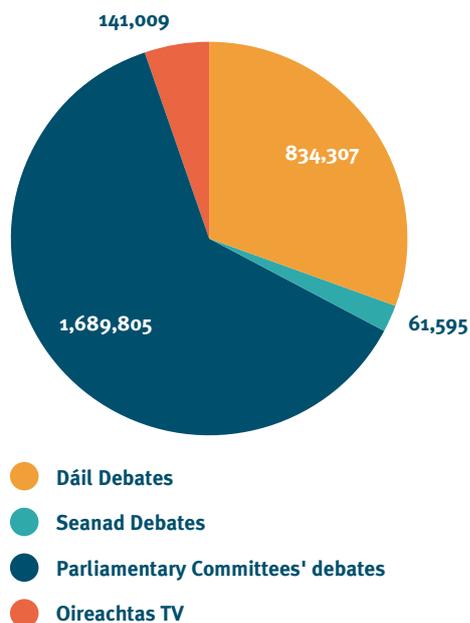
*Budget 2018 Studio Debate, produced and broadcast by Oireachtas TV.*

The provision of subtitling and signed content on Oireachtas TV has increased over the past year, including subtitling of PQs and Leaders' Questions proceedings, and live subtitling for the debate in the Houses on the *Irish Sign Language Bill*. The channel broadcasts 24 hours a day to Irish homes on Saorview, Sky, Virgin Media, eirVision, and Vodafone.

**Goal 1: Greater public understanding, trust and pride in the Houses of the Oireachtas**

The Editorial Board for Oireachtas TV oversees and gives guidance on the broadcasting of the proceedings of the Houses and their Committees.

**Figure 17: Oireachtas Website Views of Live Streams of Parliamentary Debates**

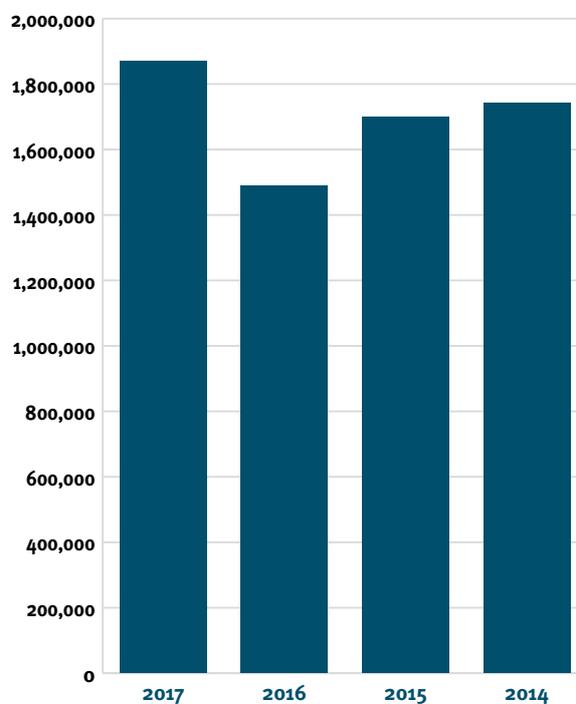


The Service holds a **broadcast archive of parliamentary proceedings** that dates back to 1990. It is our intention to preserve the archive at the highest broadcast resolution and to make it searchable and accessible on request to members of the Houses, the general public and the media. Preliminary work has commenced on this initiative.

Over the past year there was a 25% increase in the number of visitors to the **Oireachtas website**, from 1.5 million visitors in 2016 to 1.9 million in 2017. Work continued during the year on the complete redevelopment of the website. Enhancements include improved integration, greater reuse of information, improved filtering of content by member (for example, Debates, Votes, PQs), improved structure for data handling, enhanced reader view and detailed analytics. The increase of

in-house web skills resulting from the project will ensure greater in-house control over the website and reduce reliance on external resources. The new website was officially launched in May 2018. The website will contribute to greater engagement, access to information, transparency and openness in relation to the business of the Houses.

**Figure 18: Visits to the Oireachtas Website**



The post of **Parliamentary Education Officer** was established and filled by secondment following a recruitment campaign. The responsibilities of the Parliamentary Education Officer include developing programmes aimed at informing the next generation of voters on the role of the Oireachtas, and working with the Service and members of the Houses to develop educational publications and web based materials on the role of the Houses and the work of members.

## Goal 1: Greater public understanding, trust and pride in the Houses of the Oireachtas



*Members of the Vótáil 100 Committee, chaired by Senator Ivana Bacik, launched the Vótáil 100 commemorative programme at the statue commemorating Countess Markievicz at Leinster House.*

1918 was the first time Irish women were permitted by law to vote and stand as candidates in parliamentary elections. In the same year, Countess Markievicz became the first woman to win a seat in a parliamentary election in Ireland. To mark the centenary in 2018, a **Vótáil 100 Steering Committee** was established to develop a programme of commemorative events to highlight the history of the suffrage movement and its leaders in Ireland and the impact of wider voting rights. The programme of events was launched by the Ceann Comhairle in January 2018.

The 100th anniversary of the first meeting of Dáil Éireann will take place on 21 January 2019. A steering group is planning and developing a **Centenary Commemorative Programme for 2019** aligned with the Decade of Centenaries programme. A Working Group of the Commission was established to provide political oversight of the Programme.

A **joint project with the National Archives of Ireland** to digitise a series of records from the early Dáil Éireann, held by the National Archives, has commenced. These rare and historically important records require careful conservation and curating. Digitising these records will allow them to be made available on the broadest scale possible to the Irish public and to historians and academics worldwide. It will also provide a valuable resource for the Centenary Commemorative Programme for 2019.

The L&RS has developed a strategy for **the Library's special collections**. The strategy entitled *Curate, Promote, Collaborate: Towards 100 Years of Special Collections at the Parliamentary Library, 1924-2020* will guide the management and promotion of these historically significant collections. The initial focus is on developing a collection of historical records for the Centenary Commemorative Programme for 2019.

## Goal 2: An Open Parliament that strengthens its engagement with the people

### STRATEGY 3: GOAL 2

#### An open parliament that strengthens its engagement with the people

The Commission's **Communications Strategy 2017-2019 – An Open Parliament for the People: Informing and Engaging the Public** focuses on five supporting strategies: media; broadcasting; web and social media; education; and branding, marketing and public events. The actions identified in the strategy were progressed during the year.

While new technologies are embraced in the dissemination of news, traditional print and broadcast media will, over the medium term, remain the primary means by which the public are informed about parliament, politics, and public affairs. The level of parliamentary related activity is reflected in the 632 press releases issued on the work of the Houses and their Committees in 2017.

The provision of weekly local radio and newspaper reports continued throughout 2017. The availability of spokespersons, access to our audio and visual records of the parliamentary proceedings, providing clear, accessible and relevant information about the work of the Houses and answering media queries in a prompt and consistent manner are some of the services provided to the media by the Communications Unit. The Unit also supports and advises all members in the communication of their parliamentary work to the media. It also responds to media coverage of parliament.



*Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD, at the planting of a Tree of Hope in Leinster House Lawn.*

There was greater **social media engagement** with parliamentary events over the course of 2017. The number of Facebook Followers increased by 36% on 2016. With the introduction of Facebook LIVE, videos on the Facebook page were viewed over 107,000 times. The gender breakdown of our followers is 41% Women and 59% Men, with the largest age demographic for both being 25-35 years. The top Facebook LIVE videos included the election of An Taoiseach, Mr Leo Varadkar TD, An Taoiseach's first Leaders' Questions, Budget 2018, and the address to the Houses by Mr Michel Barnier, the European Commission Chief Negotiator for the United Kingdom Exiting the European Union.

**Table 7: Houses of the Oireachtas Social Media**

|                    | 2017   | 2016   | % Increase |
|--------------------|--------|--------|------------|
| Facebook followers | 4,643  | 3,420  | 36         |
| Twitter followers  | 26,430 | 23,797 | 11         |

**Goal 2: An Open Parliament that strengthens its engagement with the people**



*Mr Guy Verhofstadt MEP, European Parliament Brexit Coordinator, addressed three Joint Committees at a joint meeting in the Dáil Chamber: the Joint Committees on European Union Affairs; Foreign Affairs and Trade and Defence; and Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement.*

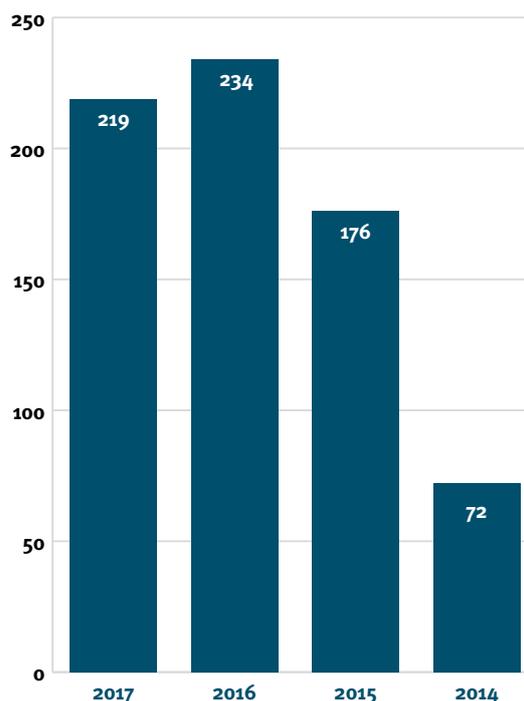
The number of Twitter followers increased by 11%. @OireachtasNews account gained nearly 6 million impressions. The top five tweets for 2017 included the final statement in the Dáil Chamber by former Taoiseach Mr Enda Kenny TD, the special address to three Oireachtas Committees in the Dáil Chamber by Mr Guy Verhofstadt MEP, Brexit Coordinator for the European Parliament, the planting of a ‘Tree of Hope’ in the Leinster House lawn, and #Vótáil100 – the Oireachtas Commemorative Programme for the 100th anniversary of the parliamentary vote for women in Ireland. The address by Mr Verhofstadt MEP gained the most impressions with over 47,000 generated from one tweet. The Twitter LIVE videos of debates in the Dáil, Seanad and Committees gained almost 300,000 views over the last year.

The number of Instagram followers increased by 160% in 2017. Our LinkedIn profile has gained over 1,200 followers in 2017 – a 40% increase on 2016. Our LinkedIn account has become an integral tool for advertising career opportunities in the Houses of the Oireachtas Service.

The proactive **publication of Open Data** on the website has been achieved. Parliamentary debates, PQs and the results of Votes (divisions in the Houses) are now available in open data formats on the [Oireachtas website](#) and support public engagement, openness and transparency, and trust in the work of the Houses.

A **Records Management Unit** was established under the L&RS. The Unit’s strategy focusses on three objectives: protection; compliance; and control. It delivers records management services and coordinates Freedom of Information (FOI) and Data Protection requests. During 2017, the Unit responded to 219 FOI requests and eight data protection subject access requests. It provided support and guidance for FOI decision makers across the Service. The Records Management Unit supports the Services Working Group on GDPR Implementation. The Unit is currently engaged in planning for implementation of the GDPR in May 2018.

**Figure 19: FOI Requests**



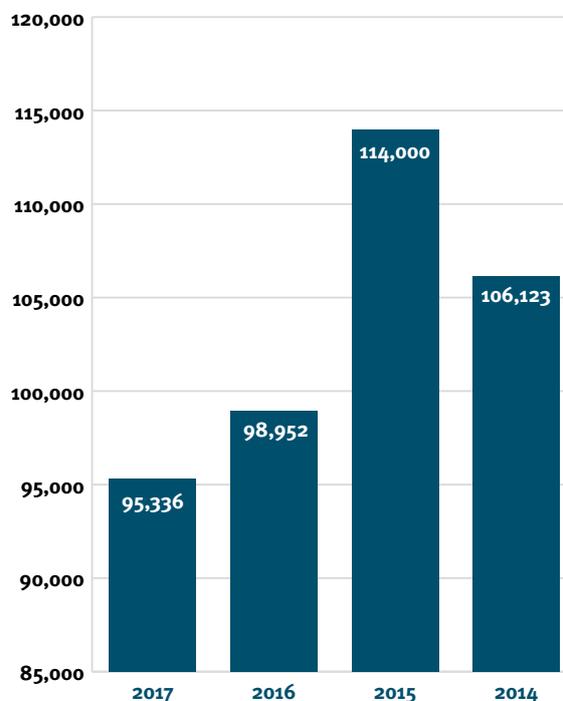
## Goal 2: An Open Parliament that strengthens its engagement with the people

A key priority under the Accessibility and Public Engagement Strategy in our Strategic Plan is to support the greater use of Irish in the Houses of the Oireachtas.

A working group was established to develop an **Irish Language Strategy** for the Houses, *Stráitéis Ghaeilge Sheirbhís Thithe an Oireachtais*, which was launched by the Ceann Comhairle for ‘Bliain na Gaeilge 2018’. The strategy aims to progressively develop the Service into a functioning bilingual organisation in which members of the Houses and the public will be facilitated in using the Irish language in their day to day business. The strategy, approved by the Commission, contains a number of commitments in the following areas: recruitment; services for members; language resources and social events; and commemorations and media. In 2018 the Management Committee will receive biannual progress reports on the actions taken to achieve the commitments under the strategy. Progress is reported in the Secretary General’s annual Implementation Report on the Strategic Plan and in the Commission’s Annual Reports.

The Oireachtas continued to provide **guided tours of Leinster House** and the work of the Houses of the Oireachtas during the year. Due to the Georgian Leinster House structural programme, the tours were necessarily restricted to ensure the safety of visitors to the Houses. The demand for tours remains high. There were approximately 52,000 visitors on guided tours in 2017. The guided tours, conducted by the Parliamentary Ushers, are very well received.

Figure 20: Visitors to the Houses of the Oireachtas



Mr Leo Varadkar TD was elected as Taoiseach by the Dáil on 14 June 2017.

## STRATEGY 4: Develop our Capability and our Staff

**OUTCOME: An organisation with a focus on continuous improvement, high performance and learning**

*We have four strategic goals to achieve this outcome*

### STRATEGY 4: GOAL 1

High performing, engaged and motivated staff

At 31 December 2017, the Service employed 512 civil service staff, 495.24 full-time equivalent posts (FTE) out of a total of 529 FTE sanctioned posts. In addition the Service employed 56 State Industrial and Office Holders' staff, 50.8 FTE posts. A total of 13 staff retired in 2017.

The breakdown of staff by gender at the end of 2017 was 47% female and 53% male. The senior management breakdown (i.e. Principal Officer level and above) is 48% female and 52% male. Less than 8% of our workforce is under 30 years of age and 40% is over 50 years of age.

The **Pensions Unit** focussed on a review of the requirements under the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) legislation for all incoming staff. There were 105 Single Scheme Statements and 40 Leaver Statements issued. Information seminars on pensions schemes were also provided.



*Mr Peter Finnegan, Clerk of the Dáil and Secretary General, and Mr Michael Errity, Assistant Secretary, meeting with officials from the Ukrainian Parliament on a study visit to the Houses of the Oireachtas Service.*

### Goal 1: High performing, engaged and motivated staff

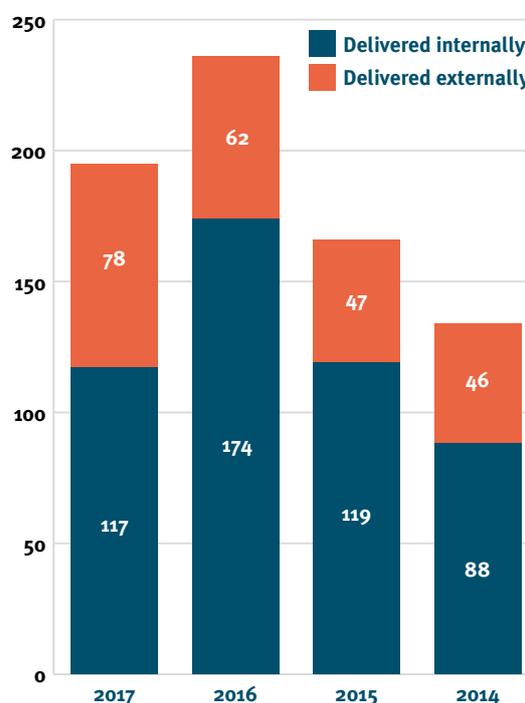
New posts were created to **support implementation of Dáil Reform initiatives**, including the establishment and staffing of the PBO, increased support for private members' legislation, budget scrutiny, expanded Committees' system and the establishment of Special Committees. Two new posts of Oireachtas Education Officer and Oireachtas Events Officer were created to strengthen Oireachtas engagement with the public. New posts were sanctioned for the newly established Records Management Unit. Additional Parliamentary Ushers were recruited to implement arrangements put in place to strengthen security and health and safety across the Leinster House campus, including enhanced security measures at the main entrance to the precinct.

The Service undertook six internal and 13 external recruitment competitions in a very competitive recruitment environment. These competitions reflected the broader range of expertise and specialist skills that the Service requires to provide quality services to meet more complex parliamentary, corporate and technical requirements. A total of 34 staff left the organisation through external promotions, career breaks and retirements in 2017. The retention of staff in an increasingly competitive landscape for recruiting and retaining talented employees is a challenge for the Service into the future.

A *Skills and Training Needs Analysis Survey* was conducted to identify and address skills gaps. A **skills development programme** was implemented under the Service's *Organisation Development Initiative* (ODI). The ODI focused on staff coaching, mentoring, high performing teams and on performance improvement. An external review of the ODI was carried out and the report will inform implementation of phase two of the ODI programme in 2018.

In addition, 62 staff (12%) applied under the Refund/Advance of Fees Scheme to undertake third level courses that are aligned to the business needs of the Service, including finance, audit and accountancy, law and policy analysis.

Figure 21: Staff Training and Development



Actions under the *Civil Service Renewal Plan – A Vision and Three Year Action Plan for the Civil Service* and civil service central guidelines continued to be promoted, implemented and reported. During 2018, we will develop actions, goals and outcomes for the Service under the new public service strategy, *Our Public Service 2020*, launched in December 2017.

An **Internal Communications Plan** for the Service was launched and Staff Networks and cross cutting project teams contributed to bringing people together from across the Service for information sharing, team building, peer support and staff development.

**Goal 1: High performing, engaged and motivated staff**



*Members of the Houses meeting with Dr Amal Abdullah Al Qubaisi, President of the Federal National Council of the United Arab Emirates, and members of the UAE's national parliament on a visit to the Houses of the Oireachtas.*

## Goal 2: Good Corporate Governance

### STRATEGY 4: GOAL 2

#### Good Corporate Governance

Our *Corporate Governance Framework* is designed to support the achievement of our strategic goals as identified in our Strategic Plan, the delivery of tasks under the *Corporate Business Plan 2016-2018*, and to meet our statutory and non-statutory obligations.

The Management Committee met on 13 occasions during 2017, including one off-site meeting and one incorporeal meeting. An external member was appointed to the Committee in March 2017. The Committee considered, among other items:

- progress on strategic plan goals;
- corporate business plan priorities;
- quarterly HR, Financial, and Performance reports;
- risk and procurement reports;
- the 2017 Annual Resource Plan for the Service and Estimates for 2018;
- internal and external audit reports;
- ICT projects' portfolio progress reports;
- the Service's *Digital Transformation Programme 2020*; and
- business cases for new projects and new items of expenditure.

There are three Management Committee sub-Committees with specific terms of reference to assist the Committee with its work and to manage its business in an efficient manner. The Systems sub-Committee met on six occasions, including one incorporeal meeting, the Business and Strategy sub-Committee met on six occasions and the People and Finance sub-Committee held two meetings during 2017. A formal system of assigning

responsibility for performance of functions to each Assistant Secretary is in place in accordance with the *Public Services Management Act 1997* and the Commission Acts.

An evaluation of the Management Committee and its sub-Committees and their contribution to managing the Service and delivering on strategic goals was carried out in 2017. A new structure will be put in place in 2018.



*Mr Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, meeting with Senator Paul Coghlan, Leas-Chathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann, and members of the Houses.*

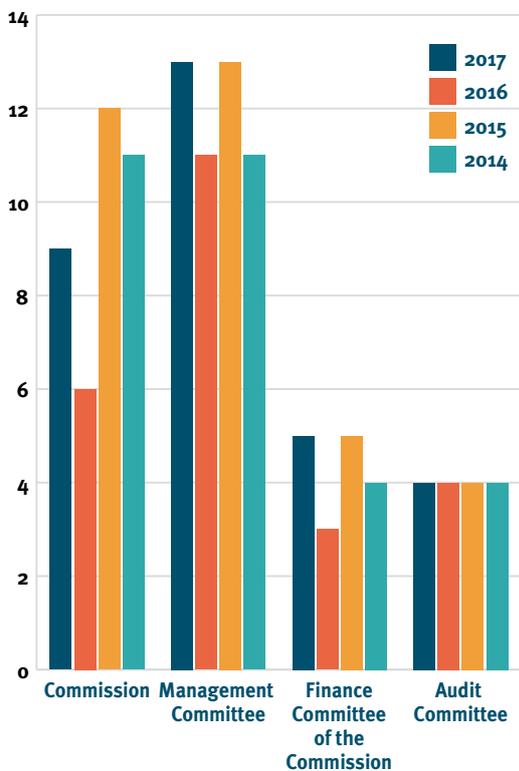
The Audit Committee met four times during 2017. Its function is to advise the Secretary General on financial matters relating to his functions, and to advise the Commission on matters of corporate governance relating to its functions. The Audit Committee reports annually to the Commission on its activities and its report is published with the Commission's Annual Report and laid before the Houses.

The Internal Audit Unit produced four reports in 2017 on areas of the Service's business. The Unit reports directly to the Secretary General and its work is overseen by the Audit Committee. The Head of the Internal Audit Unit also participated in the Heads of Internal Audit Forum (a Civil Service

**Goal 2: Good Corporate Governance**

internal audit network) and a Heads of Internal Audit of Parliaments and Assemblies in Ireland and the UK Group to share experiences and to help ensure consistent best practice audit.

**Figure 22: Governance of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service (Meetings)**



The Service continues to review, update and promote its policy documents and reviews its ongoing **compliance with statutory and non-statutory obligations** including obligations under the *Ethics in Public Office Acts, Data Protection Acts, Regulation of Lobbying Act, CCTV Code of Practice, Prompt Payments, Freedom of Information, Risk, Procurement, systems of Internal Financial Control, and employee related statutory and non-statutory obligations.*

Over the course of 2017 the Service also focused on preparing the organisation and supporting members of the Houses for compliance with the EU GDPR that comes into effect in May 2018.

**STRATEGY 4: GOAL 3**

**Development of innovative ICT solutions to support our work**

The Service has recruited key **specialist ICT personnel** to plan and deliver a significant investment in our key processes and systems and in developing in-house ICT expertise that will continue throughout the period of the current strategic plan and beyond.

Virtual Desktop Infrastructure, which provides the ability to access virtual desktops anytime, from anywhere, on any thin client device, was provided to 427 (83%) of Service staff. The provision of a Managed Print Service to staff and to members and their staff continued throughout 2017.

The development of a Legal Case Management System was considered a priority due to the expanded role and workload of the OPLA. Following a tender process, the project is due to commence in 2018.

The Programme of Business Process Mapping and Improvement (BPMI) was completed and informed the development of an ICT Enterprise Architect (EA) for the Service. A proposal for a new Technology Stack was considered by the Management Committee and the development of phase one of the Parliamentary Procedural Systems Project, to modernise and integrate systems in key procedural areas, was approved and delivered during 2017 with a view to go live in 2018. Phase two and phase three of the project are scheduled for delivery during 2018.

### Goal 3: Development of innovative ICT solutions to support our work



*New Parliamentary Procedural System Programme.*

A proposal for a digital technology initiative, the **Digital Transformation Strategy 2017-2020**, was developed and approved by the Management Committee and the Commission in 2017. The seven components of the programme as set out below will be delivered, subject to business case and expenditure approval, over the next number of years:

- Technology in the Chambers;
- Parliamentary Procedures;
- Informing the Citizen;
- Informing the Debates Programme;
- Corporate Programme;
- Digital Modernisation Programme; and
- Data Integration and Analytics Programme.

## STRATEGY 4: GOAL 4

### Economic, efficient and effective use of resources

The Service manages the Commission's resources through appropriate HR, financial management, procurement and contract management, efficiency evaluation and project management procedures. The Commission's Finance Committee, which monitors ongoing expenditure and considers detailed expenditure and budgetary performance, met five times and reported and made recommendations, as appropriate, to the Commission on these matters.

Expenditure to end 2017 was €113 million against an estimate of €127.434 million resulting in a net variance underspend of €14.746 million. The variance was primarily as a result of staff vacancies and the timing of recruitments, and includes contingencies not required, lower than anticipated energy costs, and projects' spend that would now fall to be paid in 2018, the final year of the Commission's three year funding cycle. The audited accounts of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission are presented in Chapter 6 the Commission's annual reports as laid before the Houses.

#### Goal 4: Economic, efficient and effective use of resources



*Leas-Cheann Comhairle Pat the Cope Gallagher TD, and members of the Houses meeting with a German parliamentary delegation led by the Speaker of the Parliament, Prof Dr Norbert Lammert, during a visit to the Houses of the Oireachtas.*

The **Annual Resource Plan (ARP) for 2017** for the Houses of the Oireachtas Service was approved by the Commission and implemented through recruitment, secondments, central mobility programmes and other initiatives, as required, throughout 2017. The annual Statement of Staff Resources is presented in the Commission's Annual Report at Appendix II.

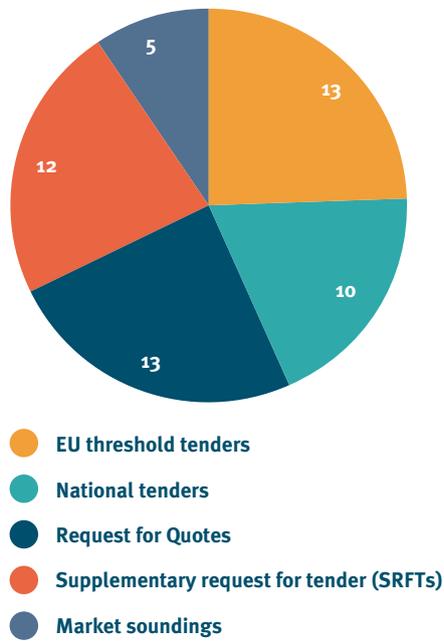
**Capacity planning reviews** of both the Debates Office and Rannóg an Aistriúcháin were commissioned to help ensure that the Service optimises its resources to best meet parliamentary reform, key organisational changes and statutory obligations and challenges. The capacity review reports will be presented in 2018.

A review of the Service's **Organisational Development Initiative (ODI)** was commissioned and the review findings and recommendations will be utilised to develop and align new ODI initiatives to the *Civil Service Renewal Plan* actions, the results of the *Civil Service Staff Engagement Survey*, and the new public service strategy *Our Public Service 2020*.

The **Procurement Unit** continues to provide support to business units in the procurement of goods and services and in ongoing contract management. During 2017, 61 public procurement processes were supported by the Procurement Unit. In addition, 20 contracts were negotiated through the Office of Government Procurement Frameworks. The Oireachtas Contracts Committee met eight times during 2017.

**Goal 4: Economic, efficient and effective use of resources**

**Figure 23: Public Procurement Management, 2017**



## Financial Performance over the Commission's Three Year Budget Framework 2016-2018

### Financial Information

The Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2015 provides funding of €369m for the three year period 2016—2018. The current 3 year projected outturn is €365m detailed as follows:

#### Current 3 year projection: €365m

|               |       |
|---------------|-------|
| 2016 Outturn  | €116m |
| 2017 Outturn  | €113m |
| 2018 Forecast | €136m |

| Category                                  | 2017<br>Outturn<br>(provisional)<br>€000 | 2017<br>Estimate<br>€000 | Variance    |                   |
|---|--|--------------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Dáil Éireann                              | 41,595                                   | 42,848                   | -3%         | Underspend        |
| Seanad Éireann                            | 8,745                                    | 8,961                    | -2%         | Underspend        |
| Oireachtas Committees and MEPs            | 1,122                                    | 1,507                    | -26%        | Underspend        |
| Administration & other Services – pay     | 28,455                                   | 31,603                   | -10%        | Underspend        |
| Administration & other Services – non-pay | 19,006                                   | 26,933                   | -29%        | Underspend        |
| Pensions & Redundancy                     | 13,765                                   | 15,582                   | -12%        | Underspend        |
|   | <b>€112,688</b>                          | <b>€127,433</b>          | <b>-12%</b> | <b>Underspend</b> |

## Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Appropriation Account 2017

|   | 2017 Estimate |         |                | 2017 Outturn |         |                | 2016 Outturn |         |                |
|---|---------------|---------|----------------|--------------|---------|----------------|--------------|---------|----------------|
|   | Current       | Capital | Total          | Current      | Capital | Total          | Current      | Capital | Total          |
| <b>Programme Expenditure</b>                                | €000          | €000    | €000           | €000         | €000    | €000           | €000         | €000    | €000           |
| A. Delivering services to Parliament and Oireachtas members | 127,434       | -       | <b>127,434</b> | 112,688      | -       | <b>112,688</b> | 115,887      | -       | <b>115,887</b> |
| <b>Gross total</b>  | 127,434       | -       | <b>127,434</b> | 112,688      | -       | <b>112,688</b> | 115,887      | -       | <b>115,887</b> |
| <b>Deduct:</b>  |               |         |                |              |         |                |              |         |                |
| B. Receipts of the Commission                               | (3,800)       | -       | <b>(3,800)</b> | (2,494)      | -       | <b>(2,494)</b> | (2,330)      | -       | <b>(2,330)</b> |
| <b>Net total</b>  | 123,634       | -       | <b>123,634</b> | 110,194      | -       | <b>110,194</b> | 113,557      | -       | <b>113,557</b> |

|                                    | 2017 Estimate |         |                | 2017 Outturn |         |                | 2016 Outturn |         |                |
|------------------------------------|---------------|---------|----------------|--------------|---------|----------------|--------------|---------|----------------|
|                                    | Current       | Capital | Total          | Current      | Capital | Total          | Current      | Capital | Total          |
| <b>A - Analysis of Expenditure</b> | €000          | €000    | €000           | €000         | €000    | €000           | €000         | €000    | €000           |
| 1. Administration                  | 52,118        | -       | <b>52,118</b>  | 42,538       | -       | <b>42,538</b>  | 39,823       | -       | <b>39,823</b>  |
| 2. Other Services                  | 22,000        | -       | <b>22,000</b>  | 18,688       | -       | <b>18,688</b>  | 23,034       | -       | <b>23,034</b>  |
| 3. Dáil Éireann                    | 42,848        | -       | <b>42,848</b>  | 41,595       | -       | <b>41,595</b>  | 43,710       | -       | <b>43,710</b>  |
| 4. Seanad Éireann                  | 8,961         | -       | <b>8,961</b>   | 8,745        | -       | <b>8,745</b>   | 8,431        | -       | <b>8,431</b>   |
| 5. Oireachtas Committees           | 700           | -       | <b>700</b>     | 351          | -       | <b>351</b>     | 105          | -       | <b>105</b>     |
| 6. European Parliament             | 807           | -       | <b>807</b>     | 771          | -       | <b>771</b>     | 783          | -       | <b>783</b>     |
| <b>Programme total</b>             | 127,434       | -       | <b>127,434</b> | 112,688      | -       | <b>112,688</b> | 115,887      | -       | <b>115,887</b> |

|  | 2017 Estimate |          |               | 2017 Outturn  |          |               | 2016 Outturn  |          |               |
|--|---------------|----------|---------------|---------------|----------|---------------|---------------|----------|---------------|
|  | Current       | Capital  | Total         | Current       | Capital  | Total         | Current       | Capital  | Total         |
|  | €000          | €000     | €000          | €000          | €000     | €000          | €000          | €000     | €000          |
| <b>Analysis of Administrative Expenditure</b>  |               |          |               |               |          |               |               |          |               |
| 1(a) Salaries, wages and allowances in respect of staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service. | 29,807        | -        | <b>29,807</b> | 26,882        | -        | <b>26,882</b> | 25,217        | -        | <b>25,217</b> |
| 1(b) Travel and susistence.  | 364           | -        | <b>364</b>    | 293           | -        | <b>293</b>    | 180           | -        | <b>180</b>    |
| 1(c) Training and development and incidental expenses.   | 1,896         | -        | <b>1,896</b>  | 862           | -        | <b>862</b>    | 853           | -        | <b>853</b>    |
| 1(d) Postal and telecommunications services.   | 686           | -        | <b>686</b>    | 587           | -        | <b>587</b>    | 781           | -        | <b>781</b>    |
| 1(e) Office equipment and external IT services.  | 10,300        | -        | <b>10,300</b> | 9,760         | -        | <b>9,760</b>  | 8,528         | -        | <b>8,528</b>  |
| 1(f) Office premises expenses.   | 3,413         | -        | <b>3,413</b>  | 2,418         | -        | <b>2,418</b>  | 2,671         | -        | <b>2,671</b>  |
| 1(g) Consultancy services and value for money and policy review.                                 | 2,844         | -        | <b>2,844</b>  | 524           | -        | <b>524</b>    | 399           | -        | <b>399</b>    |
| 1(h) Parliamentary printing.   | 1,199         | -        | <b>1,199</b>  | 526           | -        | <b>526</b>    | 660           | -        | <b>660</b>    |
| 1(i) Library and research services.  | 1,250         | -        | <b>1,250</b>  | 609           | -        | <b>609</b>    | 444           | -        | <b>444</b>    |
| 1(j) Public relations and communications.  | 359           | -        | <b>359</b>    | 77            | -        | <b>77</b>     | 90            | -        | <b>90</b>     |
| <b>Programme total</b>   | <b>52,118</b> | <b>-</b> | <b>52,118</b> | <b>42,538</b> | <b>-</b> | <b>42,538</b> | <b>39,823</b> | <b>-</b> | <b>39,823</b> |



**Accounts of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission  
for the Period from 1 January To 31 December 2017**  
(kept in accordance with the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2015)

61

## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Introduction   | 62 |
| Statement of Accounting Policies and Principles                  | 62 |
| Statement on Internal Financial Control                          | 62 |
| Accounting Policies and Principles                               | 66 |
| Comptroller and Auditor General Certificate                      | 71 |
| Houses of the Oireachtas Commission – Appropriation Account 2017 | 74 |
| Notes to the Appropriation Account                               | 76 |

## 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 2017 for the salaries and expenses of the Commission, including certain grants, 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 2017.

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 (DPER), I am legally obliged to adhere to the Commission Acts as this primary legislation takes precedence over administrative DPER circulars.

There was a surplus for the year of €13,438,866.

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

Grant funding of €12,808,452 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.

## Statement of Accounting Policies and Principles

The Statement of Accounting Policies and Principles and notes 1 to 7 form part of the account, and are in line with guidance provided in the DPER Circular 25/2017.

## 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 and my other obligations as Secretary General and Clerk of the Dáil. 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;
- there is an Audit Committee to advise me in discharging my responsibilities for the internal financial control system;
- procedures for all key business processes have been documented;
- there are systems in place to safeguard the assets.

### 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. This includes the following elements:

- 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;
- the Service ensures that there is an appropriate focus on good practice in purchasing and procedures are in place to ensure compliance with all relevant guidelines.

I have reported in the 2017 annual 40/02 return 9 contracts with a total value of €1,883,105, which were undertaken without a competitive process but are in compliance with relevant guidelines, 7 (€1,802,525) of which are sole suppliers, 1 (€35,040) for a contract extension relating to library records management and 1 (€45,540) urgent legal counsel service.

### Oireachtas Catering and Bar Services

The Service has in its continued programme of reform, further enhanced and developed the Catering and Bar Services control environment, financial management and procurement management in line with the Services standards to include:

- 1) The recruitment in April 2017, through an open competitive external selection process of a Restaurant Manager whose job specification includes managerial functions with more direct input and support from the Service.
- 2) Reporting the accounts of the Catering and Bar Services on a quarterly basis to the Management Committee, Finance Committee and Commission.

- 3) Increased procurement compliance. The addendum to the 2017 annual 40/02 return details 19 legacy contracts at a total value of €792,926, which had been procured without a competitive process but extended for continuity of services and support while the competitive procurement processes were ongoing. 11 (€529,186) have been replaced with new contracts following competitive tendering, 2 (€60,955) are sole suppliers and the remaining 6 (€202,785) are in the procurement process and expected to be concluded and in contract in 2018.
- 4) The Houses of the Oireachtas Commission has approved a new credit policy which will facilitate automatic credit/debit card or salary deductions.

### Grant Accounts

The British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) draws down funds from the allocated budget contained in the Commission's Estimate. All BIPA expenditure is sanctioned initially by the BIPA Committee Clerk (Assistant Principal Officer) and then by the Principal Officer.

All Irish Parliamentary Association expenditure is sanctioned initially by the Head of the Inter-Parliamentary and Travel Unit (Assistant Principal Officer) and then by the Principal Officer or Assistant Secretary, as appropriate.

There is a system of detailed record keeping and bank reconciliation maintained monthly and balanced at year end for the Annual Account. A detailed explanatory record is made in regard to all payments (including credit card payments). Vouched records are retained of all expenditure.

### Internal Audit

I confirm that the Service has an internal audit function, which operates in accordance with a written charter which the Management Committee (MC) has 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. In 2018, this was extended to cover operations of the Bar and Restaurant. The internal audit function is reviewed periodically by me and the Audit Committee.

### 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.

### Risk and Control Framework

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service has implemented a risk management system which identifies and reports key risks and the management actions being taken to address and, to the extent possible, to mitigate those risks.

A risk register is in place which identifies the key risks facing the Houses of the Oireachtas Service and these have been identified, evaluated and graded according to their significance. The register is reviewed and considered by the Management Committee on a quarterly basis. The outcome of these assessments is used to plan and allocate resources to ensure risks are managed to an acceptable level.

The risk register details the controls and actions needed to mitigate risks and responsibility for operation of controls assigned to specific staff.

### Ongoing Monitoring and Review

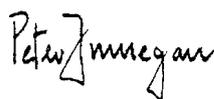
Formal procedures have been established for monitoring control processes and control deficiencies are communicated to those responsible for taking corrective action and to management and the Management and Audit Committee, where relevant, in a timely way. I confirm that key risks and related controls have been identified and processes have been put in place to monitor the operation of those key controls and report any identified deficiencies.

### Review of Effectiveness

I confirm that the Houses of the Oireachtas Service has procedures to monitor the effectiveness of its risk management and control procedures. The Service's monitoring and review of the effectiveness of the system of internal financial control is informed by the work of the internal and external auditors, the Management Committee and the Audit Committee which oversees their work, and the senior management within Houses of the Oireachtas Service responsible for the development and maintenance of the internal financial control framework.

### Internal Financial Control Issues

No weaknesses in internal financial controls were identified in relation to 2017 that require disclosure in the financial statements.



**Peter Finnegan**

*Accounting Officer*

*Houses of the Oireachtas Commission*

**18 June 2018**

## Accounting Policies and Principles

### *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.

The Commission provides funding and support to a number of entities whose results are not consolidated into the Commission's accounts as follows:

- British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly — The Commission provides a grant via subhead 2(e) to the assembly and details of the income and expenditure incurred is shown by way of note (Note 7.1). The accounts are prepared on a cash basis.
- Cumann Parlaiminteach na hÉireann (The Irish Parliamentary Association) – The Commission provides a grant via subhead 2(d) and details of the income and expenditure incurred is shown by way of note (Note 7.2). The accounts are prepared on a cash basis.
- Catering and Bar Services – The Commission employs staff who work in the bar and restaurant and whose pay costs are charged to subhead 2(a) and receives a contribution from the operation of the catering and bar services. (Note 4). Details of the operation of the facilities are included by way of a note to these accounts. (Note 7.3). The accounts are prepared on an accruals basis.

### Reporting Period

The reporting period is the year ended 31 December 2017.

### 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. (Note 4).

### Payments

Payments consist of those sums which have come in course of payment during the year. Sums are deemed to have come in course of payment where the liability has been incurred, payment is due and the instruction for payment has been executed.

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 is 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 statement of financial position 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 statement of financial position includes the position at year-end in relation to the following:

- **Accrued expenses** – these represent all liabilities at the year end 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 statement of financial position. (Note 2).

The following are not included in the statement of capital assets:

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

## Valuation of Assets

### 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%.

## Capital Assets under Development

Capital assets under development should be included within Capital Assets in the Statement of Financial Position, showing expenditure on assets being developed within the Department, e.g. software development or construction projects.

## Stocks

Consumables are stated at the lower of cost or Commission valuations. (Note 2.4).

## Net Amount due from/to the Exchequer

The net amount due from/to the Exchequer note shows the funding position of the Commission at the year end, 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. (Note 2.7).

## 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 all (global) contractual commitments likely to materialise in subsequent years under (a) procurement and (b) grant subheads, excluding commitments under €10,000. (Note 2.8).

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

Where the reported commitment level or projected project cost has varied by more than €500,000 compared with the previous year, the reason for the movement should be explained.

## 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 statement of financial position but are disclosed by way of a note unless the possibility of an outflow of resources is remote. (Note 6.5).

## 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 and bar staff are met on a current basis from Vote 12- Superannuation and Retired Allowances.

## Foreign Currency Transactions

Transactions arising in foreign currencies are converted 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 Department of Public Expenditure and Reform consider that a note should be given.

#### *Variations from Grant – Note 3 (Expenditure by subhead)*

Note 3 provides explanations of variations on outturn versus original estimate provision. A note is provided where the variation relative to the original estimate provision:

- is €100,000 or more; and
- represents 5% or more of the subhead (25% in the case of administrative subheads); or
- represents a significant variation from the original estimate provision that does not meet the above criteria but which warrants explanation.

The explanation should distinguish between the reason for the variation in the amount spent, and the funding implications e.g. under/over spend requires a supplementary estimate, or virement. Notes in relation to variations in the categories of appropriations in aid are included on a similar basis.

#### *Allowances and Overtime Payments – Note 5 (Employee Numbers and Pay)*

In the case of allowances and overtime payments, the details given in Note 5 include the total number of recipients of allowance and overtime payments in one or more categories, the number of individuals

that received €10,000 or more and the maximum payment to an individual, if over €10,000. The figure required is the total payment to an individual who received allowance and overtime payments in more than one category i.e. the total of their combined extra remuneration, not the maximum figure in a single category.

#### *Severance payments and Payroll Overpayments - Note 5 (Employee Numbers and Pay)*

Severance/redundancy and payroll overpayment amounts are disclosed where material.

#### *Legal Costs – Note 6 (Miscellaneous Items)*

The components of the legal costs in respect of cases in which the Commission is or was involved should be disclosed. This does not include the cost of legal advice provided outside of legal proceedings (other than the Chief State Solicitor's Office), the costs incurred in relation to these cases are included in the table. In cases, where cumulative legal costs incurred in the year of account exceed €50,000 (i.e. in situations where legal costs, in total, have exceeded €50,000 or where a single case exceeds €50,000), a note is to be provided with a breakdown of the total costs into:

- Legal costs,
- Legal costs awarded, and
- Compensation awarded.

#### *Arbitration and Conciliation Costs – Note 6 (Miscellaneous Items)*

Costs arising from arbitration and conciliation proceedings are shown in Note 6.

**Late Payments – Note 6 (Miscellaneous Items)**

In the case of interest payments under the Late Payment in Commercial Transactions Regulations, 2012 (as revised in 2013), information is supplied (Note 6.1) 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 – Note 6 (Miscellaneous Items)**

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 DPER considers that a disclosure should be made.

**Commissions and Inquiries – Note 6 (Miscellaneous Items)**

Where appropriate, Note 6 should include a statement of expenditure on each Commission or Inquiry financed by the Commission.

A distinction is made between permanent commission, and those established on a temporary basis for a fixed purposes. In the former case, expenditure in the year of account and prior year should be shown. In the latter case, the date of establishment and cumulative expenditure from the date of establishment should be shown. (Note 6.2).

**Petty Cash**

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

**Bank and Cash**

“Bank and Cash” include all commercial bank accounts balances (payroll and other related accounts) held at year-end which are funded by the Exchequer or receipts retained by the Commission (as set out in Note 4.1). Under the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003-2015, the Commission is obliged to retain all receipts. The note separately identifies PMG from commercial bank accounts.

**Grant Funds and Miscellaneous Accounts – Note 7**

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

# Comptroller and Auditor General Certificate

## Report for presentation to the Houses of the Oireachtas

### *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission*

#### **Opinion on the appropriation account**

I have audited the appropriation account of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission for the year ending 31 December 2017 as required under the provisions of section 14 of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Act 2003. In my opinion, the appropriation account

- properly presents the receipts and expenditure of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission for the year ended 31 December 2017
- has been prepared in the form prescribed by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

#### **Basis of opinion**

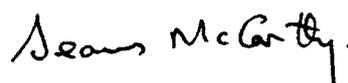
I conducted my audit of the appropriation account in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) as promulgated by the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions. My responsibilities under those standards are described in the appendix to this report. I am independent of the Commission and have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the standards.

I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

#### **Report on information other than the appropriation account, and on other matters**

The Accounting Officer has presented certain other information together with the account. This comprises the annual report including the Accounting Officer's introduction paragraph and the statement on internal financial control. My responsibilities to report in relation to such information, and on certain other matters upon which I report by exception, are described in the appendix to this report.

I have nothing to report in that regard.



**Seamus McCarthy**

*Comptroller and Auditor General*

**20 June 2018**

## Responsibilities of the Commission and of the Accounting Officer

The Commission is responsible for the preparation of the appropriation account. The Accounting Officer, is responsible for signing the appropriation account and the statement on internal financial control and submitting them to the Comptroller and Auditor General by 31 March following the end of the year of account. The appropriation account must comply with the requirements of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's *Public Financial Procedures*, and with other directions of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

The Accounting Officer is also responsible for the safeguarding of public funds and property under his control, for the efficiency and economy of the Commission in the use of its resources and for the regularity and propriety of all transactions recorded in the appropriation account.

## Responsibilities of the Comptroller and Auditor General

I am required under section 14 Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Act 2003 to audit the appropriation account of the Commission and to report thereon to the Houses of the Oireachtas.

My objective in carrying out the audit is to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the account as a whole is free from material misstatement due to fraud or error. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the ISAs will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to

influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the account.

As part of an audit in accordance with the ISAs, I exercise professional judgment and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. In doing so,

- I identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the account whether due to fraud or error; design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks; and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- I obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the internal controls.
- I assess whether the accounting provisions of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's *Public Financial Procedures* have been complied with.
- I communicate with the Accounting Officer regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiency in internal control that is identified during the audit.

Upon completion of the audit, I am obliged to attach to the account a certificate stating whether, in my opinion, the account properly presents the receipts

and expenditure related to the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission and to refer to any material case in which

- the Commission has failed to apply expenditure recorded in the account for the purposes intended, or
- transactions recorded in the account do not conform with the authority under which they purport to have been carried out.

### **Information other than the appropriation account**

My opinion on the appropriation account does not cover the other information presented with it, and I do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with the audit of the appropriation account, I am required under the ISAs to read the statement on internal financial control and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the appropriation account or with knowledge obtained during the audit, or if it otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If, based on the work performed, I conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, I am required to report that fact.

### **Reporting on other matters**

My audit is conducted by reference to the special considerations which attach to State bodies in relation to their management and operation. I report if there are material matters relating to the manner in which public business has been conducted.

I also report by exception if, in my opinion,

- I have not received all the information and explanations required for the audit, or
- the accounting records were not sufficient to permit the appropriation account to be readily and properly audited, or
- the appropriation account is not in agreement with the accounting records.

## Houses of the Oireachtas Commission – Appropriation Account 2017

|   | 2017<br>Estimate<br>provision<br>€000 | 2017<br>Outturn<br>€000 | 2016<br>Outturn<br>€000 |
|---|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>1. Administration</b>  |                                       |                         |                         |
| (a) Salaries, wages and allowances in respect of staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service. | 29,807                                | 26,882                  | 25,217                  |
| (b) Travel and subsistence.   | 364                                   | 293                     | 180                     |
| (c) Training and development and incidental expenses.   | 1,896                                 | 862                     | 853                     |
| (d) Postal and telecommunications services.   | 686                                   | 587                     | 781                     |
| (e) Office equipment and external IT services.  | 10,300                                | 9,760                   | 8,528                   |
| (f) Office premises expenses.   | 3,413                                 | 2,418                   | 2,671                   |
| (g) Consultancy services and value for money and policy review.                                 | 2,844                                 | 524                     | 339                     |
| (h) Parliamentary printing.   | 1,199                                 | 526                     | 660                     |
| (i) Library and research services.  | 1,250                                 | 609                     | 444                     |
| (j) Public relations and communications.  | 359                                   | 77                      | 90                      |
| <b>2. Other services</b>  |                                       |                         |                         |
| (a) Payment in respect of catering and bar staff.   | 1,796                                 | 1,573                   | 1,467                   |
| (b) Expenses of delegates to other parliamentary assemblies.                                    | 240                                   | 111                     | 98                      |
| (c) Televising of proceedings of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann and other services.            | 3,987                                 | 2,975                   | 2,630                   |
| (d) Grant in respect of inter-parliamentary activities.   | 210                                   | 152                     | 95                      |
| (e) Grant to British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly.  | 125                                   | 100                     | 55                      |
| (f) North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association.  | 50                                    | 2                       | 2                       |
| (g) Termination allowances in respect of former members of the Houses of the Oireachtas.        | 109                                   | 69                      | 3,082                   |
| (h) Grant to Irish Parliamentary (former members) Society.                                      | 10                                    | 10                      | 10                      |
| (i) Grant in respect of “Ciste Pinsean Thithe an Oireachtais”.                                  | 14,552                                | 12,808                  | 14,564                  |
| (j) Pension scheme for secretarial assistants.  | 921                                   | 888                     | 1,032                   |

|  | 2017<br>Estimate<br>provision<br>€000 | 2017<br>Outturn<br>€000 | 2016<br>Outturn<br>€000 |
|--|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>3. Membership of Dáil Éireann</b>   |                                       |                         |                         |
| (a) Salaries of members (including Office Holders and Chairpersons of Committees). | 14,171                                | 14,529                  | 14,052                  |
| (b) Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for members.                     | 19,937                                | 19,009                  | 22,739                  |
| (c) Travel and Accommodation Allowance.  | 3,169                                 | 2,934                   | 2,853                   |
| (d) Public Representation Allowance.   | 3,085                                 | 2,933                   | 2,741                   |
| (e) Other allowances.  | 2,486                                 | 2,190                   | 1,324                   |
| <b>4. Membership of Seanad Éireann</b>   |                                       |                         |                         |
| (a) Salaries of members (including Office Holders and Chairpersons of Committees). | 4,016                                 | 4,055                   | 3,880                   |
| (b) Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for members.                     | 2,753                                 | 2,585                   | 2,696                   |
| (c) Travel and Accommodation Allowance.  | 1,218                                 | 1,151                   | 1,107                   |
| (d) Public Representation Allowance.   | 734                                   | 655                     | 586                     |
| (e) Other allowances.  | 240                                   | 299                     | 163                     |
| <b>5. Membership of Oireachtas Committees</b>                                      |                                       |                         |                         |
| (a) Travel expenses.   | 182                                   | 62                      | 24                      |
| (b) Other expenses relating to Committees.   | 518                                   | 289                     | 81                      |
| <b>6. Membership of European Parliament</b>  |                                       |                         |                         |
| (a) Salaries of members of the European Parliament.                                | 87                                    | 89                      | 87                      |
| (b) Pensions of former members of the European Parliament.                         | 720                                   | 682                     | 696                     |
| <b>Gross Expenditure</b>   | <b>127,434</b>                        | <b>112,688</b>          | <b>115,887</b>          |
| <b>DEDUCT</b>  |                                       |                         |                         |
| Receipts of the Commission (Note 4.1)  | (3,800)                               | (2,494)                 | (2,330)                 |
| <b>Net Expenditure</b>   | <b>123,634</b>                        | <b>110,194</b>          | <b>113,557</b>          |
| <b>Surplus for the year</b>  |                                       | €13,438,866             | €17,434,507             |



**Peter Finnegan**

*Accounting Officer*

*Houses of the Oireachtas Commission*

**18 June 2018**

## Notes to the Appropriation Account

### 1. Operating Cost Statement 2017

|  | Note | €000  | 2017<br>€000 | 2016<br>€000 |
|--|------|-------|--------------|--------------|
| Pay                                    |      |       | 83,169       | 89,513       |
| Non-Pay                                |      |       | 29,519       | 26,374       |
| <b>Gross expenditure</b>               |      |       | 112,688      | 115,887      |
| Deduct                                 |      |       |              |              |
| Receipts                               |      |       | (2,494)      | (2,330)      |
| <b>Net expenditure</b>                 |      |       | 110,194      | 113,557      |
| <b>Changes in capital assets</b>       | 2.2  |       |              |              |
| Purchases Cash                         |      | (493) |              |              |
| Depreciation                           |      | 1,064 |              |              |
| <b>Loss on disposals</b>               |      | 1     | 572          | (178)        |
| <b>Changes in net current assets</b>   |      |       |              |              |
| Decrease in closing accruals           |      | 279   |              |              |
| Increase in stock                      | 2.4  | (24)  | 255          | 1,100        |
| <b>Direct expenditure</b>              |      |       | 111,021      | 114,479      |
| <b>Expenditure borne elsewhere</b>     |      |       |              |              |
| Net allied services expenditure (Cash) | 1.1  |       | 25,862       | 24,608       |
| Notional Rents (Non-cash)              | 1.2  |       | 5,165        | 5,165        |
| <b>Net Programme cost</b>              |      |       | 142,048      | 144,252      |

### 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.

|         |   | 2017          | 2016          |
|---------|---|---------------|---------------|
|         |   | €000          | €000          |
| Vote 9  | Office of the Revenue Commissioners                                 | e 75          | 75            |
| Vote 12 | Superannuation and Retired Allowances                               | 3,813         | 3,191         |
| Vote 13 | Office of Public Works  | 7,084         | 4,624         |
|         | Central Fund:   |               |               |
|         | Parliamentary Activities Allowances to Leaders                      | 8,654         | 8,084         |
|         | Payments to qualified parties under the Electoral Acts 1992 to 2015 | 5,964         | 5,755         |
|         | Re-imbursments of Electoral Expenses                                | 61            | 2,667         |
|         | Pensions in respect of former Cinn Comhairle (No. 38 of 1938, etc.) | 211           | 212           |
|         |   | <b>25,862</b> | <b>24,608</b> |

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

1.2 The notional rents figure above relates to State-owned accommodation occupied by the Houses of the Oireachtas and the amount of rent estimated by the Office of Public Works that it could earn based on the market rental values for such accommodation.

## 2. Statement of Financial Position

|                                    | Note | 2017<br>€000 | 2016<br>€000 |
|------------------------------------|------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Capital Assets</b>              | 2.2  | 1,713        | 2,286        |
| <b>Current Assets</b>              |      |              |              |
| Net Liability from the Exchequer   | 2.7  | 705          | -            |
| Bank and Cash                      | 2.3  | 1,069        | 2,060        |
| Stocks                             | 2.4  | 215          | 191          |
| Prepayments                        |      | 1,303        | 1,050        |
| Accrued income                     |      | 619          | 709          |
| Other debit balances               | 2.5  | 731          | 635          |
| <b>Total Current Assets</b>        |      | 4,642        | 4,645        |
| <b>Less Current Liabilities</b>    |      |              |              |
| Net Liability due to the Exchequer | 2.7  | -            | 1            |
| Accrued expenses                   |      | 1,599        | 1,158        |
| Other credit balances              | 2.6  | 2,505        | 2,694        |
| <b>Total Current Liabilities</b>   |      | 4,104        | 3,853        |
| <b>Net Current Assets</b>          |      | 538          | 792          |
| <b>Net Assets</b>                  |      | 2,251        | 3,078        |
| <b>Represented By:</b>             |      |              |              |
| <b>State Funding Account</b>       |      | 2,251        | 3,078        |

## 2.1 State Funding Account

|                                      |          |          | 2017      | 2016      |
|--------------------------------------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
|                                      |          |          | €000      | €000      |
| <b>Balance at 1 January</b>          |          |          | 3,078     | 4,001     |
| Disbursements by the Commission      |          |          |           |           |
| Estimate provision                   | Account* | 123,634  |           |           |
| Surplus                              | Account* | (13,440) |           |           |
| <b>Net Provision</b>                 |          |          | 110,194   | 113,556   |
| Expenditure (cash) borne elsewhere   |          |          |           |           |
|                                      | Note 1   |          | 25,862    | 24,608    |
| Non cash expenditure – notional rent |          |          |           |           |
|                                      | Note 1   |          | 5,165     | 5,165     |
| Net programme cost                   |          |          |           |           |
|                                      | Note 1   |          | (142,048) | (144,252) |
| <b>Balance at 31 December</b>        |          |          | 2,251     | 3,078     |

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

## 2.2 Capital Assets

|  | IT<br>Equipment<br>€000 | Furniture<br>and Fittings<br>€000 | Office<br>Equipment<br>€000 | Assets under<br>Development<br>€000 | Total*<br>€000 |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Gross Assets</b>                            |                         |                                   |                             |                                     |                |
| Cost or valuation at 1 January 2017            | 8,720                   | 2,657                             | 5,210                       | -                                   | 16,587         |
| Additions                                      | 214                     | 74                                | 205                         | -                                   | 493            |
| Disposals                                      | (2,239)                 | -                                 | (1,730)                     | -                                   | (3,969)        |
| Gross assets at 31 December 2017               | 6,694                   | 2,731                             | 3,685                       | -                                   | 13,110         |
| <b>Accumulated Depreciation:</b>               |                         |                                   |                             |                                     |                |
| Opening balance at 1 January 2017              | 7,439                   | 2,361                             | 4,502                       | -                                   | 14,301         |
| Depreciation for the year                      | 494                     | 114                               | 456                         | -                                   | 1,064          |
| Depreciation on disposals                      | (2,238)                 | -                                 | (1,730)                     | -                                   | (3,968)        |
| Cumulative depreciation at 31<br>December 2017 | 5,695                   | 2,474                             | 3,228                       | -                                   | 11,397         |
| <b>Net Assets at 31 December 2017</b>          | 999                     | 257                               | 457                         | -                                   | 1,713          |
| <b>Net Assets at 31 December 2016</b>          | 1,281                   | 297                               | 708                         | -                                   | 2,286          |

\* Any apparent discrepancies in total are due to rounding of constituent figures.

## 2.3 Bank and Cash

|                          | 2017<br>€000 | 2016<br>€000 |
|--------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| at 31 December           |              |              |
| PMG balances             | 1,060        | 2,059        |
| Commercial Bank Accounts | 9            | 1            |
|                          | 1,069        | 2,060        |

## 2.4 Stocks

|                | 2017<br>€000 | 2016<br>€000 |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| at 31 December |              |              |
| Stationery     | 30           | 21           |
| IT consumables | 150          | 132          |
| Other          | 35           | 38           |
|                | 215          | 191          |

## 2.5 Other Debit Balances

|                              | 2017<br>€000 | 2016<br>€000 |
|------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| at 31 December               |              |              |
| Recoupable salaries          | 7            | 7            |
| Recoupment of travel schemes | 271          | 225          |
| Other debit items            | 453          | 403          |
|                              | 731          | 635          |

## 2.6 Other Credit Balances

|                                       | 2017<br>€000 | 2016<br>€000 |
|---------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|
| at 31 December                        |              |              |
| <b>Amounts due to the State</b>       |              |              |
| Income tax                            | 1,058        | 1,132        |
| Pay Related Social Insurance          | 599          | 613          |
| Professional Services withholding Tax | 80           | 137          |
| Value Added Tax                       | 103          | 53           |
| Pension Contributions                 | 207          | 211          |
| Universal Social Charge               | 229          | 279          |
|                                       | 2,276        | 2,425        |
| Payroll deductions held in suspense   | 229          | 269          |
|                                       | 2,505        | 2,694        |

## 2.7 Net amount due to the Exchequer

|                                      |     | 2017<br>€000 | 2016<br>€000 |
|--------------------------------------|-----|--------------|--------------|
| at 31 December                       |     |              |              |
| Surplus                              |     | 13,439       | 17,435       |
| Exchequer grant undrawn              |     | (14,146)     | (17,438)     |
| Net Exchequer Funding Due            |     | (706)        | (3)          |
| Balance brought forward at 1 January |     | 1            | 4            |
|                                      |     | (705)        | 1            |
| Represented by:                      |     |              |              |
| Debtors                              |     |              |              |
| Bank                                 | 2.3 | 1,069        | 2,060        |
| Other Debit balances                 | 2.5 | 731          | 635          |
|                                      |     | 1,800        | 2,695        |
| Creditors                            |     |              |              |
| Due to State                         | 2.6 | (2,276)      | (2,425)      |
| Other Credit balances                | 2.6 | (229)        | (269)        |
|                                      |     | (2,505)      | (2,694)      |
|                                      |     | (705)        | 1            |

## 2.8 Commitments

|                           |  | 2017<br>€000 | 2016<br>€000 |
|---------------------------|--|--------------|--------------|
| at 31 December            |  |              |              |
| <b>Global commitments</b> |  |              |              |
| Procurement subheads      |  | 38           | 93           |
| Grant subheads            |  | -            | -            |
| Multi-annual commitments* |  | 5,259        | 9,124        |

\* This figure relates to five multi-annual contracts in relation to Broadcasting and ICT, none of which exceed €6,350,000 individually.

### 3. Variations in Expenditure

The final gross outturn in relation to the Commission was €14.7 million less than the Statement of Estimate. 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) or represents a significant variation from the original estimate provision that does not meet the above criteria but which warrants explanation.

| Description  | Sub-Head | (Less)/<br>more<br>than<br>provided<br>€000 | Explanation  |
|--|----------|---|--|
| <b>Administration</b>  |          |   |  |
| Salaries, wages and allowances in respect of staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service | 1(a)     | (2,925)                                     | The underspend relates to delays in filling 49 FTE vacancies throughout the year of which 9 remained unfilled at year end.   |
| Training and development and incidental expenses   | 1(c)     | (1,034)                                     | The underspend relates to an unused contingency of €1m provided for exceptional purposes.  |
| Office Premises Expenses   | 1(f)     | (995)                                       | The underspend primarily relates to the provision for electricity and gas which exceeded expenditure by €620k. This was partly due to a change of contract mid-year which resulted in costs savings over the same period in 2016 of €135k for electricity and €70k for gas. In addition electricity bills for November 2017 totalling €130k were not paid until 2018.<br><br>OPW maintenance costs for the year which are difficult to foresee were also €185k lower than was anticipated. |
| Consultancy services and value for money and policy review                                 | 1(g)     | (2,320)                                     | The underspend arose due to an unused contingency of €2m for legal costs and a lower than anticipated demand for consultancy services.   |
| Parliamentary printing   | 1(h)     | (673)                                       | The underspend arose due to a lower than anticipated demand for printing combined with a renegotiated reduction in contract costs from January 2017 which was not anticipated in the estimates. There was also a backlog in the production of bound volumes.   |
| Library & research services  | 1(i)     | (641)                                       | The underspend was primarily due to scheduled projects which were deferred to 2018, including the parliamentary archive project (€250k), a new library management system (€201k) and the digitisation of collections (€50k).<br><br>There was also a lower than anticipated requirement for external commissioned research.  |
| Public relations and communications  | 1(j)     | (282)                                       | The underspend is mainly due to an unused provision for centenary commemorations of €115k. There was also a lower than anticipated spend on events and associated costs including event content, advertising and design mainly due to restrictions associated with the renovation works.   |
| <b>Other Services</b>  |          |   |  |
| Payment in respect of catering and bar staff   | 2(a)     | (223)                                       | The underspend arose due to the provision of a full year salary for ten staff members who are employed on a flexible part-time basis.  |

| Description   | Sub-Head | (Less)/<br>more<br>than<br>provided<br>€000 | Explanation  |
|---|----------|---|--|
| Expenses of delegates to other parliamentary assemblies                         | 2(b)     | (129)                                       | The underspend arose due to less travel being undertaken than had been provided for.   |
| Televising of Proceedings of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann and Other Services | 2(c)     | (1,012)                                     | The underspend was primarily due to scheduled projects for archiving (€425k) and equipment replacement (€160k) deferred to 2018. There was also a lower than anticipated spend on maintenance and content production.  |
| Grant in respect of "Ciste Pinsean Thithe an Oireachtais"                       | 2(i)     | (1,744)                                     | The underspend arose due to a combination of higher than anticipated contributions and an overestimate of the cost of new pensions. A provision of €400k for pension lump sums was not required and 14 pensioners who exited from the scheme also reduced the outturn. |
| <b>Membership of Dáil Éireann</b>   |          |   |  |
| Salaries of Members (including Office Holders and Chairpersons of Committees)   | 3(a)     | 358   | The overspend arose due to the payment of arrears for specified position allowances relating to 2016. This variation was approved for virement by the Commission in November 2017.   |
| Travel and Accommodation Allowance  | 3(c)     | (235)                                       | The underspend relates to a requirement to make provision for a full drawdown of the Travel and Accommodation Allowance (TAA) which was not claimed.   |
| Other allowances  | 3(e)     | (296)                                       | The underspend relates to a requirement to make a provision for full drawdown of certain allowances which was not claimed. In particular the provision for the Special Secretarial Allowance and the Constituency Office Grant were underdrawn.                        |
| <b>Membership of Seanad Éireann</b>   |          |   |  |
| Salaries of Members (including Office Holders and Chairpersons of Committees)   | 4(a)     | 39  | The overspend arose due to the payment of arrears for specified position allowances relating to 2016. This variation was approved for virement by the Commission in November 2017.   |
| Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for members                       | 4(b)     | (168)                                       | Provision was made for 87 Secretarial Assistants to be employed whereas on average 78 Secretarial Assistants were actually employed throughout the year.   |
| Other Allowances  | 4(e)     | 59  | This excess arose due to a higher than anticipated take up of the vouched special secretarial allowance scheme. This variation was approved for virement by the Commission in November 2017.   |
| <b>Membership of Oireachtas Committees</b>                                      |          |   |  |
| Travel expenses   | 5(a)     | (120)                                       | The underspend arose due to less travel being undertaken than had been provided for.   |
| Expenses related to Committees  | 5(b)     | (229)                                       | The underspend arose due to a lower than anticipated demand for consultancy and legal advice than was provided for.  |
| <b>Membership of the European Parliament</b>                                    |          |   |  |
| Salaries of Members of the European Parliament                                  | 6(a)     | 2   | The overspend relates to a salary increase of 3% from April 2017 which was not provided for. This variation was approved for virement by the Commission in November 2017.  |

## 4. Receipts

### 4.1 Receipts of the Commission

In accordance with the provisions of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2015, 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 2017 financial statements record total receipts of €2,499,885 retained by the Commission and offset against its gross expenditure. Receipts of €9,415 relate to Broadcasting services, receipts of €128,631 relate to Catering and Bar services. The remainder of the receipts are made up of the following categories, receipts of €2,355,790 relate to pension related deductions on public service remuneration and the remaining €542 received in 2017 was retained by the Commission and offset against its gross expenditure. Receipts of €5,357 relate to MEP pension contributions and are off-set against Pensions of former members of the European Parliament.

|  | Estimated<br>€000 | 2017<br>Realised<br>€000 | 2016<br>Realised<br>€000 |
|--|-------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Sales of services of Broadcasting Unit   |                   | 9                        | 32                       |
| 2 Net income from catering and bar services (Note 7.3)   |                   | 129                      | 54                       |
| 3 Receipts obtained by the Commission in the performance of its functions (other than receipts in respect of expenses paid by the Commission on behalf of its members or members of staff that have been recouped by the Commission from the members or members of staff concerned). | 3,800             | 2,356                    | 2,244                    |
| <b>Receipts recognised in Appropriation Account</b>  | <b>3,800</b>      | <b>2,494</b>             | <b>2,330</b>             |
| 4 Members' contributions under the European Parliament (Irish Representatives) Pension Scheme, 1979  | -                 | 5                        | 5                        |
| <b>Total Receipts</b>  | <b>3,800</b>      | <b>2,499</b>             | <b>2,335</b>             |

#### Notes

*Members' contributions under the European Parliament (Irish Representatives) Pension Scheme, 1979 are not included as a receipt as it is offset against pensions paid to former Members of the European Parliament under subhead 6(b) of the account.*

#### Significant Variations (+/- 5%)

Overall receipts from the Commission were €1.301m less than the estimate.

Explanation for variances is set out below:

*3. Receipts obtained by the Commission in the performance of its functions (other than receipts in respect of expenses paid by the Commission on behalf of its members or members of staff that have been recouped by the Commission from the members or members of staff concerned).*

The variance arose due to the overprovision for receipts, particularly the pension related deduction in 2017.

## 5. Employee Numbers and Pay

### Houses of the Oireachtas Service\*

|  | 2017          | 2016          |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Number of staff at year end (full time equivalents)</b> | <b>546</b>    | <b>498</b>    |
|  | €000          | €000          |
| Pay  | 24,402        | 22,904        |
| Higher, special or additional duties allowances            | 359           | 350           |
| Other allowances   | 204           | 177           |
| Overtime   | 1,077         | 1,041         |
| Shift and roster allowances                                | 456           | 441           |
| Employer's PRSI  | 2,023         | 1,867         |
| Severance Payments   | -             | 115           |
| <b>Total pay</b>   | <b>28,521</b> | <b>26,895</b> |

### Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members and Partiess

|  | 2017          | 2016          |
|--|---------------|---------------|
| <b>Number of staff at year end (full time equivalents)</b> | <b>445</b>    | <b>439</b>    |
|  | €000          | €000          |
| Pay  | 17,401        | 16,627        |
| Redundancy payments  | (18)**        | 5,157         |
| Higher, special or additional duties allowances            | -             | 2             |
| Overtime and extra attendance                              | 2,333         | 1,832         |
| Employer's PRSI  | 2,041         | 1,924         |
| <b>Total pay</b>   | <b>21,757</b> | <b>25,542</b> |

\* On the payroll of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service

\*\* See Note 5.3, Redundancy and Termination Payments

### 5.1 Allowances and Overtime Payments

|   | Number of recipients | Recipients of €10,000 or more | Total individual payment 2017<br>€ | Total individual payment 2016<br>€ |
|---|----------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Houses of the Oireachtas Service</b>   |                      |                               |                                    |                                    |
| Higher, special or additional duties allowances                                 | 83                   | 6                             | 25,992                             | 22,335                             |
| Other allowances  | 95                   | 1                             | 48,864                             | 48,776                             |
| Overtime  | 195                  | 34                            | 28,967                             | 27,254                             |
| Shift and roster allowances   | 72                   | -                             | 7,702                              | 7,724                              |
| Number of individuals who received extra remuneration in more than one category | 118                  | 84                            | 48,864                             | 48,776                             |
| <b>Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members and Parties</b>                |                      |                               |                                    |                                    |
| Higher, special or additional duties allowances                                 | -                    | -                             | -                                  | 1,397                              |
| Overtime and extra attendance   | 482                  | 4                             | 18,661                             | 15,086                             |
| Number of individuals who received extra remuneration in more than one category | -                    | -                             | -                                  | 8,187                              |

### 5.2 Payroll overpayments

In 2017, the Commission identified 50 individuals with payroll overpayments totalling €43,609. A total of €28,707 was recovered in 2017 with €14,902 outstanding for 13 individuals. Of these, 11 (€13,791) have recovery arrangements in place with 2 (€1,111) outstanding. Of the carried forward balance of €82,913 at 1 Jan 2017, €31,543 has been recovered with €51,370 outstanding relating to 10 individuals. Of these, 5 (€7,850) have recovery arrangements in place, 2 (€37,907) are with legal advisors with 3 (€5,613) outstanding. In line with policy, the Commission continues to pursue recoupment of funds outstanding.

|                                     | 2017<br>€ | 2016<br>€ |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Outstanding balance 1 January       | 82,913    | 69,930    |
| Overpayments identified in the year | 43,609    | 81,327    |
| Repayments / Adjustments            | (60,250)  | (62,344)  |
| Outstanding balance at 31 December  | 66,272    | 82,913    |
| Number of cases at 31 December      | 23        | 28        |

### *5.3 Redundancy and Termination Payments*

A total of €6,912 was paid in redundancy payments to 2 staff under the Scheme for Secretarial Assistants. However, a refund of €25,982 (which relates to the scheme and Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) recoupment guidelines) has been offset against this figure resulting in a net amount of €17,548. (Note 5).

The VER scheme has been reviewed by DPER with an amendment to the policy with effect from the 1st February 2018, which provides that staff who return to employment after a period of one year are no longer required to repay the severance payment. A total of 7 staff employed under the scheme who have been refunding to the Commission have with DPER sanction been given the option to have repayments made, refunded to them on the basis that their service for future payments is based on current contract only. A total of €45,992 has been refunded to all 7 in 2018.

Former members of the Houses of the Oireachtas who do not propose to seek election to Seanad Éireann or consent to be nominated as a member of Seanad Éireann, may obtain a termination allowance, known as termination payments. Members who went on to be elected or nominated to the Seanad were required to refund the payments. An amount of €11,375 remains outstanding at 31st December 2017 with recoupment arrangements in place.

### *5.4 Other Remuneration Arrangements*

Payments totalling €20,646 were paid to retired civil servants whose services were employed on various interview boards, specialist parliamentary and governance tasks. The payments made were consistent with the principles of the Public Service (Single Scheme and other Provisions) Acts 2012.

The terms of the AHCPs/IMPACT (PCW 1% Restructuring Agreement) were implemented resulting in a total payment of €42,797 in 14 instances.

## 6. Miscellaneous Items

### 6.1 Late Payment Interest and Compensation

|  | 2017<br>€ | 2016<br>€ |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Total of interest and compensation due | 1,264     | 730       |

### 6.2 Commissions and Special Inquiries

|  | Year of<br>Appointment | Cumulative<br>Expenditure<br>to end 2017<br>€000 | 2017<br>Outturn<br>€000 | 2016<br>Outturn<br>€000 |
|--|------------------------|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Fixed Term Commissions and Special Inquiries |                        |  |                         |                         |
| Banking Inquiry Costs                        | 2014                   | 6,682  | -                       | 478                     |

### 6.3 Tax liability discharged

|  | 2017<br>€000 | 2016<br>€000 |
|--|--------------|--------------|
|  | -            | -            |

### 6.4 Legal Costs

Legal costs paid during the year are categorised as follows:

|                                  | Number of<br>cases | Legal costs<br>paid by the<br>Commission<br>€000 | Com-<br>pen-<br>sa-<br>tion<br>awarded<br>€000 | Legal Costs<br>awarded<br>€000 | 2017<br>Total<br>€000 | 2016<br>€000 |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|--|--|--------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| Claims against the<br>Commission | 12                 | 99   | -  | -                              | 99                    | 270          |

### 6.5 Contingent Liabilities

The Commission is involved in a number of legal proceedings which, depending on the outcome, may generate liabilities. The Commission has appealed a costs ruling that was made against it and this appeal will be heard in the Supreme Court.

### *6.6 Arbitration and Conciliation Costs*

Expenditure in 2017 includes payments of €10,045 (2016: €7,175) to cover the costs as a result of conciliation and arbitration proceedings.

### *6.7 Carryover to 2018*

In accordance with the House of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2015, the Commission receives a three year funding allocation of €369m for the years 2016, 2017 and 2018. Gross expenditure in 2016 was €115.887m in 2017 it was €112.688m. Unspent allocation of €140.425m was carried forward to 2018.

### *6.8 Fraud or Suspected Fraud*

There were no cases of Fraud or Suspected Fraud disclosed in 2017.

## 7. Grant and Miscellaneous Accounts

### 7.1 Grant to British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly

The British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly was established in 1990. Its membership consists of British and Irish Parliamentarians together with Parliamentarians from each of the Assemblies of Northern Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Jersey, Guernsey and the Isle of Man. Funding is provided by the UK and Irish Exchequers with bi-annual Plenary sessions alternating between Ireland and the UK.

#### *Grant to British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly*

##### Account of receipts and payments for year ended 31 December 2017

|                                  | 2017<br>€ | 2016<br>€ |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Balance at 1 January             | 36,709    | 43,939    |
| <b>Receipts</b>                  |           |           |
| Grant [subhead 2(e)]             | 100,000   | 55,000    |
| Miscellaneous receipts           | 450       | 1,219     |
| Uncashed cheque                  | 237       | -         |
| <b>Total Receipts</b>            | 100,687   | 56,219    |
| <b>Payments</b>                  |           |           |
| Plenary sessions                 | 81,390    | 51,670    |
| Committees                       | 20,522    | 10,083    |
| Miscellaneous                    | 1,677     | 1,696     |
| <b>Total Payments</b>            | 103,589   | 63,449    |
| <b>Balance as at 31 December</b> | 33,807    | 36,709    |

## 7.2 Grant to Cumann Parlaiminteach na hÉireann (The Irish Parliamentary Association)

The Cumann Parlaiminteach na hÉireann (The Irish Parliamentary Association) operates under the remit of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission. The powers of the Irish Parliamentary Association are exercised by an Executive Committee which consists of the Ceann Comhairle, Chairman, the Cathaoirleach, Deputy Chairman and fifteen members of the Oireachtas. The role of the Association is to foster and promote understanding and contacts between Irish Parliamentarians and those of other countries.

### *Cumann Parlaiminteach na hÉireann*

#### *Grant in respect of inter-parliamentary activities*

#### **Account of receipts and payments for year ended 31 December 2017**

|   | 2017<br>€ | 2016<br>€ |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| Balance at the 1 January                                      | 54,218    | 50,781    |
| <b>Receipts</b>   |           |           |
| Grant [subhead 2(d)]  | 151,588   | 95,117    |
| Members Subscriptions   | 2,737     | 2,159     |
| Miscellaneous   | -         | 943       |
| <b>Total Receipts</b>   | 154,325   | 98,219    |
| <b>Payments</b>   |           |           |
| Expenses associated with Irish delegations on foreign visits  | 41,731    | 1,130     |
| Expenses associated with foreign delegations visiting Ireland | 49,363    | 19,485    |
| Inter Parliamentary Union Conference expenses                 | 39,216    | 20,165    |
| Other expenses  | 47,337    | 54,002    |
| <b>Total Payments</b>   | 177,647   | 94,782    |
| <b>Balance as at 31 December</b>                              | 30,896    | 54,218    |

### 7.3 Accounts of the Catering and Bar Services

#### Income and Expenditure Account for year ended 31 December 2017

|                      | 2017<br>€      | 2016<br>€      |
|----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Sales</b>         | 1,250,458      | 1,184,049      |
| Cost of sales        | (736,553)      | (729,021)      |
| <b>Gross Surplus</b> | <b>513,905</b> | <b>455,028</b> |
| Expenses             | (374,858)      | (390,304)      |
| <b>Net Surplus</b>   | <b>139,047</b> | <b>64,724</b>  |

#### Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2017

|   | 2017<br>€      | 2016<br>€      |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Fixed assets</b>                                 | 38,145         | 38,320         |
| <b>Current assets</b>                               |                |                |
| Stock   | 38,133         | 35,128         |
| Debtors   | 45,174         | 50,610         |
| VAT and Prepayments                                 | 55,859         | 81,917         |
| Bank and cash                                       | 253,284        | 137,657        |
|   | 392,450        | 305,312        |
| <b>Current liabilities</b>                          |                |                |
| Trade creditors                                     | (158,323)      | (60,982)       |
| <b>Total net assets</b>                             | <b>272,272</b> | <b>282,650</b> |
| <b>Finance by:</b>                                  |                |                |
| Surplus/Deficit Retained excluding subhead 2(a)     | 872,321        | 828,391        |
| Surplus/Deficit current year excluding subhead 2(a) | 139,047        | 64,724         |
| Repaid to Houses of the Oireachtas                  | (739,096)      | (610,465)      |
|   | 272,272        | 282,650        |

#### Notes to accounts

- (i) Payroll costs of the staff of the Catering and Bar are borne directly by the Commission and are reflected at subhead 2(a) of the Appropriation Account amounting to €1,572,940 in 2017 (2016: €1,466,621).
- (ii) An amount is remitted from the catering and bar accounts to the Commission on an annual basis and recorded as a receipt in the Commission's accounts (Note 4.1). The amount is calculated based on the retention of a bank balance in the account equivalent to an average of two months payments to suppliers. The amount remitted in 2017 was €128,631 (2016: €54,000).

## 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 2017 to 31 December 2017

#### *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 a total of 8,044 payments were processed with a total value of €23.5m. Of those payments 28 incurred penalties and interest under the Act totalling €1,263.58. Ten of these payments involved invoices in excess of €317.

#### *Reduction of payment period to 15 days*

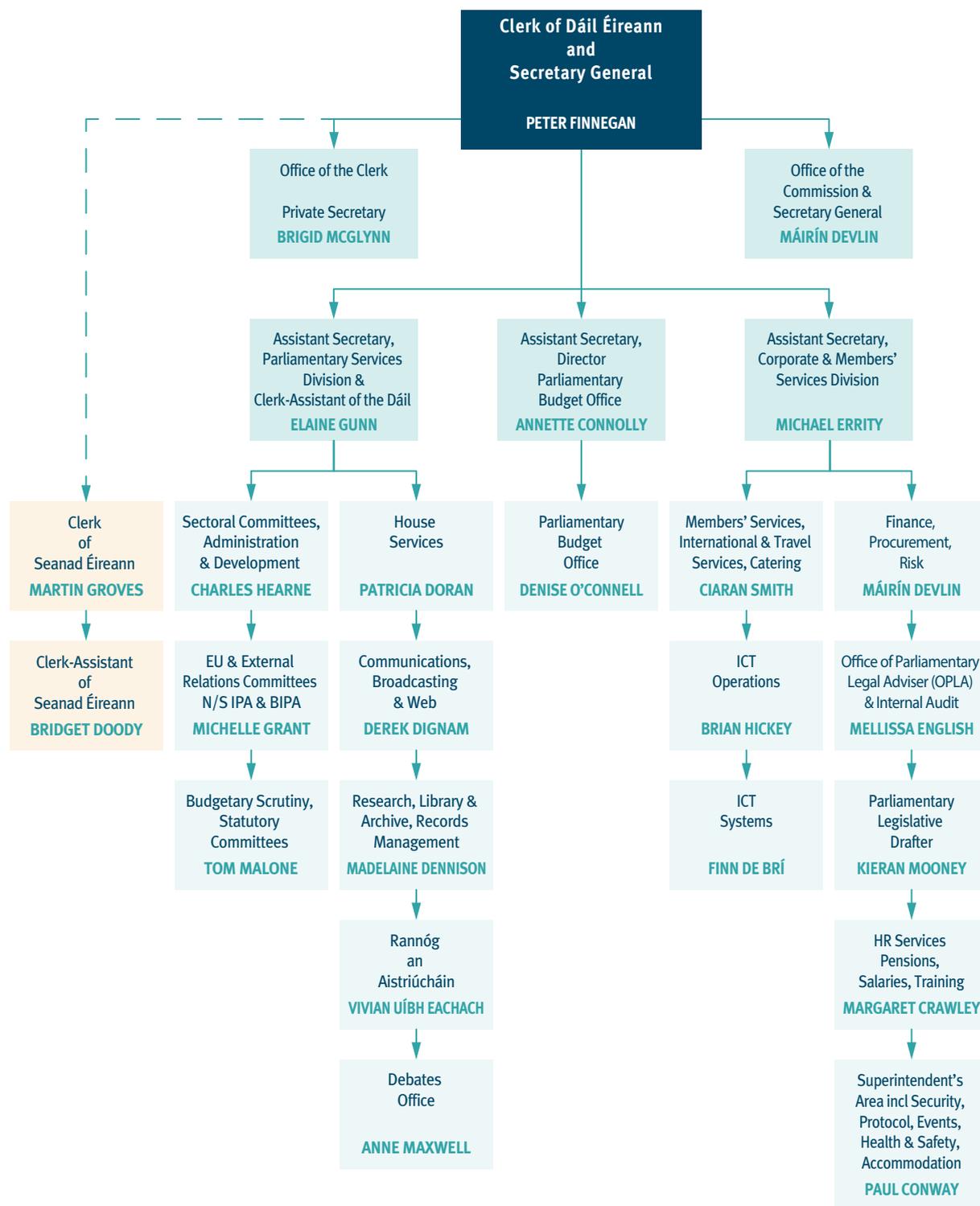
With effect from 15 June 2009, the Service reduced its maximum target period for payments to suppliers from 30 days to 15 days to reflect a change in Government policy. Had the 15 day target been in place on a statutory basis, a further 575 payments would have incurred prompt payment interest, representing 12% of the total number of commercial payments processed from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2017.



**Michael Errity,**  
Assistant Secretary,  
Corporate and Members' Services  
**1 June 2018**

# Appendix I:

## Houses of the Oireachtas Service Organisation Chart



## Appendix II:

### Statement of Resources 2017 (Civil Service staff only)

| Summary of Numbers by Grade  |   |   |                                     |
|--|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| Grades   | Approved numbers, including fixed term contracts 2016 | Approved numbers, including fixed term contracts 2017 | Total number in place December 2017 |
| Secretary General  | 1   | 1   | 1                                   |
| Assistant Secretary  | 3   | 4   | 3                                   |
| Director (PO (higher))   | 0   | 0   | 1                                   |
| Principal Officer (standard)   | 17  | 19  | 17                                  |
| AP   | 64  | 67  | 59                                  |
| Advisory Counsel Grade III   | -   | 10  | 7                                   |
| Administrative Officer   | 13  | 17  | 16                                  |
| Senior Clerk   | 54  | 61  | 56                                  |
| Junior Clerk   | 57  | 63  | 57                                  |
| Staff Officer  | 1   | 0   | 0                                   |
| Telephonist  | 3   | 3   | 3                                   |
| Clerical Officer   | 76  | 81  | 82                                  |
| Head Usher/Deputy Head Usher   | 4   | 4   | 4                                   |
| Usher Grade Team Leader  | 7   | 7   | 8                                   |
| Superintendent's Section: Usher Grade III, Services Officer, Porter, Service Attendant, Cleaner, Storekeeper | 81  | 81  | 79                                  |
| Assistant Editor   | 7   | 7   | 7                                   |
| Deputy Editor  | 3   | 3   | 3                                   |
| Translator Grade I   | 2   | 2   | 2                                   |
| Translator Grad II   | 9   | 10  | 9                                   |
| Translator Grad III  | 11  | 12  | 11                                  |
| Reporters  | 38  | 40  | 39                                  |
| Assistant Librarian  | 6   | 6   | 6                                   |
| Senior Researcher  | 6   | 10  | 8                                   |
| Researcher   | 21  | 17  | 14                                  |
| Archive & Records Manager  | 0   | 0   | 0                                   |
| Specialist, Temporary, and Other   | 0   | 3   | 2                                   |
| Third Secretary  | 1   | 1   | 1                                   |
| <b>Total Civil Service Staff</b>   | <b>485</b>  | <b>529</b>  | <b>495</b>                          |
| <b>Vacancies</b>   |   |   | <b>34</b>                           |
| <b>Cumulative Total</b>  |   |   | <b>529</b>                          |

## Appendix III:

### Annual Report of the Audit Committee of the Commission 2017

#### 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:

- a) one member of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission;
- b) at least one but not more than three other members of either House of the Oireachtas who are not members of the Commission;
- c) at least two but not more than three external persons nominated by the Secretary General, one of whom is designated by the Commission as Chairperson of the Committee; and
- d) one member of the staff of the Service nominated by the Secretary General.

#### 2. 2017 Membership Of The Committee

- Mr Pat McLoughlin (Chairperson)
- Senator Ned O'Sullivan (Commission member)
- Senator Catherine Ardagh
- Senator Victor Boyhan
- Senator Kieran O'Donnell
- Mr Cyril Maybury (external member)\*
- Ms Noreen Fahy (external member)\*\*
- Mr Charles Hearne, Principal Officer (staff representative)

\* Mr Cyril Maybury was re-appointed by the Commission on 7 March 2017.

\*\* Ms Noreen Fahy was appointed by the Commission on 4 April 2017.

#### 3. Role of the Audit Committee

The role of the Committee is:

- a) to advise the Secretary General on financial matters relating to his or her functions,
- b) to advise the Commission on matters of corporate governance relating to its functions, and
- c) to meet at least four 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 their functions including the following:

- a) the proper implementation of public service guidelines on financial matters;
- b) compliance with section 22 of the Exchequer and Audit Departments Act 1866, section 19 of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993, and any other obligations imposed by law relating to financial matters;
- c) the appropriateness, efficiency, and effectiveness of the Commission's procedures relating to public procurement, seeking sanction for expenditure and complying with that sanction, acquiring, keeping custody of, and disposing of assets, risk management, financial reporting, internal audit, and internal controls; and
- d) 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 2017

The Audit Committee met four times during 2017.

The Committee considered the following Internal Audit Reports in 2017:

##### *(i) Internal Audit on Dissolution Planning 2016*

The audit reviewed the planning and implementation framework for the impacts of the dissolution of the Houses to ensure they were adequate.

##### *(ii) Internal Audit on the Oireachtas Contracts Committee*

The overall objective of the audit was to ensure that the Contracts Committee is operating in accordance with its Terms of Reference, departmental/internal guidelines, and whether its remit reflects that of comparable committees in a number of Government Departments and whether the structure and role of the committee reflects best practice.

##### *(iii) Internal Audit on Compliance with the Prompt Payments Legislation*

The overall objective of the audit was to provide assurance that the overall framework and systems are effective. A core element of the audit work was to examine procedures, practices, systems and records to assess whether the Service is operating in compliance with requirements under the legislation.

##### *(iv) Internal Audit on Compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2014*

The audit reviewed the Service's compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2014 to ascertain if it is operating in accordance with relevant provisions of the Act, Statutory Instruments issued on foot of the Act, the Code of Practice for Public Bodies and other guidance issued by DPER, and to identify any areas of non-compliance and related risks.

Through this process, the Audit Committee advised the Secretary General and Houses of the Oireachtas Commission on financial matters relating to the Accounting Officer's functions and matters of corporate governance of relevance to the Commission's functions.

Other reports considered by the Committee:

*(i) Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) Audit Reports*

The Audit Committee considered the 2016 C&AG Report on the accounts of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission.

*(ii) 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.

*(iii) Risk Management*

The Committee considered four Risk 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.

*(iv) Public Representation Allowance audit*

The Committee considered the independent auditors report on the Public Representation Allowance for 2015. The PRA is payable to all TDs, Ministers, and Senators at rates applicable to each office. Members may opt for either the fully vouched amount or a lower monthly amount. A Member may opt to waive the entirety of the allowance.

The core purpose of the audit was to establish whether Members had valid evidence of vouchers, receipts and bills in respect of the amount paid to them, for expenses which come within the allowable categories in the Regulations underpinning the PRA.

*(v) Data Protection Policy*

The Committee considered an updated Data Protection Policy. The document presented to the Committee formed part of the Service's suite of Data Protection policy documents, including but not limited to the (i) CCTV Code of Conduct, (ii) Personal Data Security Breach Protocol, and (iii) Personal Data Security Breach Flowchart.

*(vi) Policy on Estates as agreed by Trustees*

The Committee was sent, for noting only, a submission to the Trustees of the Ciste Pinsean containing a proposal on the write-off of pre-2016 overpayments to Estates and to propose a policy on dealing with current and future overpayments.

The administration and management of the Ciste Pinsean is vested in the Trustees and write offs are at the discretion of the Trustees. The Trustees are the Ceann Comhairle, Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann, and the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

## **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 IV:

### Bills Initiated in the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2017

| No. | Bill Title  |
|-----|---|
| 1   | Civil Liability (Amendment) Bill 2017 [Seanad]                                |
| 2   | Ethical Public Investment (Tobacco) Bill 2017 [PMB]                           |
| 3   | Consumer Insurance Contracts Bill 2017 [PMB]                                  |
| 4   | Public Services and Procurement (Social Value) Bill 2017 [PMB]                |
| 5   | Harmful Communications and Digital Safety Bill 2017 [PMB]                     |
| 6   | University College Galway (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]                         |
| 7   | Media Ownership Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 8   | National Famine Commemoration Day Bill 2017 [PMB]                             |
| 9   | Prohibition of Above-cost Ticket Touting Bill 2017 [PMB]                      |
| 10  | Pensions (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 11  | Sentencing Council Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 12  | Electricity (Supply) (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]                              |
| 13  | Domestic Violence Bill 2017 [Seanad]  |
| 14  | Pensions (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2017 [PMB]                                  |
| 15  | European Communities (Brexit) Bill 2017 [PMB]                                 |
| 16  | Derelict and Vacant Sites Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]                            |
| 17  | Pensions (Amendment) (No. 3) Bill 2017 [PMB]                                  |
| 18  | Misuse of Drugs (Supervised Injecting Facilities) Bill 2017                   |
| 19  | Sea-Fisheries (Amendment) Bill 2017 [Seanad]                                  |
| 20  | Mediation Bill 2017   |
| 21  | Minimum Custodial Periods upon Conviction for Murder Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB] |
| 22  | Road Traffic (Minimum Passing Distance of Cyclists) Bill 2017 [PMB]           |

| No. | Bill Title   |
|-----|--|
| 23  | Mental Health (Amendment) Bill 2017 changed from Mental Health (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2017 [PMB] |
| 24  | Rural Equality Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 25  | Keeping People in their Homes Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 26  | Intoxicating Liquor (Amendment) Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]   |
| 27  | Health (Amendment) Bill 2017   |
| 28  | National Food Ombudsman Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 29  | Sale of Tickets (Sporting and Cultural Events) Bill 2017 [PMB]                                     |
| 30  | Electoral (Extension of Voting Rights to Non-Irish Citizens) Bill 2017 [PMB]                       |
| 31  | Protection of Employees (Collective Redundancies) Bill 2017 [PMB]                                  |
| 32  | Critical Health Professionals Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]   |
| 33  | Protection of Life During Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]                                    |
| 34  | Civil Liability (Amendment) (Prevention of Benefits from Homicide) Bill 2017 [PMB]                 |
| 35  | Statute of Limitations (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 36  | Irish Nationality and Citizenship (Restoration of Birthright Citizenship) Bill 2017 [PMB]          |
| 37  | Prohibition of Wild Animals in Circuses Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 38  | Education (Disadvantage Committee) Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 39  | Welfare of Greyhounds (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 40  | National Minimum Wage (Protection of Employee Tips) Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]                       |
| 41  | Thirty-fifth Amendment of the Constitution (Right to Housing) Bill 2017 [PMB]                      |

| No. | Bill Title   |
|-----|--|
| 42  | Medical Practitioners (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 43  | Gender Recognition (Amendment) Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]  |
| 44  | Adult Safeguarding Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]  |
| 45  | Diplomatic Relations (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2017  |
| 46  | Parental Leave (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 47  | Sale of Illicit Goods Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 48  | Companies (Amendment) Bill 2017 [Seanad]   |
| 49  | Consumer Protection (Regulation of Credit Servicing Firms) (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]           |
| 50  | Local Government (Establishment of Town Councils Commission) Bill 2017 [PMB]                     |
| 51  | Inland Fisheries (Amendment) Bill 2017   |
| 52  | Local Government (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 53  | Public Transport Regulation (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 54  | Garda Síochána (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 55  | Equal Status (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 56  | Education (Guidance Counselling Provision) Bill 2017 [PMB]                                       |
| 57  | Trade Union (Garda Síochána and the Defence Forces) Bill 2017 [PMB]                              |
| 58  | Litter Pollution (Amendment) Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]  |
| 59  | Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman Bill 2017  |
| 60  | Declaration of Independence Day Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]   |
| 61  | Autism Spectrum Disorder Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]  |
| 62  | Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank Bill 2017   |
| 63  | Harassment, Harmful Communications and Related Offences Bill 2017 [PMB]                          |
| 64  | Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (Gender Pay Gap Information) Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB] |

| No. | Bill Title   |
|-----|--|
| 65  | Urban Regeneration and Housing (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 66  | Foal Levy Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 67  | Údarás na Gaeltachta (Amendment) Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]  |
| 68  | Controlled Drugs and Harm Reduction Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]                                       |
| 69  | Health and Safety (Funfair) (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 70  | Judicial Council Bill 2017 [Seanad]  |
| 71  | Judicial Appointments Commission Bill 2017   |
| 72  | Valuation (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 73  | Criminal Justice (Commission of Sexual Offences) (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]                       |
| 74  | Road Traffic (Quads and Scramblers) (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]                                    |
| 75  | Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 76  | Health and Social Care Professionals (Amendment) Bill 2017   |
| 77  | Independent Reporting Commission Bill 2017   |
| 78  | Rugby World Cup 2023 Bill 2017   |
| 79  | Industrial Relations (Defence Forces) (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]                                  |
| 80  | Waste Reduction Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 81  | Legal Metrology (Measuring Instruments) Bill 2017  |
| 82  | Thirty-fifth Amendment of the Constitution (Protection of Pension Property Rights) Bill 2017 [PMB] |
| 83  | Public Services and Procurement (Workers' Rights) Bill 2017 [PMB]                                  |
| 84  | National Housing Co-operative Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]   |
| 85  | Rent Transparency Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 86  | National Minimum Wage (Removal of Sub-minimum Rates of Pay) Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]               |
| 87  | Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2017 [PMB]  |

| No. | Bill Title   |
|-----|--|
| 88  | Mortgage Arrears Resolution (Family Home) Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 89  | Neighbour Disputes (Vegetation) Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 90  | Education (Regulation of Voluntary Contributions in Schools) Bill 2017 [PMB]                         |
| 91  | Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2017   |
| 92  | Life Saving Equipment Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]   |
| 93  | Planning and Development (Rapid Broadband) Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 94  | Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Bill 2017  |
| 95  | Roads (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 96  | Genuine Progress Indicators and National Distributional Accounts Bill 2017 [PMB]                     |
| 97  | Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Bill 2017  |
| 98  | Education (Inspection of Individual Education Plans for Children with Special Needs) Bill 2017 [PMB] |
| 99  | Small Unmanned Aircraft (Drones) Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 100 | Housing (Homeless Families) Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 101 | International Protection (Family Reunification) (Amendment) Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]                 |
| 102 | Defamation (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 103 | Thirty-fifth Amendment of the Constitution (Blasphemy) Bill 2017 [PMB]                               |
| 104 | Waste Reduction (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 105 | Island Fisheries (Heritage Licence) Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 106 | Court Funds Administration Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 107 | Thirty-fifth Amendment of the Constitution (Separation of Church and State) Bill 2017 [PMB]          |
| 108 | Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2017   |
| 109 | Education (Welfare) (Amendment) Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]   |

| No. | Bill Title   |
|-----|--|
| 110 | National Archives (Amendment) Bill 2017  |
| 111 | Water Services Bill 2017   |
| 112 | Mental Health Parity Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 113 | Vacant Housing Refurbishment Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 114 | National Asset Management Agency (Amendment) Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]                                      |
| 115 | Finance Bill 2017  |
| 116 | Landlord and Tenant (Ground Rents) (Amendment) Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]                                    |
| 117 | Contempt of Court Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 118 | Civil Law (Costs in Probate Matters) Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]  |
| 119 | Comptroller and Auditor General (Accountability of Recipients of Public Funds) (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB] |
| 120 | Planning and Development (Strategic Infrastructure) (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]                            |
| 121 | Maternity Protection (Local Government Members) Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 122 | Criminal Justice (Corruption Offences) Bill 2017   |
| 123 | Companies (Statutory Audits) Bill 2017   |
| 124 | Public Service Pay and Pensions Bill 2017  |
| 125 | Defence (Veterans Lapel Badge) Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]  |
| 126 | Health and Safety (Carbon Monoxide) Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]   |
| 127 | Electoral (Amendment) (Voting Rights for Residents) Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]                               |
| 128 | Regional Technical Colleges (Amendment) Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]   |
| 129 | Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 130 | Multi-Party Actions Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 131 | Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No.2) Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 132 | Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 133 | Petroleum and Other Minerals Development (Climate Emergency Measures) Bill 2017 [PMB]                      |

| No. | Bill Title  |
|-----|---|
| 134 | Social Welfare Bill 2017  |
| 135 | Health Insurance (Amendment) Bill 2017 [Seanad]   |
| 136 | Prohibition of Fossil Fuels (Keep it in the Ground) Bill 2017 [PMB]                       |
| 137 | Electoral (Amendment) (Dáil Constituencies) Bill 2017                                     |
| 138 | Consumer Rights (Gift Vouchers) Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 139 | Personal Insolvency (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 140 | Property Services Regulatory Authority (Amendment) (Bidding Transparency) Bill 2017 [PMB] |
| 141 | Community Energy (Co-ownership) Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 142 | Statistics (1926 Census Release) Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]                                 |
| 143 | Consumer Protection (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 144 | Digital Safety Commissioner Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 145 | Planning and Development (Amendment) (Short Term Lettings) Bill 2017 [PMB]                |
| 146 | Appropriation Bill 2017   |
| 147 | Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2017   |
| 148 | Harbours (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 149 | Social Welfare (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]                     |
| 150 | Online Advertising and Social Media (Transparency) Bill 2017 [PMB]                        |
| 151 | Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]                               |
| 152 | Courts Service (Amendment) Bill 2017 [Seanad] [PMB]                                       |
| 153 | Childcare Support Bill 2017   |
| 154 | Living Cities Bill 2017 [PMB]   |
| 155 | Microgeneration Support Scheme Bill 2017 [PMB]  |
| 156 | Bail (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]  |

## Appendix V:

### Bills Passed by the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2017

| No. | Act Title   |
|-----|---|
| 1   | Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2017  |
| 2   | Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017   |
| 3   | Communications Regulation (Postal Services) (Amendment) Act 2017                                |
| 4   | Criminal Justice (Suspended Sentences of Imprisonment) Act 2017                                 |
| 5   | Health (Amendment) Act 2017   |
| 6   | Knowledge Development Box (Certification of Inventions) Act 2017                                |
| 7   | Misuse of Drugs (Supervised Injecting Facilities) Act 2017                                      |
| 8   | Courts Act 2017   |
| 9   | Companies (Accounting) Act 2017   |
| 10  | Medical Practitioners (Amendment) Act 2017  |
| 11  | Criminal Justice (Offences Relating to Information Systems) Act 2017                            |
| 12  | Competition (Amendment) Act 2017  |
| 13  | Companies (Amendment) Act 2017  |
| 14  | Criminal Justice Act 2017   |
| 15  | Petroleum and Other Minerals Development (Prohibition of Onshore Hydraulic Fracturing) Act 2017 |
| 16  | Inland Fisheries (Amendment) Act 2017   |
| 17  | Rugby World Cup 2023 Act 2017   |
| 18  | Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Act 2017  |
| 19  | Adoption (Amendment) Act 2017   |
| 20  | Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2017   |

| No. | Act Title  |
|-----|--|
| 21  | Central Bank and Financial Services Authority of Ireland (Amendment) Act 2017              |
| 22  | Financial Services and Pensions Ombudsman Act 2017   |
| 23  | Minerals Development Act 2017  |
| 24  | Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank Act 2017  |
| 25  | Independent Reporting Commission Act 2017  |
| 26  | National Shared Services Office Act 2017   |
| 27  | Mediation Act 2017   |
| 28  | Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017   |
| 29  | Water Services Act 2017  |
| 30  | Civil Liability (Amendment) Act 2017   |
| 31  | Legal Metrology (Measuring Instruments) Act 2017   |
| 32  | Health and Social Care Professionals (Amendment) Act 2017                                  |
| 33  | Diplomatic Relations (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2017                                   |
| 34  | Public Service Pay and Pensions Act 2017   |
| 35  | Appropriation Act 2017   |
| 36  | Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (Hague Convention) Act 2017 |
| 37  | Health Insurance (Amendment) Act 2017  |
| 38  | Social Welfare Act 2017  |
| 39  | Electoral (Amendment) (Dáil Constituencies) Act 2017                                       |
| 40  | Irish Sign Language Act 2017   |
| 41  | Finance Act 2017   |

## Appendix VI:

### Meetings and Reports of Parliamentary Committees

105

| Joint Committees of both Houses   |                         |  |
|---|-------------------------|--|
| Committee   | Number of meetings held | Number of policy reports presented to the Houses |
| Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine                                   | 27                      | 7  |
| Joint Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs [See note 2] | 15                      | 1  |
| Joint Committee on Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht                                | 5                       | 1  |
| Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs   | 19                      | 4  |
| Joint Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment                     | 21                      | 2  |
| Joint Committee on Education and Skills   | 18                      | 4  |
| Joint Committee on European Union Affairs   | 21                      | 1  |
| Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure & Reform & Taoiseach                   | 41                      | 6  |
| Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Trade & Defence                                   | 19                      | -  |
| Joint Committee on Health   | 32                      | 10   |
| Joint Committee on Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government [See note 2]       | 22                      | 3  |
| Joint Committee on Housing, Planning & Local Government                               | 12                      | 1  |
| Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement                    | 17                      | 2  |
| Joint Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation [See note 2]                       | 13                      | 4  |
| Joint Committee on Business, Enterprise and Innovation                                | 7                       | 1  |
| Joint Committee on Justice and Equality   | 32                      | 11   |
| Joint Committee on Rural and Community Development <sup>6</sup>                       | 2                       | -  |
| Joint Committee on Social Protection [See note 2]                                     | 15                      | 4  |
| Joint Committee on Employment Affairs and Social Protection                           | 6                       | -  |
| Joint Committee on Transport, Tourism and Sport                                       | 31                      | 3  |

6 Established on 26 September 2017.

| Select Committees  |                         |  |
|--|-------------------------|--|
| Committee  | Number of meetings held | Number of policy reports presented to the Houses |
| Select Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine                                   | 2                       | -  |
| Select Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs [See note 2] | 1                       | -  |
| Select Committee on Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht                                | 2                       | -  |
| Select Committee on Children and Youth Affairs   | 1                       | -  |
| Select Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment                     | 5                       | -  |
| Select Committee on Education and Skills   | 6                       | -  |
| Select Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure & Reform & Taoiseach                   | 14                      | -  |
| Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, Trade & Defence                                   | 8                       | -  |
| Select Committee on Health   | 6                       | -  |
| Select Committee on Housing, Planning, Community & Local Government [See note 2]       | 2                       | -  |
| Select Committee on Housing, Planning & Local Government                               | 3                       | -  |
| Select Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation [See note 2]                       | 4                       | -  |
| Select Committee on Business, Enterprise and Innovation                                | 3                       | -  |
| Select Committee on Justice and Equality   | 12                      | -  |
| Select Committee on Social Protection [See note 2]                                     | 1                       | -  |
| Select Committee on Employment Affairs and Social Protection                           | 3                       | -  |
| Select Committee on Transport, Tourism and Sport                                       | 2                       | -  |
| Select Committee on Rural and Community Development <sup>7</sup>                       | 1                       | -  |

<sup>7</sup> Established on 26 September 2017.

| Standing Committees  |                         |  |
|--|-------------------------|--|
| Committee  | Number of meetings held | Number of policy reports presented to the Houses |
| Committee on Budgetary Oversight (Dáil)                      | 30                      | 3  |
| Joint Committee on Irish Language, Gaeltacht and the Islands | 18                      | 2  |
| Select Committee on Members' Interests of Dáil Éireann       | 3                       | -  |
| Select Committee on Members' Interests of Seanad Éireann     | 1                       | -  |
| Committee of Public Accounts (Dáil)                          | 49                      | 4  |
| Joint Committee on Public Petitions                          | 16                      | -  |

| Special Committees  |                         |  |
|---|-------------------------|--|
| Committee   | Number of meetings held | Number of policy reports presented to the Houses |
| Joint Committee on the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution <sup>8</sup>                                | 21                      | 1  |
| Joint Committee on the Future Funding of Domestic Water Services <sup>9</sup>                           | 21                      | 1  |
| Select Committee on the Future of Healthcare (Dáil) <sup>10</sup>                                       | 23                      | 2  |
| Joint Committee on the Future of Mental Health Care <sup>11</sup>                                       | 8                       | 1  |
| Select Committee on the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Seanad) <sup>12</sup> | 14                      | 1  |

#### Notes

- The Parliamentary Committees fall into four broad categories: Joint Committees, Select Committees, Standing Committees and Special Committees.

*Joint Committees* are established for the term of the Dáil and cease to exist when the Dáil is dissolved. These Committees are established to conduct oversight of the work of a Government Department and related policy matters according to the Orders of Reference given to them by the Dáil and Seanad. Joint Committees are composed of members of both Houses of the Oireachtas.

*Select Committees* comprise members of one House of the Oireachtas. Select Committees of Dáil Éireann, as listed in this Appendix, consider bills, estimates, motions, international agreements and other matters referred to them by Dáil Éireann.

*Standing Committees* (Joint or Select) are permanent Committees with specific responsibilities set out in Standing Orders.

*Special Committees* (Joint or Select) are established to examine a particular subject and usually cease to exist when they have completed their work and presented their final reports to the House(s).

- The orders of reference of the Committees set out in the Table below were amended in September 2017 to reflect changes in the structure of the relevant Government Departments and reorganisation of Departmental functions. The Committees were also renamed to take account of the change to their functions.

| Committee   | Renamed  | To perform functions in relation to Government Department |
|---|--|---|
| Joint/Select Committee on Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs | Joint/Select Committee on Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht      | Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht                       |
| Joint/Select Committee on Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government     | Joint/Select Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government   | Housing, Planning and Local Government                    |
| Joint/Select Committee on Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation                       | Joint/Select Committee on Business, Enterprise and Innovation      | Business, Enterprise and Innovation                       |
| Joint/Select Committee on Social Protection                                     | Joint/Select Committee on Employment Affairs and Social Protection | Employment Affairs and Social Protection                  |

<sup>8</sup> Established on 4 April 2017 and completed its work on 20 December 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Established on 24 November 2016 and completed its work on 12 April 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Established on 1 June 2016 and completed its work on 30 May 2017.

<sup>11</sup> Established on 18 July 2017.

<sup>12</sup> Established on 23 February 2017.

## Appendix VII:

### Annual Report under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014

Pursuant to section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 (the “2014 Act”), this annual report covers the period 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2017.

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 2017*

One disclosure was received by the Service in the period 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2017. In accordance with the interim procedures adopted by the Service for the purposes of the 2014 Act, the screening of the disclosure was commenced. The person making the disclosure sought a review process prior to the completion of the Service’s interim procedures.

## Appendix VIII:

### Commission Meetings and Attendance in 2017

109

The table shows the number of meetings held by the Commission and its Finance committee as well as attendance of individual Commission members. The Commission held nine meetings in 2017. The Finance Committee held five meetings in 2017.

| Members   | Meetings   |                   |
|---|------------|-------------------|
|   | Commission | Finance Committee |
| Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl, Ceann Comhairle (Chairperson)                    | 9/9        | ---               |
| Senator Denis O'Donovan, Cathaoirleach of the Seanad (Deputy Chairperson) | 7/9        | 5/5               |
| Mr Peter Finnegan, Secretary General (Chief Executive)                    | 9/9        | ---               |
| Deputy Joe Carey <sup>13</sup>  | 9/9        | ---               |
| Senator Paudie Coffey   | 6/9        | 4/5               |
| Senator Gerard P. Craughwell  | 8/9        | 3/5               |
| Deputy Timmy Dooley   | 7/9        | 3/5               |
| Deputy Martin Heydon  | 7/9        | 3/5               |
| Deputy Catherine Murphy   | 5/9        | ---               |
| Deputy Louise O'Reilly  | 8/9        | 4/5               |
| Senator Ned O'Sullivan  | 8/9        | ---               |

<sup>13</sup> Deputy Joe Carey resigned his office on 12 December 2017. Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy was appointed by Dáil Éireann on 13 December 2017 to fill the vacancy in the membership of the Commission.

## Appendix IX:

### Glossary of Terms

*Commencement Debate (Seanad)* – a matter brought forward by a Senator for discussion at the commencement of sittings of the Seanad relating to public affairs connected with a Department of State or to matters of administration for which a member of the Government or Minister of State is officially responsible.

*Commission* – the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission is the governing body of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service (the Service). It oversees the provision of services to the Houses of the Oireachtas and members of the Houses.

*Dáil Reform* – reform of the procedures and practice of Dáil Éireann. In 2016 the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform undertook a comprehensive review of the Dáil procedures and proposed reforms across the broad spectrum of the parliamentary business. The reforms were implemented by the Dáil through amendments to Standing Orders.

*Digital Transformation Programme 2020* – a programme of ICT investment to modernise systems and services in the Service through the application of digital technology.

*Division* – a formal vote on a motion in the Dáil or Seanad.

*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, data protection and records management.

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

*Members' Feedback Group (MFG)* – a forum for members of the Houses to provide feedback to senior management of the Service on the facilities and services that support their parliamentary work, including how well these services meet their needs and how they might be improved.

*Office of the Parliamentary Legal Adviser (OPLA)* – provides independent legal advice and services to the Houses of the Oireachtas and their Committees, the Chairs (Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach) of either House of the Oireachtas in respect of their functions, the Clerks of both Houses in respect of the operation of the Houses, and the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission.

*Organisation Development Initiative (ODI)* – a strategy to support organisational effectiveness in the Service. Organisational Development is a planned approach to maximising organisational performance. It is usually carried out by preparing an action plan containing individual initiatives such as

training, communications, approaches to team working, or other interventions. The Service undertakes organisational development initiatives in consultation with staff at all levels, and is currently implementing initiatives to support staff performance and improve engagement and motivation.

*Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO)* – provides independent and impartial information, analysis and advice to the Houses of the Oireachtas. It is a key source of financial and budgetary intelligence for members and in particular for the Committee on Budgetary Oversight as it conducts ex-ante scrutiny of all budgetary matters.

*Parliamentary Questions (PQs)* – questions submitted, for a written or oral response, by members of the Dáil to Ministers of Government relating to public affairs connected with their Departments or on matters of administration for which they are officially responsible.

*Private Member* – a member of the Dáil or Seanad who is not a Minister or member of the Government.

*Private Members' Business* – items of parliamentary business (Bills and motions) sponsored by Private Members rather than by the Government.

*Private Members' Bills Drafting Service* – legal drafting expertise available to members of the Houses in drafting Private Members' Bills. Parliamentary legislative drafters act on the instructions of members regarding the purpose and objective of a proposed Private Member's Bill.

*Procedural Services* – procedural services are those concerned with advice to the Chairpersons of the Houses and their Committees on the application of and compliance with Standing Orders, Rulings of the Chair and parliamentary conventions, as well as

services provided by the Committees' Secretariat and the Procedural Offices – the Questions Office (Parliamentary Questions, motions), the Bills Office (managing the processing of legislation through the Houses – Bills, Amendments to Bills, Acts of the Oireachtas) and the Journal Office (maintaining the Journals of Proceedings, Standing Orders, Rulings of the Chair, Order Papers).

*Recess* – the period of time that the House(s) are not in session.

*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.

*Sectoral Committees* – Parliamentary 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, for example, the Joint Committees on Transport, Foreign Affairs, etc.

*Special Committees* – Parliamentary Committees established to examine subjects of particular importance or emerging issues and to propose recommendations, as appropriate, to the Houses.

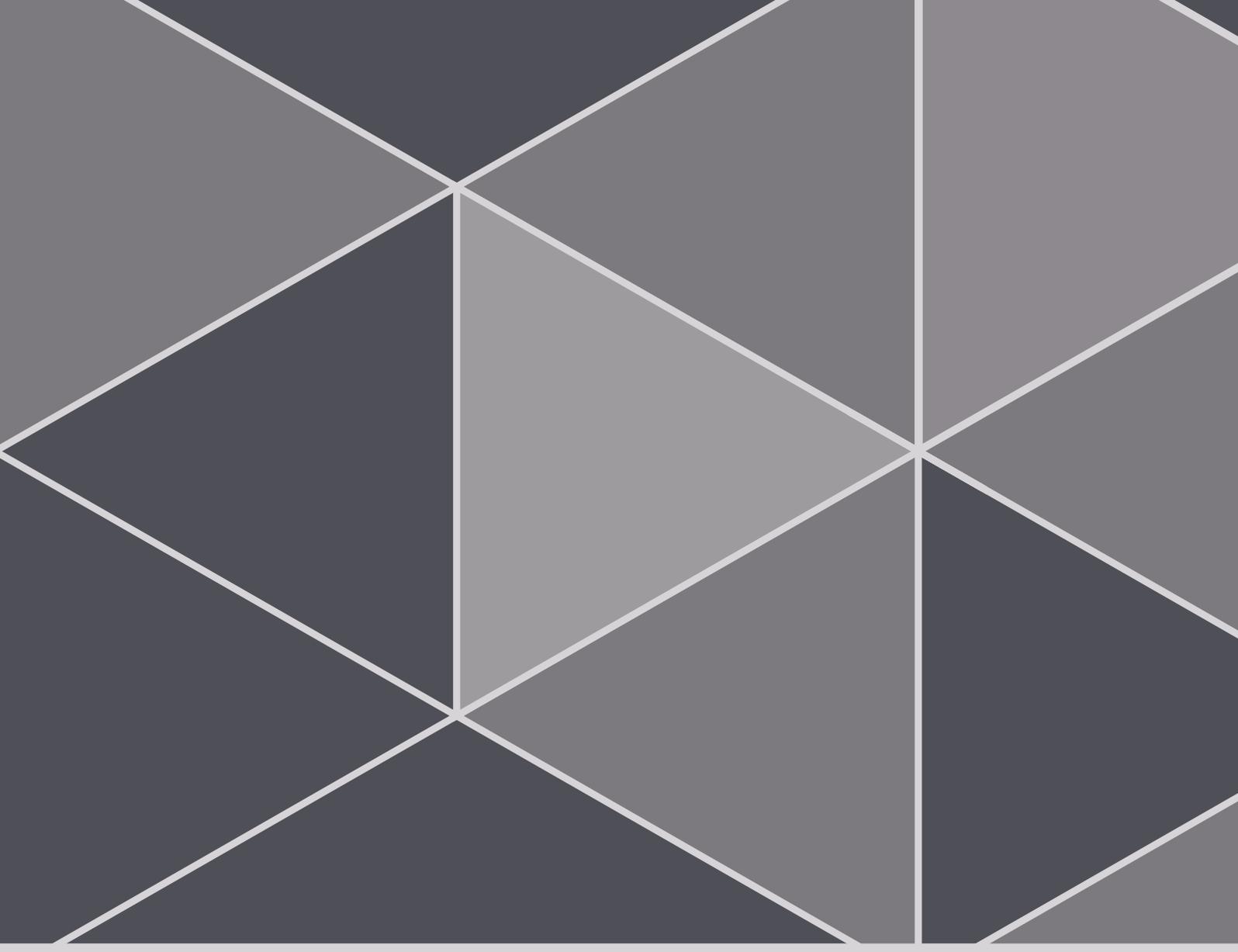
*Standing Committees* – permanent Parliamentary Committees that are required by Standing Orders of either House to be established after a General Election; for example, the Committee of Public Accounts. They may be comprised of members from one or both Houses.

*Statement of Resources* – the staffing resource requirements for each business unit in the Service

to carry out its functions is determined following an annual review process and includes necessary adjustments to ensure that resource requirements are kept up to date.

*The Service* – the Houses of the Oireachtas Service is the public service body that 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 is responsible for managing the Service on a day-to-day basis and for implementing Commission policies.

*Topical Issue Debate (Dáil)* – a matter brought forward by a member of the Dáil for consideration as a topical issue relating to public affairs connected with a Department of State or to matters of administration for which a member of the Government or Minister of State is officially responsible.



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