



Coimisiún Thithe
an Oireachtais
Houses of the
Oireachtas Commission

Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Annual Report 2018

Houses of the Oireachtas

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Introduction by Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach

We are pleased to present the annual report of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (the Commission) for 2018 pursuant to section 6 of the Commission Acts 2003-2018.

The annual report presents an overview of the work of the Commission over the past year in performing its role with respect to the delivery of services to support the work of the Houses of the Oireachtas, and providing members of the Houses with the services they need to carry out their work effectively as legislators and representatives of their constituents.

The third annual progress report on the Implementation of the Strategic Plan, showing the performance of the Service in 2018, is presented in this report. We welcome the progress achieved on its implementation which has led to the introduction of a number of new initiatives over the period of the Plan, for example the establishment of a Parliamentary Budget Office, a Private Members' Bills Service, and modernisation of our information and communications technology systems. The overall focus has been on responding effectively to the needs of the Houses and members as they evolve.

The audited financial accounts of the Commission are presented at page 69. The accounts show that the cost of running the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2018 was €134,353 million against a budget of €135,900 million, resulting in a net underspend of €1.56 million, or a 1.1% financial saving this year. At the end of 2018 the necessary legislation was

enacted, the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2018*, to provide the Commission's funding for the next three years. The amount allocated for running the Houses for the period 2019-2021 is €422 million. The Houses are funded from taxpayers' money. The Commission will continue to exercise prudent stewardship of public resources in running the Houses of the Oireachtas over the next three years.

Over the last year the Houses celebrated the centenary of women's suffrage in Ireland under the Vótáil 100 programme. Events held to mark this democratic milestone are presented throughout the report. Among the many highlights we were privileged to host a student debate in Seanad Éireann, *Díospóireacht na nÓg*, which was a wonderful occasion to observe young people's engagement with the democratic process. We would like to commend the transition year students who took part in the all-island school competition on public speaking and those who contributed to the debate in the Chamber for their excellent speeches exploring the themes of freedom, justice and equality within a contemporary context.

One hundred years later women comprise 25% of members of the Houses of the Oireachtas. As times change the needs of members also change. With the increase in the number of women in the Houses, the Commission has sought to ensure that the parliamentary workplace meets the needs of all

members, especially women raising young children who face particular challenges balancing their political career and family responsibilities. One notable initiative is the *Maternity and Adoptive Leave Policy* adopted by the Commission last year. The Policy aims to support members of the Houses who wish to take leave of absence in the case of pregnancy, child birth or adoption. We would like to acknowledge the contribution of the Oireachtas Women's Caucus in the development of this policy.

This year, 2019, we mark another significant milestone in our Parliament's history as we celebrate the centenary of the first meeting of Dáil Éireann. In January members of the Dáil and Seanad met in the round room of the Mansion House for a special centenary sitting, 100 years after the first meeting of Dáil Éireann was convened in the Mansion House on 21 January 1919. For us all this was an occasion to pause and reflect on 100 years of Dáil Éireann, its history and achievements.

Throughout 2019, a number of signature events will be hosted by the Houses to commemorate 100 years of Dáil Éireann. As we commemorate the 100th anniversary we invite you to view the Dáil 100 programme on the website www.oireachtas.ie and to watch the events as they are broadcast on Oireachtas TV and live streamed on the Oireachtas website.

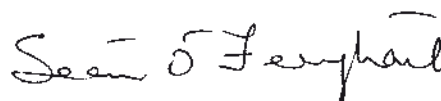
Another important focus of our work over the past year was the ongoing restoration project of Georgian Leinster House. The Georgian House is undergoing a programme of structural and upgrade works to preserve its heritage character while bringing it up to current standards. In monitoring progress of the project, the Commission is briefed at its monthly meetings by senior officials from the

Office of Public Works. This project has involved careful planning to ensure that the work of the Houses continues uninterrupted as the extensive exterior and interior work progresses, as well as ensuring that the Dáil and Seanad continue to be accessible for members and visitors.

With the construction project moving to the final stages this year, attention is being focussed on planning the phased reoccupation of the House to ensure a seamless transition. The return of Seanad Éireann to Leinster House from its temporary Chamber in the National Museum of Ireland will be a key priority in this phase of the project.

In concluding, we would like to thank members of the Commission for their work over the past year. We also thank the committees of the Commission for their work in supporting the achievement of our objectives.

We would like to acknowledge the achievements of the Service over the past year. We express gratitude to the Secretary General, the Management Board and to the staff of the Service for their work in delivering the services required to support the business of the Houses and the work of members.



Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD

Ceann Comhairle



Senator Denis O'Donovan

Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann



Secretary General's Overview

I am pleased to present the 2018 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 2003-2018* which require me, as Secretary General, to present a progress report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan annually to the Commission.

2018 was a particularly significant year for the Oireachtas because we commemorated the 100th anniversary of the vote for women in Ireland.

Over the course of 2018, a highly successful programme of events was run to mark the centenary. Led by members of the Oireachtas Women's Caucus, and supported by staff from the Oireachtas Communications Unit, the Programme commemorated the pioneering work of the women's suffrage movement as well as providing the opportunity to reflect on the role of women in contemporary politics.

In 2018, the Commission's outturn was €134 million, bringing the total expenditure for the three-year period 2016-2018 to €363 million.

On 31 December, the Commission employed 511 FTE Civil Service staff, eight Office Holder staff, and 52 State Industrial staff employed in the Catering Service and Print Facility.

There was a high level of activity in 2018 in both Houses. The Dáil sat for 989 hours over 106 sitting days and the Seanad sat for 615 hours over 98 sitting days. This represents a 12% increase on the combined number of sittings hours of both Houses for 2017. Almost 59,000 Parliamentary Questions (PQs) were processed. There were 142 Bills initiated in the Houses – two thirds were Private Members' Bills (PMBs). Of the 44 Bills passed by the Houses, five were PMBs.

Another important area of activity was the Oireachtas Committees. There were 625 Committee meetings with 2,223 witnesses contributing to the proceedings. Seventy-five committee reports were published.

The Houses and their Committees also continued their work on the implications of Brexit for Ireland. H.E. Mr Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, addressed a joint sitting of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann on 21 June 2018.

I am pleased to report that the Houses of the Oireachtas Service made significant progress on the implementation of its Strategic Plan 2016-2018.

The key objectives of the Plan were to implement parliamentary reform, respond to the needs of members, communicate the work of the Oireachtas and strengthen public engagement, and develop ICT capability and our staff.

A particular focus in 2018 was to embed the new services supporting the parliamentary reform programme. To this end, the Service significantly increased the support available to members to draft private members' legislation. During 2018, 74 PMBs were initiated in the Dáil and 20 PMBs were initiated in the Seanad. Fourteen were assigned to the new Legislative Drafting Unit in the Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers (OPLA). Five PMBs were passed by the Houses. At end of 2018, the OPLA was established on a statutory basis by the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2018*. This important legislative change will significantly improve its capacity to deliver legal advice and support to members in the years ahead.

The 2018 Act also established the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) on a statutory basis. Since its establishment in July 2017, the PBO has become an integral part of the financial scrutiny system in the Oireachtas. It produced 62 briefings, commentary, and analysis publications in 2018, including a report on Budget 2019, and worked closely with the Budgetary Oversight Committee. For its work on fiscal policy, the PBO received a Highly Commended award from the Foundation for Fiscal Studies – a notable achievement for its Director and staff.

Strengthening supports for Members was another focus for the Service in 2018. The Service developed a *Dignity and Respect Statement of Principles and Policy* for members and staff. This sets the standards of respect, dignity, safety, and equality which have been adopted by the Oireachtas Commission and which will apply to everyone in the parliamentary community. As an organisation, we are committed to a workplace that is free of bullying and harassment, and where the right of all to be treated with dignity and respect is recognised and supported.

An important objective of our Strategic Plan was to increase public understanding and improve perception of the work of the Houses and their members. The EU Barometer results for Ireland Spring 2018 reports that trust in the Dáil is now at 44%, the highest level in six years. The Service delivered a number of measures to promote greater public accessibility and engagement with the Houses, including a new website, the further development of Oireachtas TV, and new initiatives in parliamentary education. The Vótáil 100 Programme also provided the opportunity to increase public understanding of the Oireachtas. It generated considerable public interest and complemented the Dáil 100 commemorations in 2019.

The technical landscape of the Houses of the Oireachtas is undergoing major changes. Our goal is to harness the potential of new technologies to create improved ways of working for members and staff, and to facilitate greater public engagement with the democratic process. In 2018, the Service made a significant financial investment in new technology under its Digital Transformation Programme. It implemented a new email system for members and staff, and completed a substantial upgrade of its Wi-Fi infrastructure. These technical changes reflect the greater demand for fast, accessible, and secure IT services, and the increasing reliance by members and staff on mobile devices to carry out their work efficiently. In addition, the Service released four new procedural applications and upgraded the technology in the Chambers. There are now simultaneous interpretation facilities in all Committee Rooms which will enable greater use of Irish during Committee proceedings. Our new [website](#) also went live which will facilitate greater engagement, access

to information, and transparency and openness in relation to the business of the Houses.

We are confident that the changes which have been implemented under the Digital Transformation Programme will improve the delivery of our services and strengthen the capacity for public engagement in the years ahead.

A notable challenge for the Service in 2018 was the high level of staff turnover, a common issue across the civil and public service generally. Significant effort was needed to maintain staffing levels at current numbers and to attract new staff to the organisation. It was only towards the end of the 2016-2018 strategy period that staff numbers came close to sanctioned numbers. The continued induction of our new employees to bring them up to speed with the rest of the staff and to make them feel, and be part of, the Service was an area of particular attention during 2018. A number of initiatives also took place under the Service's Organisational Development Initiative (ODI). These included Knowledge Sharing, Learning and Information sessions, and Health and Well-Being seminars and activities. Leadership and Management Development under the initiative included a new Mentoring Scheme that will continue into 2019. The Oireachtas Social Club was also relaunched, and staff organised and participated in a successful Volunteering Day where staff gave up a day of their leave to work on a community project.

One of the most positive developments in 2018 was the launch of a programme for young people with intellectual disabilities – the Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) Programme. The programme which is run in conjunction with the disabilities support organisations WALK and KARE provides its participants with the opportunity to develop their work and social skills in a supportive environment. We were very pleased and privileged to welcome ten young adults to the Oireachtas in September 2018. They are important members of our parliamentary community and greatly enrich our organisation.

In conclusion, 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 and throughout the three-year strategy period 2016-2018.

I would also like to acknowledge and sincerely thank our staff for their contribution and dedication over the past year. We take great pride in working in our national parliament and we look forward to contributing to its development in 2019 as we commemorate the centenary of the first sitting of Dáil Éireann.



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 was established in 2004 as an independent statutory body under the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Act 2003. It is accountable to the Houses of the Oireachtas for the performance of its functions.

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.

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.

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 511 Civil Servants of the State and 52 State Industrial staff (Full Time Equivalent) whose terms and conditions of employment are set down in the General Civil Service Statutory Code, the Staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Act 1959 and the Commission Acts 2003 to 2018.

There are 537 political staff (450 Full Time Equivalent) 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 of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service

The Secretary General has responsibility for managing the Service on a day-to-day basis and for implementing Commission policies. The Secretary General is also the Chief Executive and a member of the Commission, the Clerk of Dáil Éireann, and the Accounting Officer in respect of Commission expenditure.

Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission



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

The Management Board

The Secretary General is assisted in the overall management of the Service by the Management Board.

The current top level management structure consists of the Secretary General and four Assistant Secretaries reporting to the Secretary General. This year there were changes to the Governance Framework for the Service arising from a review of the operation of the Management Committee as a result of changes to the organisational structure to support implementation of a programme of parliamentary reform. The review led to the establishment of the Management Board to replace the Service's Management Committee. The subsequent enactment of the Houses of the Oireachtas (Amendment) Act 2018 provides the legislative underpinning for the changes in the Service's organisational structure.

The Management Board comprises the Secretary General (chair of the Board), the four Assistant Secretaries, the Clerk of Seanad Éireann, the chair of the Principal Officer Network, and one external member of the Board appointed by the Secretary General. The Board has overall responsibility for implementation of the strategic plan for the Service. It oversees and accounts for the performance of the Service through collective leadership. It also decides on issues of strategic, operational, and financial importance which may then be referred to the Commission for decision as appropriate.

The Management Board has established four strategic committees, each chaired by a board member, to support it in carrying out its functions: Committee on Governance, Performance and Accountability; Committee on Facilities and Engagement; Committee on People and Organisation, and Committee on Technology and Digital Transformation.

Management Board of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service



Sitting left to right: Martin Groves, Clerk of Seanad Éireann; Elaine Gunn, Assistant Secretary, Parliamentary Services Division and Clerk-Assistant of Dáil Éireann; Annette Connolly, Assistant Secretary, Director of the Parliamentary Budget Office; Peter Finnegan (Chairperson), Clerk of Dáil Éireann and Secretary General; Michael Errity, Assistant Secretary, Corporate and Members' Services; Mellissa English, Assistant Secretary, Chief Parliamentary Legal Adviser; Joe Hamill, External Member; Derek Dignam, Principle Officer, Chair of the Principal Officer Network.

The work of the Management Board and its committees is driven to a large extent by the policies adopted by the Commission, as well as by the strategies and priorities set out in the Strategic and Corporate Business Plans for the Service. Members of the Management Board and other senior managers of the Service attend Commission meetings as required.

The Role of the Commission

The role of the Commission under the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2018* 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 €422.3 million for the period 2019 to 2021.

Membership of the Commission

The Commission consists of 11 members:

- 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 they are 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
- make fiscal and economic information, analysis and advice available to the Houses of the Oireachtas and Oireachtas Committees
- 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 Dáil Éireann 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
- appoint the Clerk of Seanad Éireann, Clerk-Assistant of Dáil Éireann and Clerk-Assistant of Seanad Éireann 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
- 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 Board.

Transparency and Accountability

The Commission is accountable to the Houses of the Oireachtas in the performance of its functions. It publishes an annual report 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 that 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 appropriate. 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 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 2018 can be found at Appendix III. The Commission may also establish sub-Committees as necessary to assist it in carrying out its responsibilities.

Table 1: Current Membership of the Commission

Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl, Ceann Comhairle	Chairperson <i>Ex officio</i> member
Senator Denis O'Donovan, Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann	Deputy Chairperson <i>Ex officio</i> member
Mr Peter Finnegan, Secretary General of the Service	Chief Executive <i>Ex officio</i> member
Deputy Martin Heydon	Minister's 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 2018

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 strategic 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. Attendance at meetings in 2018 is set out in Appendix VIII of this report.

The Commission held 12 meetings, including two incorporeal meetings, in 2018. The Commission dealt with a number of financial, strategy, policy and other matters falling within the scope of its functions during the year included 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 2017
- Commission's Statement of Estimates for 2019
- Commission Budget 2019-2021

Strategy

- Programme of essential structural and upgrade works for Georgian Leinster House including the accommodation plan for the duration of the works
- ICT Strategy Implementation for the Houses
- EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR): Implementation Strategy for the Houses
- Irish Sign Language Act 2017: Implementation Strategy for the Houses 2019-2021

Policy and Services

- Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members
- Provision of additional resources to political groups represented on the Joint Committee on Climate Action
- Child Safeguarding Statement for the Houses of the Oireachtas
- Guidelines for members of the Houses on allowable expenditure under the Public Representation Allowance (PRA)
- Parliamentary Budget Office – Appointment of External Panel
- Internship Programme in the Houses of the Oireachtas
- Houses of the Oireachtas Language Scheme
- Dignity and Respect Statement of Principles and Policy for the Parliamentary Workplace
- Provision of support for members who wish to take leave of absence in the case of child birth or adoption

- Service Level Agreement governing the use of the Printing Facility
- Independent review of the provision of services to Oireachtas office holders
- Houses of the Oireachtas Guided Tours Service
- Guidelines on the use of services and facilities provided out of public funds during a presidential election campaign

Annual Reporting

- Commission's Annual Report 2017 to the Houses of the Oireachtas
- Audit Committee Annual Report 2017 in accordance with section 14A(10)(c) of the Commission Acts
- Secretary General's 2017 Annual Report to the Commission on implementation of the Strategic Plan

Human Resource Strategy for the Service

- Appointment of Chief Parliamentary Legal Adviser, in accordance with the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2018*
- General Scheme of the Civil Service Regulation (Amendment) Bill 2018

Legal

- Legal proceedings involving the Houses of the Oireachtas
- Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Bill 2018

Membership of sub-Groups of the Commission

- Appointment of member to serve on the *Printing Users' Council* and the *Working Group on the Commemorative Programme for the Centenary of the First Dáil* to fill the vacancies arising in the membership of these sub groups

Annual Report on 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 2018

Table 2: Key Parliamentary Activities

	2018	2017	2016
Sittings of the Houses			
Dáil sitting days	106	104	91
Seanad sitting days	98	86	62
Dáil sitting hours	989	923	772
Seanad sitting hours	615	506	349
Meetings of Parliamentary Committees			
Committee meetings	626	665	324
Committee sitting hours	1,407	1,498	729
Committee witnesses	2,223	2,179	990
Reports presented by Committees	75	80	31
The Legislative Process			
Bills initiated in both Houses	142	156	121
<i>Government Bills</i>	48	33	36
<i>Private Members' Bills</i>	94	123	85
Bills initiated in the Dáil	105	123	88
<i>Government Bills</i>	31	27	24
<i>Private Members' Bills</i>	74	96	64
Bills initiated in the Seanad	37	33	33
<i>Government Bills</i>	17	6	12
<i>Private Members' Bills</i>	20	27	21
Bills passed by both Houses	44	41	22
<i>Government Bills</i>	39	37	22
<i>Private Members' Bills</i>	5	4	0
Amendments proposed to Bills	3,622	3,166	1,684
Parliamentary Questions			
PQs Processed	58,727	58,820	44,942
<i>Questions for Written Answer</i>	47,673	48,641	28,963
<i>Questions for Oral Answer</i>	2,008	1,958	1,071
Official Debate			
Hours of parliamentary debate	3,011	2,927	1,850
Divisions recorded (votes in the Houses)			
Dáil Divisions	198	194	147
Seanad Divisions	193	94	78
Staff of the Service at Year End (FTEs)	511	495	449
Members' Staff at Year End (FTEs)	450	448	439
Net Expenditure (€000)			
	131,581	110,194	113,557
Net Expenditure (€000) 2016-2018	355,332		

Staff of the Service at Year End (FTEs) refers to civil service staff only (numbers are rounded).

Houses and Committee Business

In 2018, the Houses sat for a combined total of 204 sitting days (1,604 sitting hours). The Dáil sat on 106 days and the Seanad sat on 98 days. The Parliamentary Committees held 626 meetings over 1,407 sitting hours and heard from 2,223 witnesses over this time, including key stakeholders and independent experts across a range of public policy areas. The Committees presented 75 reports, setting out findings and recommendations in their respective policy areas, to the Houses.

Figure 1: Sitzings Days and Hours of the Houses in 2018

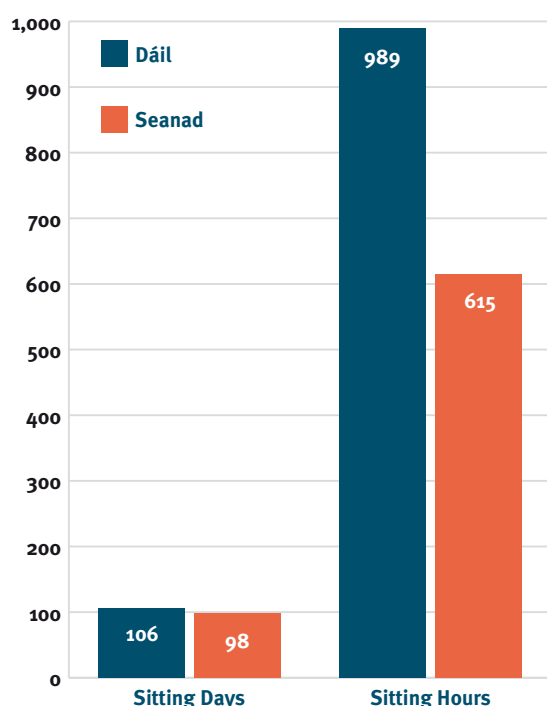
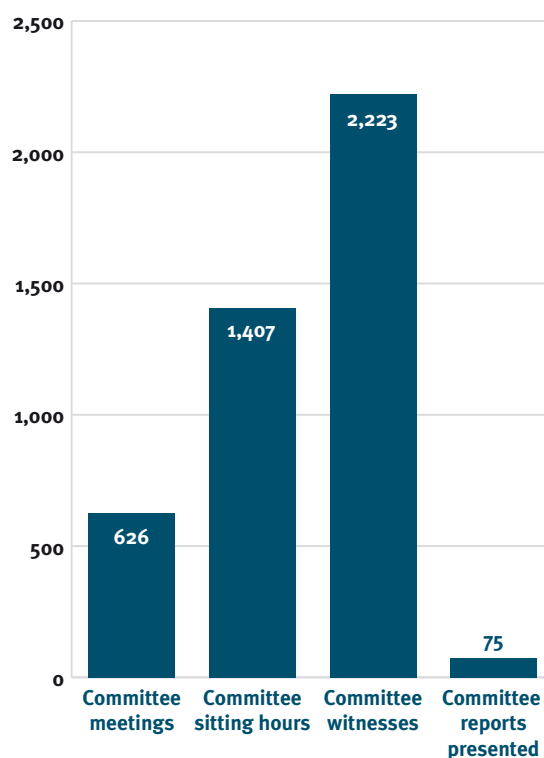


Figure 2: Meetings of Parliamentary Committees in 2018

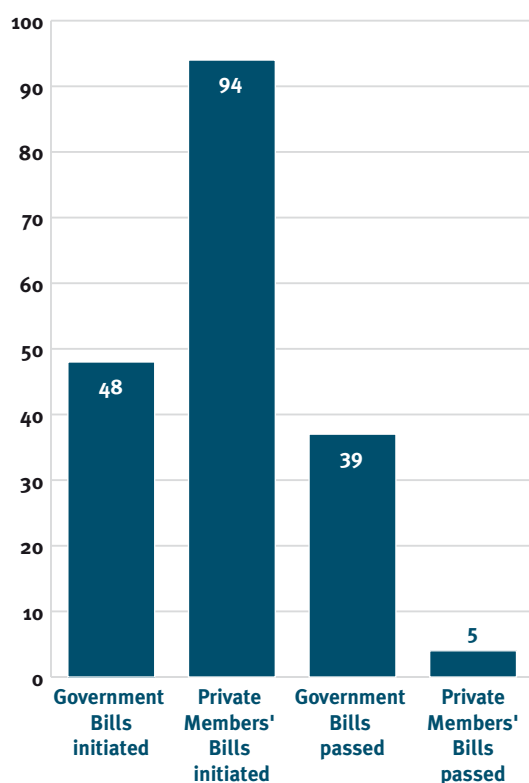


Support for the Legislative Process

In 2018, there were 142 Bills initiated in the Houses, of which 48 were Government Bills and 94 were Private Members' Bills (PMBs). There were 44 Bills passed, of which 39 (89%) were Government Bills and five (11%) were PMBs. There were 3,622 amendments tabled to Bills at amending stages as they progressed through the legislative process.

Between 2014 and 2018, the number of PMBs increased from 72 to 94, an increase of 31%. PMBs constitute the majority of Bills initiated in the Houses in recent years, representing 66% of all Bills in 2018. The increase in Private Members' Bills can be partly 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. This reform was recommended by the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform. The Dáil Standing Orders were changed on 9 June 2016 to give effect to this reform.

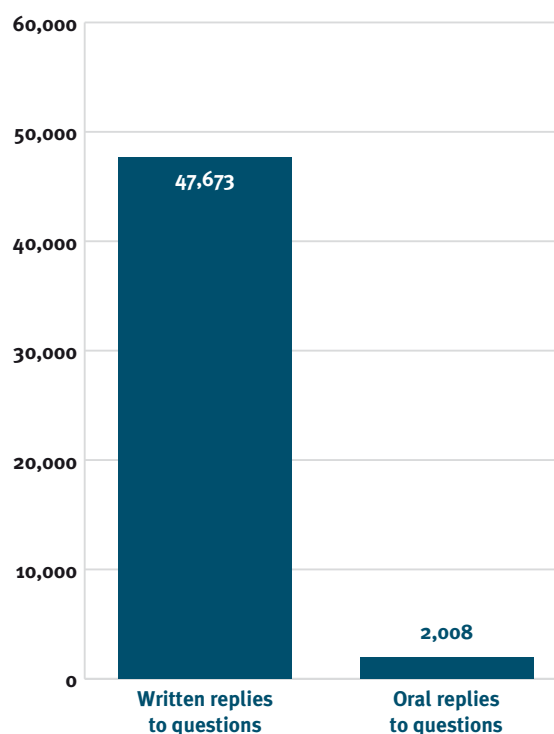
Figure 3: Bills Initiated and Bills Passed in the Houses in 2018



Parliamentary Questions

In 2018, there were 58,727 Parliamentary Questions (PQs) processed, there were 47,673 written replies to questions and 2,008 oral replies to questions; this is similar to PQs processed (58,820) in 2017.

Figure 4: PQs Addressed to Members of the Government in 2018



Employee Numbers

At the end of December 2018, there were 511 civil service staff in the Houses of the Oireachtas Service. In 2018, the focus of the HR Unit was to ensure that appropriate staffing levels, within sanctioned numbers, were available to support the core business of the Houses.

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 2003-2018 (the Commission Acts), which require me, as Secretary General, to present a progress report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan annually to the Commission.

The current Strategic Plan 2016-2018 – A Parliament for the People was delivered against a background of the need to implement the recommendations contained in the Report of the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform; the expansion of the Committees system; the need to increase public accessibility and engagement with the Houses of the Oireachtas; the need to invest in updating our key ICT processes and systems, and strengthening our ICT expertise; the structural and restoration work programme for the Georgian Leinster House building; and the implementation of relevant public service and civil service reform initiatives, while maintaining the key support services for the Houses of the Oireachtas and their members.

In 2018, the Service made significant progress in achieving the 12 goals as set out under the four key strategies of its Strategic Plan 2016-2018.

Four Key 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 for 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

Strategy 1: Support the Houses and the Parliamentary Reform Agenda

Outcome: Office Holders¹, 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 for members' and staff accommodation

Our Key Activities and Achievements 2018

H.E. Mr Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, addressed a joint sitting of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann on 21 June 2018.

Dáil Éireann sat for 106 days (989 hours) and Seanad Éireann sat for 98 days (615 hours).

The Dáil Business Committee met 41 times.

Some 25 Parliamentary Committees and bodies were supported by the Committees' Secretariat; 626 committee meetings were held, with 2,223 witnesses contributing to the proceedings.

75 committee reports were published.

The British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly met in Sligo on 11 June 2018 and in London in October 2018, where discussions on the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union was the dominant theme in the proceedings.

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

The Special Joint Committee on the Future of Mental Health Care presented its final report to the Houses in October 2018.

The Special Joint Committee on Climate Action was established in July 2018 to consider the third report and recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly: *How the State Can Make Ireland a Leader in Tackling Climate Change*. The Committee presented its report: *Climate Change: A Cross-Party Consensus for Action*, to the Houses in March 2019.

142 Bills were initiated in the Houses – 48 Government Bills (34%) and 94 Private Members' Bills (66%).

44 Bills were passed by the Houses, five of which were PMBs (11%).

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in relation to private members' Bills (PMBs) was agreed between the Government and the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform and was adopted by the Dáil in December 2018.

58,727 Parliamentary Questions (PQs) were processed.

Some 38,243 pages of Official Report were reported and published by the Debates Office, comprising 13,754 pages of Dáil Debates, 6,989 pages of Seanad Debates and 17,500 pages of Committee Debates.

24,715 pages of Written PQs were reported and published by the Debates Office.

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

¹ Office Holders include the Ceann Comhairle and the Leas-Cheann Comhairle of Dáil Éireann, and the Cathaoirleach and the Leas-Chathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann.

Strategy 1: Support the Houses and the Parliamentary Reform Agenda

Outcome: Office Holders¹, Chairpersons, and members receive high quality advice and support services

Our Goals

Our Key Activities and Achievements 2018

Rannóg an Aistriúcháin initiated a new service during 2018 comprising of 'Bills Glossaries' of terms from each new Government Bill. 32 Bills Glossaries were provided in 2018.

38 *Bills Digests* and 12 *Notes* and *Spotlights* were produced by the Library & Research Service (L&RS).

2,076 documents were laid before the Houses.

198 Divisions (formal count of member's votes) were held in the Dáil.

193 Divisions were held in the Seanad, up 105% on 2017.

1,870 Topical Issues were tabled for debate in the Dáil with 372 selected for debate.

565 Commencement Debates were tabled for debate in the Seanad – four are selected for debate each sitting day.

The Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) was established on a statutory basis under the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2018* with effect from 1 January 2019.

62 briefings, commentary, and analysis publications were produced by the PBO, including its Budget 2019 report.

The Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers (OPLA) was established on a statutory basis under the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2018* with effect from 1 January 2019. The Parliamentary Drafting Service in the OPLA was fully resourced during 2018 and 14 PMB proposals were assigned to the PMB drafting service.

336 legal advices were provided by the OPLA.

The drive to deliver a Digital Parliament that supports an open, accessible, and efficient Parliament, progressed during 2018, and the following initiatives were advanced:

- a new back-up sound system was installed in the Chambers;
- new Parliamentary Procedural Systems (Bills Administration, Committee Schedules and Submissions Applications) were developed and released; and
- SDL Trados Translation application was implemented.

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 Activities and Achievements 2018

The Commission adopted a *Dignity and Respect Statement of Principles and Policy* for members, members' staff, and staff of the Service. The Policy was formally launched in March 2019.

The Service put processes in place to support members in complying with data processing obligations under the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that came into effect in May 2018.

The Digital Transformation Programme introduced new digital services to support the work of the Houses and members, including:

- upgraded Wi-Fi installed across Oireachtas buildings;
- Microsoft Outlook to replace Lotus Notes email; and
- the introduction of a new ICT Call Management System.

10,398 ICT service desk calls from members and their staff were supported.

Approximately 83% of members used the L&RS information or research briefings service

1587 information queries and 181 research briefings for individual members or their staff were completed by the L&RS

181 research briefings, 298 blog posts and four Research Matters Quarterly (a new publication that commenced in 2018) were produced by the L&RS.

3,203 print orders were completed by the Print Facility.

49 Interparliamentary fora were attended by outgoing official parliamentary delegations.

60 Parliamentary Committee delegations undertook official travel.

The Interparliamentary and Travel Service Unit made travel plans for official visits undertaken by 220 members and 224 staff.

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 Activities and Achievements 2018

The Houses organised a programme of cultural, historical, and educational events to commemorate and highlight 100 years of women's suffrage in Ireland – Vótáil 100.

The new [Oireachtas website](#) was launched in May 2018. There were over 1.5 million visits to the website in 2018.

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

The Houses achieved greater public engagement through the use of Oireachtas social media accounts and livestreaming parliamentary debates. There were in excess of 1.9 million views of livestreams of parliamentary debate.

There were 5,138 Facebook followers and 29,284 Twitter followers in 2018.

A Working Group on Irish Sign Language (ISL), established following the enactment of the *Irish Sign Language Act 2017*, presented its report including recommendations: *Irish Sign Language (ISL) Strategy 2019-2021*. The Commission adopted the report and recommendations of the Working Group for implementation. The Irish Sign Language Strategy for the Houses was launched in January 2019.

An Irish Language Strategy was published with the aim of cultivating a positive, welcoming atmosphere for the use of Irish in the Houses.

A new Language Scheme 2018-2021 was approved in accordance with section 11 of the *Official Languages Act 2003*.

The Houses of the Oireachtas became the first Parliament to establish a programme for people with intellectual disabilities – the Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) Programme.

Restoration works to the 270-year-old Georgian Leinster House continued.

99,197 people visited Leinster House on tours, school visits, and on parliamentary business.

A Parliamentary Education Programme commenced in 2018 with the introduction of two new programmes designed to support students and teachers of Politics and Society. In October, the Civic, Social, and Political Education (CSPE) Teachers' Annual Conference was held in Leinster House and included guest lectures and workshops throughout the campus.

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 Activities and Achievements 2018

450 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff were employed by members.

563 FTE staff were employed by the Commission.

Seven internal promotion competitions and eleven external competitions/secondment processes were managed. 63 staff joined the Service and 52 staff departed.

Two Independent Capacity Reviews were conducted in two key areas – the Debates Office and Rannóg an Aistriúcháin.

Pensions were payable to 202 former political staff and 417 former members at the end of 2018.

6,391 invoices were processed for goods and services.

Training and learning interventions were delivered, including technical, professional and personal and leadership development training. 36% of courses were delivered through the One Learning Initiative (Civil Service Shared Training Service) in 2018.

The results of the 2017 Civil Service Staff Engagement Survey for the Oireachtas Service were published and showed an employee engagement level of 73%, up from 71% on 2015, and the commitment to the organisation score was 59%, up from 52% in 2015. A well-being score of 76% was achieved and a competence of staff in their roles score was 82%.

A number of internal communications initiatives were developed, including a Health and Well-Being Programme and an Organisation Development Initiative (ODI) consisting of information seminars and Knowledge Sharing sessions.

In fulfilling its governance responsibilities with respect to governance and oversight of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service, the Commission held 12 meetings in 2018.

The Commission presented its Annual Report for 2017, including its audited annual accounts, to the Houses of the Oireachtas in accordance with section 6(4) of the Commission Acts.

The Commission received a progress report from the Secretary General on implementation of the Strategic Plan for the Service in 2018 in accordance with section 16 of the Commission Acts.

The Commission presented an annual statement of estimates for 2018 to the Dáil for noting by way of motion in accordance with section 13 of the Commission Acts.

The Commission's Finance Committee monitored the financial performance of the Service and reported to the Commission on a quarterly basis. The Committee held five meetings in 2018.

The Audit Committee held four meetings in 2018. The Committee presented its Annual Report 2017 to the Commission in accordance with section 14A (10) of the Commission Acts.

Strategy 4: Develop our Capability and our Staff

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

Our Goals

Our Key Activities and Achievements 2018

The Management Committee was reconstituted as the Management Board of the Service, supported by four strategic committees, in June 2018. The Management Board held 16 meetings in 2018. The Board reviewed its governance and assurance arrangements. A new Risk Management Framework, including a new role of Chief Risk Officer, will be put in place in 2019.

A project was initiated under the Digital Transformation Programme to automate, simplify, and integrate the Service's corporate services.

8,215 ICT helpdesk calls from staff were supported.

A Legal Case Management System for the Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers (OPLA) was procured and will be implemented in 2019.

62 public procurement processes were supported during 2018.

Three efficiency reviews were carried out under the Service's Efficiency Review Programme.

STRATEGY 1: Support the Houses and the Parliamentary Reform Agenda

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

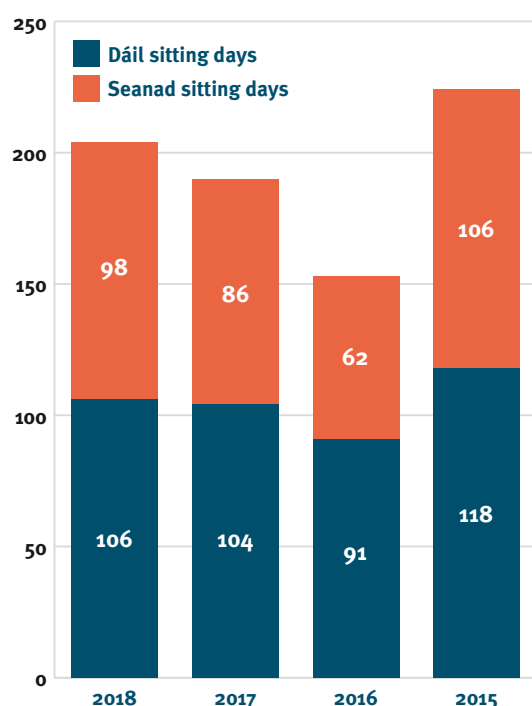
We have four strategic goals to achieve this outcome.

STRATEGY 1: GOAL 1

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

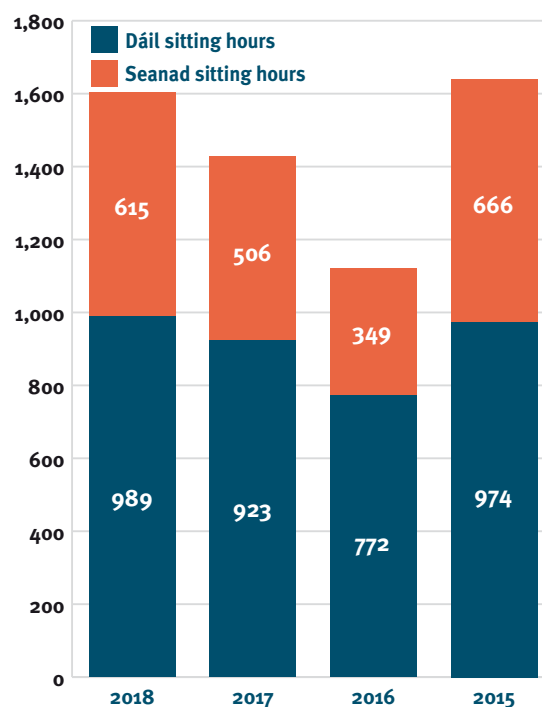
During 2018, the Houses of the Oireachtas Service (the Service) continued to maintain and enhance the advice and support services it provides to the Houses and their Committees.

Figure 5: Sitting Days of the Houses



The Service supported the Dáil on each of its 106 sitting days and the Seanad on each of its 98 sitting days. Following the advice of the National Emergency Coordination Committee (NECG) and the closure of Government Departments due to a severe weather warning, the Ceann Comhairle following consultation with the Business Committee, together with the Cathaoirleach, made the decision to close the Houses on 1 March 2018.

Figure 6: Sitting Hours of the Houses



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



H.E. Mr Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, addressed a joint sitting of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann on 21 June 2018 as part of a two-day visit to Ireland. He was accompanied on his visit by Mr Phil Hogan, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, and Mr Michel Barnier, EU Chief Negotiator for Brexit.

The **House Services business units** support the sittings and business of Dáil Éireann and its Office Holders by providing procedural advice and assistance in preparing for, and presiding over, sittings of the House. Procedural notes are prepared for each sitting, and briefings are provided to the Chairs and temporary Chairs in advance of duty in the Dáil Chamber.

The **Bills Office** supports the legislative process in both Houses and in Dáil Select Committees, and manages the process from Bill publication to the transmission of a certified vellum copy of every Bill passed by both Houses to the President for his signature.

In 2018, the Houses passed 39 Government Bills. Of the 142 Bills initiated in the Houses during 2018, two-thirds were Private Members' Bills (PMBs). Five Bills passed by the Houses were PMBs. **Appendix 4** lists all Bills initiated in the Houses and **Appendix 5** lists Bills passed.

The Bills Office examines the text of all Bills and amendments in accordance with Standing Orders and supports the Chairs and Clerks of both Houses in decisions on admissibility. All PMBs are examined prior to publication, and all Bills are examined for financial implications (and requirement for a Money Message²) prior to proceeding to Dáil Committee Stage. The Bills Office also examines all Committee and Report Stage amendments for compliance with Standing Orders. The Chairs of both Houses and Committee Chairs are individually briefed, as required, in relation to Bills or amendments ruled out of order.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in relation to private members' Bills (PMBs) was agreed between the Government and the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform and was adopted by the Dáil in December 2018³.

In order to improve the quality of private members' legislation, additional supports were provided to assist backbench members in drafting legislation.

The **Journal Office** provides a range of procedural support services to the Dáil. It produced 139 Order Papers, including Supplementary Order Papers, and recorded 198 Dáil divisions (votes in the House). The Journal Office also provides secretarial support to the Dáil Committee on Procedure, the Dáil Business Committee, and the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform.

² The requirement for Money Messages derives from Article 17.2 of the Constitution which provides that "Dáil Éireann shall not pass any vote or resolution, and no law shall be enacted, for the appropriation of revenue or other public moneys unless the purpose of the appropriation shall have been recommended to Dáil Éireann by a message from the Government signed by the Taoiseach".

³ [Report of the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform – Memorandum of Understanding Between the Government and Dáil Éireann on Private Members' Bills.](#)

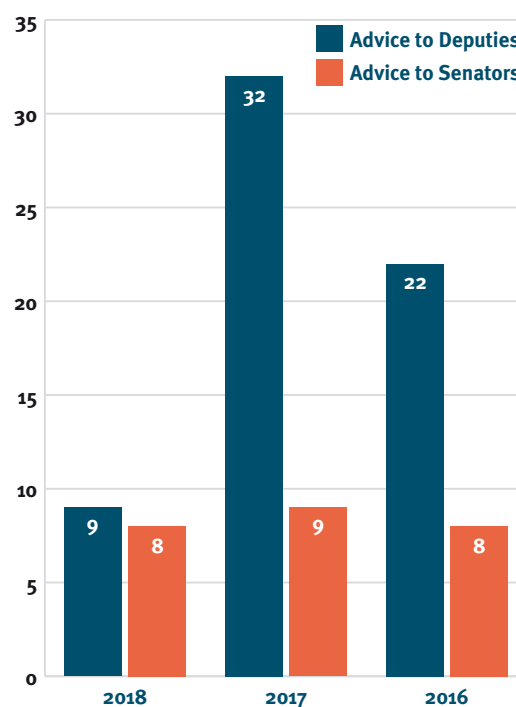
Goal 1: The sittings of the Houses and their Committees are continuously and effectively supported

Procedural notes were prepared for each sitting to guide the Chair through each item of business. Individual Chairs were briefed before they chaired proceedings in the House, and Committee Chairs were individually briefed, at their request, in relation to Bill amendments ruled Out of Order.

The **Questions Office** processed 58,727 Parliamentary Questions (PQs). Deputies availed of the opportunity provided under Dáil reform measures to submit written PQs for answer during the summer recess period. There were 4,565 questions submitted during the recess, an increase of 17.5% on same period in 2017.

The **Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers (OPLA)** has overall responsibility for the provision of a full range of legal advices relating to the running of the Houses, the Committees, and the Commission. The OPLA provided 336 legal advices in 2018. The resources of the OPLA were increased to provide in-house support to members in drafting PMBs. The Office provided advice and legislative drafting services to members in respect of 14 PMBS. It also managed 15 legal proceedings, some ongoing into 2019, including Supreme Court hearings on *Kerins v. McGuinness and Others* (as amended to *Kerins v. Dáil Éireann, Ireland and the Attorney General*), and *O'Brien v. Clerk of Dáil Éireann and Others*.

Figure 7: Legal Advice on Private Members' Bills



The **Seanad Office** supports the sittings and business of Seanad Éireann, its Committees, its Office Holders, and members by providing procedural advice and by assisting them in preparing for and presiding over sittings of the House. Of the 142 Bills initiated in the Houses in 2018, 37 Bills (26%) were initiated in the Seanad.

Table 3: Parliamentary Questions (PQs)	2018	2017	2016	2015
PQs Processed	58,727	58,820	44,942	52,910
Questions for Written Answer	47,673	48,641	28,963	38,655
Questions for Oral Answer	2,008	1,958	1,071	1,303

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



Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann, Senator Denis O'Donovan, Leas-Chathaoirleach, Paul Coghlan and members of the Seanad with Mícheál Ó Muircheartaigh on the occasion of his address to Seanad Éireann.

During 2018, the Seanad invited the following distinguished visitors to address the House:

- Mr Phil Hogan, European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development addressed the Seanad on 26 April 2018 on the withdrawal of the UK from the EU;
- Mr Mícheál Ó Muircheartaigh addressed Seanad Éireann on 21 March 2018 on the use of Irish in the community, in sport, the media, the arts, education, and in politics, to mark Bliain na Gaeilge; and
- Councillor Deirdre Hargey, Lord Mayor of Belfast, addressed Seanad Éireann on 8 November 2018 on the ways that Brexit may alter the daily lives of people who live in Northern Ireland and to explore how existing avenues of all-Ireland cooperation can continue.



The Seanad Office and the Journal Office also provided support to the Seanad Returning Officer (the Clerk of the Seanad) in the administration of two bye-elections, held on 27 April.



Seanad bye-election count underway on 27 April 2018.

The Seanad Office supported eight meetings of the Seanad Committee on Procedure and Privilege, and six meetings of the Seanad Committee of Selection.

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

The Seanad Public Consultation Committee held five meetings during the year. 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.



The Seanad Public Consultation Committee held public hearings on *Fostering and Sustaining the Irish Small and Medium-Sized Businesses Sector*. The Committee appointed Senator Pádraig Ó Céidigh as rapporteur for this phase of its work.

In 2018, the Committee presented a report on *The Status, Treatment and Use of the National Anthem* to the Houses. The Committee also launched a public consultation on the topic of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs). The Committee held public hearings on this topic in the Seanad Chamber on 13 November 2018. The Committee's report on this topic will be presented in early 2019.

The **Committees' Secretariat** teams of Clerks, Policy Advisers, and administrative staff continued to provide support to some 25 Parliamentary Committees and bodies. The Secretariat supported 626 committee meetings at which 2,223 witnesses contributed. During 2018, the Committees produced 75 reports, including 12 detailed scrutiny reports of PMBs.

Figure 8: Meetings of Seanad Committees

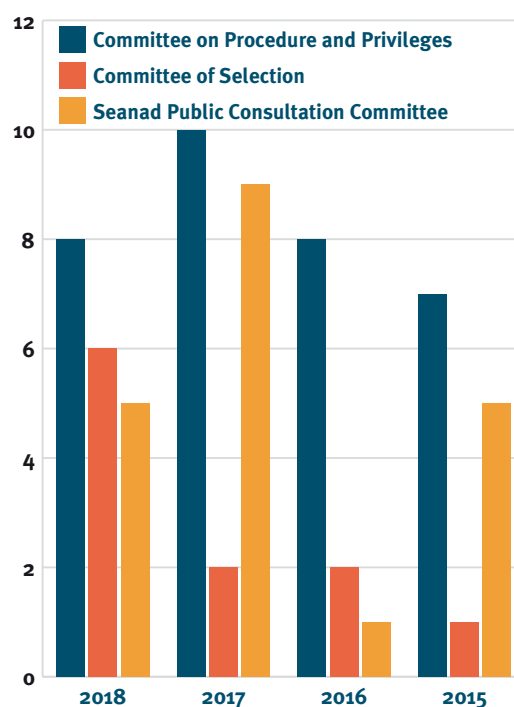
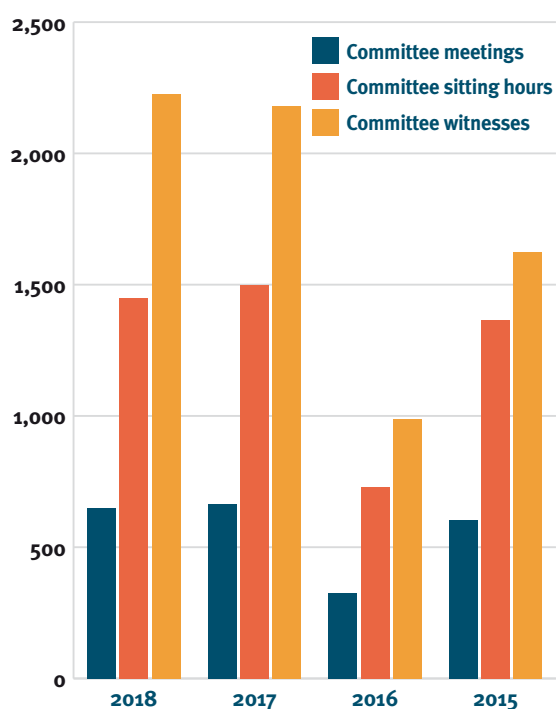


Figure 9: Parliamentary Committees



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

The Special Joint Committee on the Future of Mental Health Care, established in 2017, presented its final report to the Houses in October 2018.



Members of the Joint Committee on Climate Action on a visit to Cloughjordan Ecovillage in Co. Tipperary.

The Special Joint Committee on Climate Action was established on 3 July 2018 to consider the third report and recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly: *How the State Can Make Ireland a Leader in Tackling Climate Change*. This Committee presented its report, *Climate Change: A Cross-Party Consensus for Action*, to the Houses in March 2019. In 2018, the Commission approved the granting of additional staff resources to support members of the Joint Committee on Climate Action in undertaking their work on the Committee.



The Joint Committee on Employment Affairs and Social Protection, the Joint Committee on Education and Skills, and the Joint Committee on Health held three joint meetings for the purpose of considering the experiences of people with disabilities in accessing employment. The Committees presented their report *Review of Supports Available to People with Disabilities – Transitioning from Education or training into Employment* to both Houses in July 2018.

The Sectoral Committees continued to engage in EU matters, including the consideration of draft proposals for EU legislation. The work of Sectoral Committees in relation to EU matters is separately reported in the *Annual Report on the operation of the European Union (Scrutiny) Act 2002* published by the Joint Committee on European Union Affairs⁴. In 2018, the Sectoral Committees considered 451 proposals, 68 of which were deemed to require further scrutiny.

The **Debates Office** reported and published the proceedings of the Dáil, Seanad, and Joint and Select Committees in the floor language (Irish or English) within the set deadlines. In 2018, it reported 3,010 hours of Dáil, Seanad, and Committee debate. Together with Written Parliamentary Questions, this amounted to 62,958 pages of reported debates in total. It published these debates to the Oireachtas website in HTML, PDF and XML. It also reported the official proceedings of two meetings of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly.

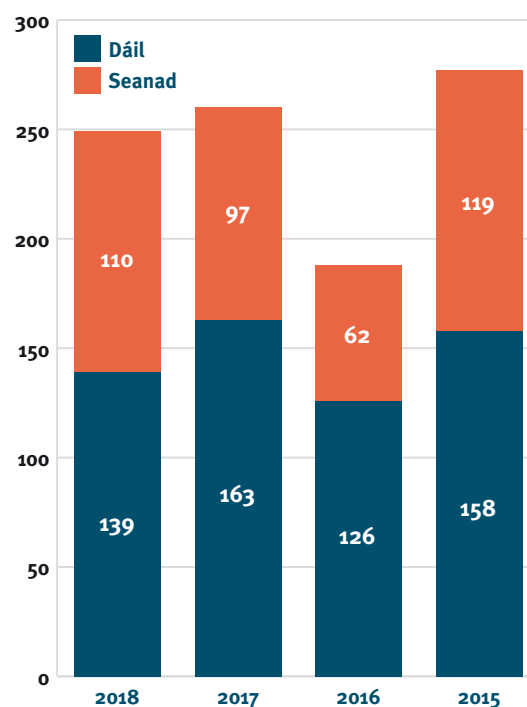
⁴ Joint Committee on European Union Affairs' *Annual Report on the operation of the European Union (Scrutiny) Act 2002*.

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

The Debates Office also managed the contract for operation and maintenance of the digital audio recording of the Dáil and Seanad Chambers, the Committee Rooms, and other venues including the AV Room. In 2018, the Debates Office held its first bilingual recruitment competition for Parliamentary Reporters with competence in Irish and English. It also held its annual continuing professional development (CPD) training day.

All proceedings of the Dáil, Seanad, and their Committees are conducted through the medium of Irish or English. **Rannóg an Aistriúcháin** (the Service's Translation Section) provided simultaneous translation services (Irish to English) during 989 hours of Dáil debate, 615 hours of Seanad debate, and to Committee meetings when requested. It also provided the official translation of material in respect of 249 Dáil and Seanad Order Papers. The Section also provides the official translations of the Acts of the Oireachtas, Long and Short Titles of Bills, and Statutory Instruments. Rannóg an Aistriúcháin introduced a new service during 2018 comprising of Bills Glossaries and now publishes terminology in Irish for new Bills for members, their staff, and for the media. This service is provided to facilitate debate on a Bill through the medium of Irish.

Figure 10: Bilingual Order Papers



The **Library & Research Service (L&RS)** delivered a range of services to support the sittings of the Houses. It provided legislative analysis services to all members, including publication of 38 Bills Digests and 38 Bill Trackers. There were 2,076 documents laid before the Houses and made available electronically to members and to the public.

Table 4: Translation Services	2018	2017	2016	2015
Simultaneous translation provided on sitting days for the parliamentary proceedings	106	107	93	122
Bilingual Order Papers produced ¹	249	260	188	277
<i>Dáil</i>	139	163	126	158
<i>Seanad</i>	110	97	62	119
Bilingual Titles of Bills ²	142	156	121	132
<i>Government Bills</i>	48	33	36	52
<i>Private Members' Bills</i>	94	123	85	80

¹ Includes supplementary Order Papers.

² Includes long and short titles of Bills formally initiated in the Houses.

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

The L&RS published a study of the impact of pre-legislative scrutiny on legislative and policy outcomes. The study was conducted by Dr Shane Martin, Professor of Government at University of Essex, and is available on the Oireachtas website.⁵

The Service, through its **Digital Transformation Programme**, is creating new and improved ways of working for the Houses and their Committees. One of the aims of the programme is a 'Digital Parliament' – an integrated Parliamentary Procedural System that will manage all the procedural work of the Houses for members, staff, and the public. This work will continue to be rolled out over the next number of years. During 2018, a Bills Administration application, a Committee Schedule application and a Submissions application were delivered. A Procedural Motions application is currently under development. Proof of concept on initial reporting from the new Parliamentary Procedural System was completed and the first version of the Bills Tracker Report was produced. An Irish translation application was developed and implemented for Rannóg an Aistriúcháin to enhance efficiency in the completion of translation work.

Chamber technology was also upgraded under the Digital Transformation Programme. The back-up sound system was replaced in the Dáil Chamber, and Committee Room One was upgraded with delegate units, microphones, a presentation system, and simultaneous interpretation facilities. All Committee Rooms now have simultaneous interpretation facilities. A new OPLA case management system was procured in 2018.

In March 2018, the Service commissioned an independent **review of satisfaction of Oireachtas Office Holders** with the support and services provided to them to carry out their parliamentary duties. The outcome of the data gathering process was a rich body of information, with positive and affirming feedback, and largely consistent views in areas such as: advice to relevant House Chairs on PQs; Commencement Matters and Topical Issues; procedural advice; access to legal advice; support functions such as the L&RS; and the organisation and reporting of Committee work. The review also identified areas where there was a divergence of opinion or reduced degrees of satisfaction and accordingly, where improvements are warranted.

Key findings of the review included the following:

- 77% of House Chairs were either satisfied or very satisfied with the timeliness of procedural advice received in the Chamber and with the accuracy of the procedural advice received;
- 92% of Committee Chairs said they were satisfied with the overall level of support available to their committees;
- 62% of Committee Chairs in the survey were either very satisfied or satisfied in respect of access to specialist policy advice.

An implementation plan to implement the recommendations arising from the review is in place.

⁵ The Impact of pre-Legislative Scrutiny on Legislative and Policy Outcomes

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, Chairs of Committees, and to members of the Houses is an essential function of the Service. The manner by which the Houses conduct debate is guided by the rules and precedents as set out in Standing Orders and in Salient Rulings of the Chair, and by the knowledge and experience of Office Holders and staff of the Service.

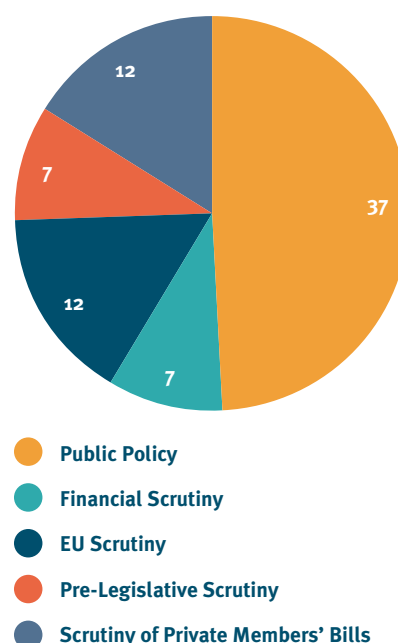
The Clerk and Clerk-Assistant of the Dáil, the Clerk and Clerk-Assistant of the Seanad, and the staff of the Journal Office, Seanad Office, Bills Office, and Questions Office provided support and advice to Office Holders, members, and their staff on the application of these rules and precedents. The review survey of Office Holders found that an 88% satisfaction level with the accuracy and quality of the procedural advice in the Chamber.



The Chairman, Alan Farrell TD, and members of the Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs at the launch of the Committee's report: Tackling Childhood Obesity.

The effectiveness of the Committees is strongly reliant on the quality of support they receive from the **Committees' Secretariat**. The Secretariat provided procedural training for Policy Advisers and Committee Clerks. The Oireachtas Office Holders Satisfaction Review (2018) recorded a strong degree of satisfaction amongst Committee Chairs, particularly in areas such as Committees' Work Programmes, the advice from the Clerk in the application of Standing Orders, and the organisation of meetings. The Review reported positive and affirming feedback and largely consistent views in the reporting of Committee work. The Review asked Committee Chairs if they were satisfied in respect of oral and written briefing provided to them in preparation for Committee meetings or receiving delegations. Seventy-seven per cent responded that the timeliness of briefings, and the quality and content of information provided, were good or excellent.

Figure 11: Committee Reports Presented in 2018

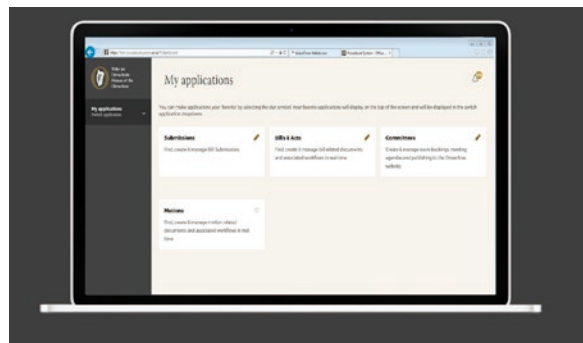


Goal 2: High quality procedural capacity in place across the service

It is acknowledged that Parliamentary procedural knowledge is complex. New members and their staff, newly appointed Office Holders, and new civil service staff are faced with the challenge of applying procedural rules and conventions. A strategic priority for the Service is the ongoing development and retention of procedural staff with experience and expert knowledge of parliamentary procedure, rulings and precedents who can advise members and their staff with confidence and accuracy.

The Dáil Chamber duty rota for Temporary Clerks was reviewed and updated with a view to training and mentoring newly assigned Temporary Clerks. Bills Office Clerks were also rostered for Dáil Chamber duty for Report Stages of Bills to link their operational knowledge with experience in the Chamber.

The Management Board requested the People and Organisation Strategic Committee to develop a Procedural Knowledge Strategy for its consideration. The Committee has conducted analysis and research, including a survey of other parliaments to inform the development of this strategy. This research was supplemented with a Training Needs Analysis Report and Training Plan completed during 2018 that contained specific recommendations concerning procedural knowledge. The Committee is due to report back to the Board in 2019.



New applications were delivered under the Parliamentary Procedural System.

A key aim of the **Digital Transformation Programme** is to harness the potential of new technologies to build capacity across the Service, including high quality procedural capacity. The procedural systems projects have been prioritised in the overall Digital Transformation Programme Delivery Plan. The new applications are delivered on a phased basis and will, in due course, form a fully integrated Digital Parliament System for the Dáil, Seanad, and Committees.

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

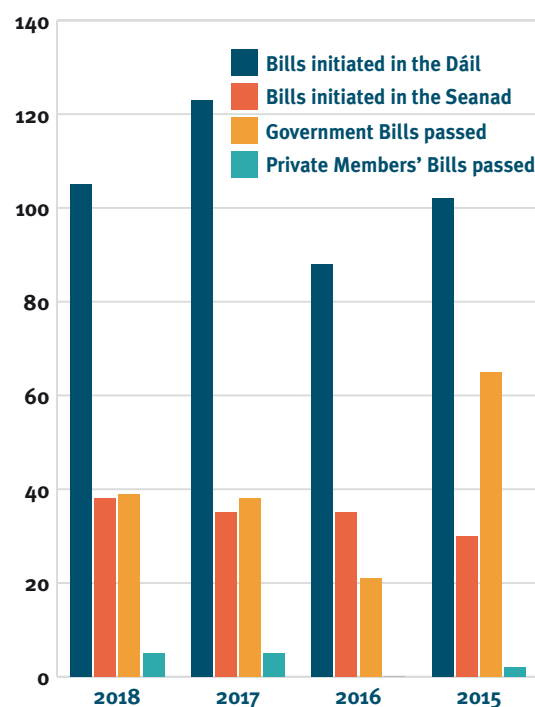
STRATEGY 1: GOAL 3

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

Supporting and implementing the Parliamentary Reform Agenda was a new element for the Service's Strategic Plan for 2016 to 2018 as was the challenge of facilitating members in conducting their business under the arrangements for the new minority government. During 2018, the Service continued to embed and consolidate the recommendations of the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform report that were adopted in 2016.

The **Dáil Business Committee**, comprising Government and Opposition Deputies, was further supported and developed during 2018. The Committee has given the Dáil a greater role in scheduling its business. The purpose of the Committee is to create greater transparency in relation to the legislative planning process and involving all members of the House in the process. The Committee met 41 times during the year and produced 109 reports on the business arrangements for Dáil sitting days.

Figure 12: Bills Initiated in Both Houses and Bills Passed



A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in relation to private members' Bills (PMBs) was agreed between the Government and the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform and was adopted by the Dáil in December 2018⁶. The purpose of the MoU is to set out:

- a comprehensive and transparent parliamentary scrutiny process for PMBs with the aim of enacting private members legislation which is fit for its intended purpose and which is legally sound; and
- a process for engagement by Government on requests for Money Messages in respect of PMBs with the aim of ensuring a response from Government within a reasonable time following the publication of a Committee Scrutiny Report.

⁶ Report of the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform – Memorandum of Understanding Between the Government and Dáil Éireann on Private Members' Bills.

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

Arising out of the MoU, Dáil Standing Orders were revised to codify a process for scrutiny of PMBs from a policy, financial and legal perspective by the relevant sectoral Committee. In turn, Government has undertaken, in general, to provide either a Money Message or a reasoned response to each committee scrutiny report within six weeks of receipt of the request for a Message. New tracking and reporting mechanisms were developed in relation to new outputs arising from the MoU, including reasoned responses from Government.

The increased role for the **Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers** to support backbench members to initiate their PMBs was further consolidated during 2018. There was a focus on recruitment, and training and development in relation to the legislative process in the Houses. The establishment of the OPLA on a statutory basis and the creation of the office of the Chief Parliamentary Legal Adviser under the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2018* further embedded this reform initiative. Fourteen PMB proposals were assigned to the new OPLA Legislative Drafting Service.

Following the implementation of the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform measures in the OPLA, there have been a number of changes in how the statistics for the office are measured. This is necessary in order to give a more accurate reflection of the varying work streams now in operation (i.e. Corporate and Parliamentary, PMB Advisory and PMB Drafting).

The impact of the increase in the number of PMBs in the current Dáil extends beyond core parliamentary procedural activities and creates new demands on support functions such as those services provided by the L&RS.

During 2018, the **Library & Research Service (L&RS)** prepared a Statement of Services to support the scrutiny of Private Members' Bills by the Houses and examined the resources required to deliver a full PMB research service. The L&RS decided to use the resources available to it for PMB research to focus on detailed scrutiny of PMBs for Committees.

Table 5: Legal and Legislative Services	2018	2017	2016	2015
Legal advices issued	336	543	517	420
<i>to the Service</i>	255	339	433	336
<i>to Parliamentary Committees</i>	81	204	84	84
Legal advice on Private Members' Bills ¹	42	56	33	–
<i>PMB Requests</i>	32	53	33	–
<i>Pre-Committee Stage Requests and Advice</i>	10	3	0	–
Private Members' Bills assigned to the legislative drafting service	14	24	15	4
<i>Sponsored by Deputies</i>	7	19	10	3
<i>Sponsored by Senators</i>	7	5	5	1

¹ 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.

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

The L&RS prepared 25 briefings for Committees' detailed scrutiny of PMBs and published two Bills Tracker pages for PMBs. Limited on-demand research for individual members for PMB development work was also provided from existing L&RS resources. To meet the current demand, and to futureproof the potential continued demand by Committees for PMB detailed scrutiny research support, the L&RS sought additional capacity and capability from an external contractor to augment the resources of the PMB team. This new service commenced in January 2019.

The **Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO)**, which is an independent specialist unit within the Service, supported the members of the Oireachtas by providing fiscal and economic analysis for the purposes of promoting greater budget scrutiny, transparency, and accountability. The need for the Office was identified by the OECD in its review of budgetary oversight by the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The PBO is a key source of financial and budgetary intelligence for members and, in particular, for the Committee on Budgetary Oversight in its ex ante scrutiny of all budgetary matters. The PBO was put on a statutory basis with effect from 1 January 2019 following the signing of the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2018* in December 2018. The function of the PBO, as set out in the Act, is to provide the Houses and their Committees with fiscal and economic information, analysis, and advice that is independent and impartial relating to:

- the particular macroeconomic conditions in the State;
- developments affecting public finances;

- the management of public finances; and
- the financial implications of proposals affecting the public finances.

During 2018, the PBO produced 62 briefings, commentary, and analysis publications, including its *Budget 2019* report, which assisted members of the Houses in identifying the key points arising from the Budget 2019. This was in addition to the PBO's preliminary review of the Budget which was produced on Budget night. Speeches made by members during the Budget 2019 debate acknowledged the contribution of the PBO in supporting members in the fulfilment of their constitutional function in fiscal matters, including budgetary proposals.

All PBO publications are made available on the [Oireachtas website](#) and a paper copy of the Quarterly Economic and Fiscal Commentary is provided to each member to ensure that they are kept abreast of developments on a regular basis.

The PBO provided consistent support focused especially on assisting the Committee on Budgetary Oversight, appearing in private session on request and through regular written correspondence highlighting PBO publications and key emerging issues. Analysis was also provided to other Committees with regard to budgetary implications related to a range of issues including the European Semester, the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), and climate policy. A range of publications were also provided along with support to the Committees' Secretariat in relation to analysis of the Estimates of Voted Expenditure.

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

Table 6: Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO)¹

	2018	Aug.– Dec. 2017
Publications	62	11
Commentaries	5	3
Briefing Papers	16	3
Notes	28	3
Infographics	6	1
Other	7	1
Briefings to the Committee on Budgetary Oversight	7	3
Presentations at external Events (Speakers)	5	4

¹ The PBO was established in August 2017 and was formally established on a statutory basis under the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2018.



The Parliamentary Budget Office was awarded a Highly Commended award by the Foundation for Fiscal Studies.

The PBO received a Highly Commended award decided by the Foundation for Fiscal Studies in October 2018. The awards are given for original work in Irish fiscal policy. Members of the PBO were also invited to chair or present at external budgetary and economic events, both domestically and internationally.

The establishment of an External Advisory Group (EAG) to the PBO was agreed by the Commission in April 2018 and its first meeting took place on 25 June 2018. The EAG’s expertise is wide-ranging, valuable, and highly regarded by peers and commentators drawing as it does from both academia and the private sector. The EAG assist the PBO in providing members with independent, non-partisan, and authoritative fiscal and economic analysis.

In carrying out its role, the PBO helps to strengthen parliamentary oversight of the management of the economy and the public finances, with the aim of ensuring that increases in public expenditure are sustainable and are predicted on stable tax revenues.

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 for members' and staff accommodation



The **Office of Public Works (OPW)** continued its programme of structural and conservation works to the original Leinster House building to protect it and to ensure that it can continue to serve as home to the Houses of the Oireachtas for the foreseeable future. A Steering Group chaired at Assistant Secretary level reports monthly to the Commission on the project's progress.

Given the importance of the parliamentary work that is conducted in Leinster House, the works have been scheduled to minimise disruption to the sittings of the Houses, and to members, staff and the public. The Seanad continued to meet during the year in its relocated temporary chamber in the National Museum of Ireland building. The contract completion of the building works is scheduled for 2019 and the 'fit out' works will then commence on a phased basis.

A particular challenge for the **Facilities Management Unit (FMU)** was to find suitable accommodation for members and Service staff. The FMU also continued to provide a clean, safe, and appropriate environment to support members and staff, and for the visitors to the Houses. The Service implemented its health and safety management plan. The Service's Health and Safety Committee met five times in 2018.

The **Oireachtas Ushers Service** continued to implement the enhanced security measures installed to ensure the safety of members and their staff, staff of the Oireachtas, and all visitors to Leinster House. In addition, the teams of Ushers carry out chamber, protocol, and official events duties, and welcome and manage groups of visitors.

Support teams, including the **Oireachtas Service Officers, Telephonists, Parliamentary Porters, and Cleaners**, all facilitated the smooth running of the Houses and the essential services provided to members and staff to enable them to carry out their work efficiently and safely.

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

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 focus within the catering services area during 2018 on providing and encouraging a more sustainable, green, compostable initiative for consumables (cups, bowls, and straws) which will continue and expand further. The Members' Restaurant hosted a special evening on 4 July that showcased the produce of Irish food producers. Further comprehensive tendering exercises were undertaken during the year to ensure continued implementation of the ongoing roll-out of a procurement strategy for the catering area that will further enhance the overall catering governance, and embed purchasing management best practices across a wide range of food produce, beverages, equipment, and utensils. The new credit arrangements approved by the Commission for users of the catering facilities were also introduced and implemented during the year.

Energy management in the Houses of the Oireachtas is structured around three pillars: people behavioural change; managing buildings; and technology aligned with the Sustainability Energy Authority of Ireland's (SEAI's) *Public Sector Energy Efficiency Reform Strategy*. The Houses of the Oireachtas Service participates in the OPW's Optimising Power at Work scheme, and the FMU works closely with the OPW to implement methods to reduce energy usage and improve data collection.

The Service reports to the SEAI annually on consumption and activity. The SEAI reports annually on Energy Performance Indicators and progress towards the public service organisation target to achieve a 33% energy efficiency improvement by 2020. The SEAI Public Sector website, and Annual

Report 2018 on the Public Sector, reports that the Houses of the Oireachtas Service has achieved a 25.5% Score Card energy efficiency improvement from 2009 to the end of 2017, up from 21% in 2016, i.e. 2017 is more efficient than the baseline and on track for meeting the 2020 target. This improvement rate is above the average for public bodies.

In 2018, the Houses of the Oireachtas undertook a number of initiatives to continue to improve energy performance including:

- out of hours energy inspections to identify areas where energy savings can be made;
- optimisation and alignment of heating and ventilation times to reflect the opening hours of Leinster House;
- wood chip boilers were fully recommissioned providing approximately 14% of the heating requirements of the Leinster House complex. This is a renewable source of energy;
- monthly energy monitoring and reporting and regular energy team meetings;
- an Energy Pledge day that was held in September 2018; and
- an upgrade of lighting systems in parts of the Leinster House complex.

Energy management actions will continue to focus on the installation of more energy efficient lighting and out of hours energy inspections. Staff engagement in information and training events to raise awareness of energy efficiency will also continue. In addition to this, an energy audit of the Leinster House complex is to be completed in 2019, and arising from this, an improved energy action plan will be completed, agreed, and implemented.

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

The 158 members of Dáil Éireann and 60 members of Seanad Éireann were provided with a range of services to support their work. There were 537 political staff (450 Full Time Equivalent) employed by members and parties under the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance. There was a relatively high rate of turnover of political staff; 63 political staff departed and 85 political staff were appointed during 2018.

While members are the employers of these staff and have certain obligations as an employer, the Service's **HR Unit for Members** assists members with the effective operation of the *Scheme for Secretarial Assistance*. This includes the administration of payroll and conditions for staff employed under the Scheme, and training and other services as required. The Administrator/Group Co-ordinator Forum that

was formed in 2018 operates as a consultation group on issues such as the *Dignity and Respect Statement of Principles and Policy*, and the terms and conditions for members' staff employed under the Scheme.

HR also provides services for the administration of members' pensions under the Ciste Pinsean Scheme, and also administers the Single Public Sector Pension Scheme. Seminars on pensions were held for both members and their staff. Pensions were payable to 202 former political staff and 417 former members at the end of 2018.

The Workplace Support Programme, which was introduced in September 2017 to provide support services and information on health and well-being for members and their staff, had its first full year of operation in 2018. A key focus in 2018 was the development of a *Dignity and Respect Statement of Principles and Policy* for members and staff that was approved by the Commission and was launched in March 2019. The Principles set out common standards to ensure that all those working in the parliamentary community are treated with dignity and respect.

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

The Commission also approved a *Maternity and Adoptive Leave Policy* to support members who wish to take leave of absence in the case of childbirth or adoption of a child. An amendment was required by way of *Statutory Instrument 426 of 2018* to give legal effect to the Commission's decision to allocate an additional Secretarial Assistant, under the *Scheme for Secretarial Assistance*, to support a member for a period of maternity or adoptive leave.

Members' Services' **One Stop Shop (OSS)** provides members of the Houses with a single access point for information on the services and resources made available to them to support them in carrying out their parliamentary functions. It also provides information on the policies and guidelines governing the use of such resources. Members avail of the One Stop Shop as a source of information relating to any allowance and payment applicable to their position. The Service processes most of the allowances due to members and provides guidance and assistance to them on allowable expenses, salaries and related issues.



The Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD, launched the Irish Language Strategy for the Houses to mark Bliain na Gaeilge.

The **Oireachtas Print Facility**, which is available for the use of members and qualifying parties in connection with their parliamentary duties,

completed over 3,000 print orders during the year. The Commission approved a revised Service Level Agreement for the use of the Print Facility.

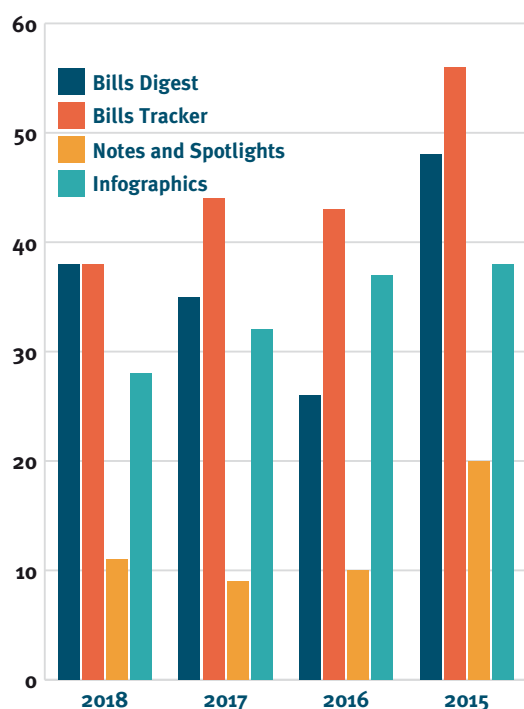
Rannóg an Aistriúcháin provides a Correspondence Translation Service to members in addition to the new Bills Glossaries service for members initiated during 2018 as part of *Straitéis na Gaeilge* that was launched by the Ceann Comhairle in March 2018.

The **Library & Research Service (L&RS)** provides information and research services to members. Approximately 83% of members requested information or research briefings from the L&RS. The Service completed 1074 information queries and 181 research briefings for individual members or their staff, many of which related directly to proceedings in the Houses. The librarians and researchers were available to assist members in the temporary Members' Reading Room that was provided during the restoration of the permanent Reading Room in Georgian Leinster House.

In addition to on-demand services, all members received 54 publications, including 38 *Bills Digests* and 12 *Notes and Spotlights*. Members were also kept up to date with 298 blog posts. The L&RS has further embedded the use of infographics in its research products and has also developed new infographic-based products. The L&RS introduced a new publication called *Research Matters Quarterly* to provide members and their staff with insights into recent and ongoing work of the L&RS. In addition, the L&RS provided 72 research briefings to Oireachtas Committees many of which also went to all members. The L&RS delivered an Information Skills programme for members' staff. A similar programme was also delivered to Committee Clerks and Policy Advisers.

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

Figure 13: Parliamentary Library & Research Service Research Publications



The L&RS provides Constituency Dashboards through the [Oireachtas website](#). The Dashboards provide an interactive online visualisation of census data for each of the Dáil Éireann constituencies and a new updated database was formally launched by the Ceann Comhairle in early 2018.

The ongoing review and development of L&RS technical infrastructure is a significant part of the L&RS work. L&RS staff work closely with the Oireachtas Digital Transformation team to deliver digital transformation projects across the section.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force on 25 May 2018. The Service supported members with their new obligations through its comprehensive ‘how to’ publications, training sessions, and a designated email address for

members to submit GDPR queries. Two documents entitled *GDPR how to comply: a preliminary guide for Members of the Houses* and *GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 FAQs*, along with templates for members, were issued. Six fortnightly bulletins on GDPR were circulated to members in advance of the GDPR coming into force. The Houses of the Oireachtas Commission received a detailed presentation in July from the Commissioner for Data Protection on GDPR implementation and, specifically, the obligations of members of the Houses in processing personal data in the course of their constituency work.

The **Training and Development Unit** organised GDPR training for members, political staff, and Service staff throughout 2018, and GDPR online training was rolled out in 2019. Other training programmes and information seminars delivered for members and their staff included Constituency Database training, Health and Safety training, Irish language courses, and Microsoft Word and Excel courses.



The Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghail TD, meeting with members of the Ireland-South Korea Parliamentary Friendship Group during a visit to the Houses of the Oireachtas.

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

Table 7: International and Interparliamentary Functions ¹	2018	2017	2016	2015
Outgoing visits by parliamentary delegations				
IPU General Assemblies and related meetings	6	5	1	4
PACE plenary and committee meetings	23	24	13	22
Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE	6	6	5	5
Speaker-led delegations and bilateral meetings	14	9	8	8
Incoming visits by parliamentary delegations				
Speaker-led Delegations	4	5	2	3
Bilateral meetings	7	10	8	11
Visits by Parliamentary Friendship Groups				
Incoming visits by Parliamentary Friendship Groups	7	1	1	2
Outgoing visits by Parliamentary Friendship Groups	2	1	—	1

¹ This table does not include international and interparliamentary functions undertaken by the Parliamentary Committees.

The Service's **Interparliamentary and Travel Service Unit** supports members in the ongoing development of Interparliamentary relations. The Houses hosted seven incoming Parliamentary Friendship Groups and the Oireachtas Parliamentary Friendship Groups undertook two official visits to the parliaments of their partner Friendship Groups.

The Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD, and the Cathaoirleach of the Seanad, Senator Denis O'Donovan, welcomed EU representatives to Leinster House for Europe Day on 9 May, where the EU flag was raised outside Leinster House for the first time.

The Ceann Comhairle led seven delegations abroad including a 12-day bilateral visit to China and Mongolia to speak on the opportunities for both countries in forging new partnerships in the areas of IT, bio-sciences, food, and tourism. The visit to Mongolia also included the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding on 4 April between the parliaments of both countries.



The Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD, led a parliamentary delegation on an official visit to China and Mongolia in April 2018.

The Cathaoirleach of the Seanad led six delegations abroad, including to the 139th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) General Assembly in Geneva and to Morocco. The Interparliamentary and Travel Service Unit also provided ongoing support to the Oireachtas delegations that participate at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe – Parliament Assembly (OSCE–PA).

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



The Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann, Senator Denis O'Donovan, addressed the Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland in October 2018.



The Chairman, Brendan Smith TD, and members of the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade and Defence, visited the Air Corps Headquarters at Casement Aerodrome in March and were briefed on the work of the Air Corps.

Parliamentary Committees undertook 60 official visits during the year and hosted 36 incoming parliamentary delegations through formal and informal engagement. These included three formal meetings held with European Commissioners and one informal meeting as follows:

- The Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach hosted two visits:
 - European Commissioner, Mr Valdis Dombrovskis, Commission Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogues on 1 February; and
 - European Commissioner, Mr Günther Oettinger, Commissioner for Budget and Human Resources, on 6 March.
- The Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and the Joint Committee on Rural and Community Development held a joint meeting with European Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr Phil Hogan, on 26 April to discuss Brexit and the EU's Common Agricultural Policy.
- Mr Klaus-Heiner Lehne, President of the European Court of Auditors, attended an informal meeting in 13 November with the Chairs of the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, and the Vice-Chair of the Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach. He also made a courtesy call on the Ceann Comhairle.

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



Members of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly attending the 56th Plenary of the Assembly held in Sligo in June 2018.

In addition to the interparliamentary activities summarised in Table 7, the 56th British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) met in Sligo in June. Ms Bronagh Hinds and Baroness May Blood addressed the Assembly on this the 20th anniversary year of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. Both were founding members of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition that was party to the negotiations. BIPA met again in London in October, where discussion on the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union was the dominant theme in the proceedings. A number of Sectoral Committees carried out extensive engagement with stakeholders on Brexit-related matters, including the Seanad Special Select Committee on the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union.



The Leas-Cheann Comhairle, Pat the Cope Gallagher TD, led a parliamentary delegation on an official visit to the Parliament of Australia in November 2018.

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 (ICT) 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 focused on the following: *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.

The Service is currently implementing a Digital Transformation Programme that will, amongst other initiatives, digitise existing parliamentary processes and ways of working as well as providing modern tools to support members and their staff when carrying out their parliamentary activities. These projects will continue to be delivered over the course of the programme. A number of procedural system improvements were introduced in the organisation in 2018. These included the release of the Bills Administration, Committee Schedule and Submissions Management applications. Work on the Motions application is currently underway with its delivery scheduled for 2019.

A new Call Management System was installed on the Members' IT Service Desk to provide a more efficient system of processing and responding to calls from members and their staff. A total of 10,398 ICT Service Desk requests for support from members and their staff were supported during the year.

A substantial upgrade of the Wi-Fi infrastructure across the parliamentary precinct was completed. The upgrade provides members and their staff with improved Wi-Fi access and mobility throughout the Houses of the Oireachtas buildings. This reflects a greater demand for fast, accessible and secure broadband to support the increased use and reliance by members and their staff on mobile devices to carry out their work efficiently.

The Service also migrated to Microsoft Outlook in late 2018. This will enable the delivery of new and upgraded software and enhanced flexible services and capability for members and staff, and will enhance *anytime, anywhere* access to information and resources on a range of devices that the Service continues to develop.

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

In 2018, the Houses commemorated the 100th anniversary of the vote for women in Ireland. A Committee of members of both Houses was established, chaired by Senator Ivana Bacik, to develop and plan the Vótáil 100 commemorations celebrating 100 years of “Votes for Women”.

Vótáil 100 provided an opportunity to increase public understanding of the Houses of the Oireachtas and to learn about the participation of women in parliamentary politics in Ireland. As part of Vótáil 100, a debate was held in the Seanad chamber for Transition Year students from around the country and a Vótáil 100 exhibition, entitled *Votes for Women: Suffrage and Citizenship*, was officially opened in the ante room of the Seanad Chamber. In the 2016 general election, 35 women were elected to Dáil Éireann, an increase of 40% on the previous election. Women now make up 22% of the Dáil membership, the highest proportion in the history of the State to date.



On 8 March, International Women’s Day, a portrait of the 53 women members of the current Dáil and Seanad was presented in Leinster House. The portrait also includes Countess de Markievicz.

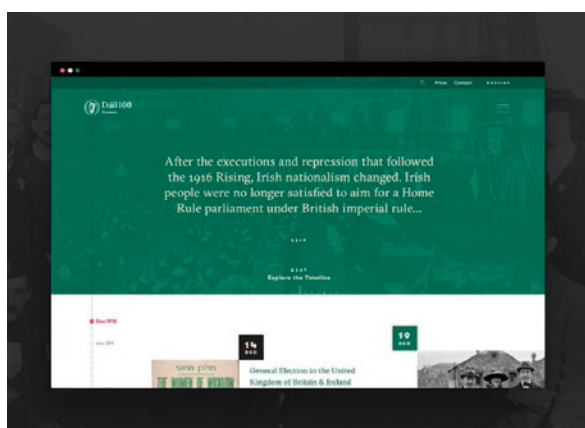
The first Vótáil 100 event was a conference entitled *Representation, Gender and Politics: Past and Present*, hosted by the Royal Irish Academy. Papers were presented by leading national and international academics. As part of the Vótáil 100 programme, the Ceann Comhairle officially launched the exhibition

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

Markievicz: Portraits and Propaganda at the National Gallery of Ireland. Members of the Vótáil 100 committee travelled to Westminster to present a picture of Countess de Markievicz to the Speaker of the House of Commons.

An important objective of the Strategic Plan for 2016-2018 is to increase public understanding and improve perception of the work of the Houses and their members. The Strategic Plan includes measures to promote greater public accessibility and engagement with the Houses. The measures implemented in 2018 included the further development of the website and Oireachtas TV Channel and new initiatives under the parliamentary education programme.

The new [Oireachtas website](#) was officially launched in May 2018. There were over 1.5 million visitors to the website during the year. The website contributes to greater engagement, access to parliamentary information, transparency and openness in relation to the business of the Houses.

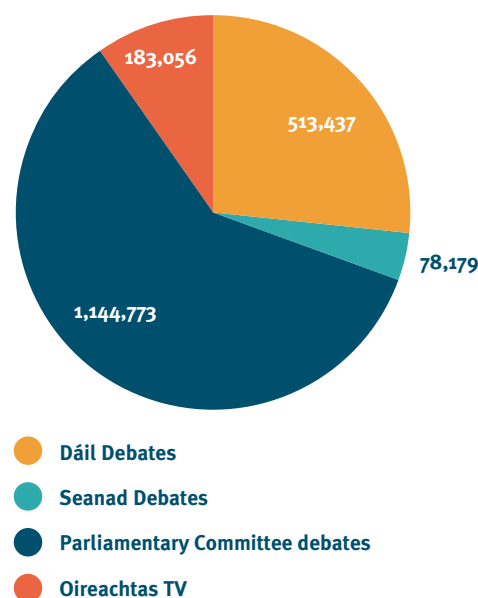


The Dáil 100 website was launched to commemorate the centenary of the first Dáil.

In addition to the Oireachtas website, the development of a new [Dáil 100 website](#) was completed in 2018 and launched in January 2019.

This interactive website houses the commemorative and educational outputs of the Dáil 100 Project, including video and audio content, educational lessons and historical materials. The Dáil 100 website's aim is to raise awareness, engagement and understanding of the formation of the first Dáil.

Figure 14: Oireachtas Website Views of Livestreams of Parliamentary Debates, 2018



Oireachtas TV was further developed over the course of the year in terms of technical infrastructure and programme content. Engagement with the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) continued. Funding was provided by the Sound and Vision Fund to commission and produce two stand-alone documentaries focussed on women in politics to celebrate Vótáil 100 – “A Woman’s Place” and “In Their Own Words”. In addition, a series of animations focused on parliamentary democracy entitled “The Future Is You”, and a stand-alone animation celebrating the anniversary of the Dáil – “Dáil Day One”, were also produced, and were broadcast in 2018.

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



The Irish Parliamentary Women's Caucus, chaired by Catherine Martin TD, hosted the first International Congress of Parliamentary Women's Caucuses in Dublin Castle in September 2018.

Oireachtas TV increased its production material, including a monthly discussion programme called "Oireachtas TV Debates", and a monthly round-up of events in the Oireachtas, "Around the Houses". A number of events in the Oireachtas were broadcast during the year, including: the International Caucus of Women Politicians; the National Bravery Awards ceremony; the Ceann Comhairle's lecture; lectures during Seachtain na Gaeilge; committee report launches; and events in conjunction with the National Museum of Ireland.

A significant focus during the year was the preparation for Dáil 100 commemorations in 2019. The design, planning and production elements for the broadcasting of the commemorative sitting were significant projects during 2018.



The Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD, and Secretary General, Peter Finnegan, at the launch of the Irish Sign Language (ISL) Strategy 2019-2021 for the Houses.

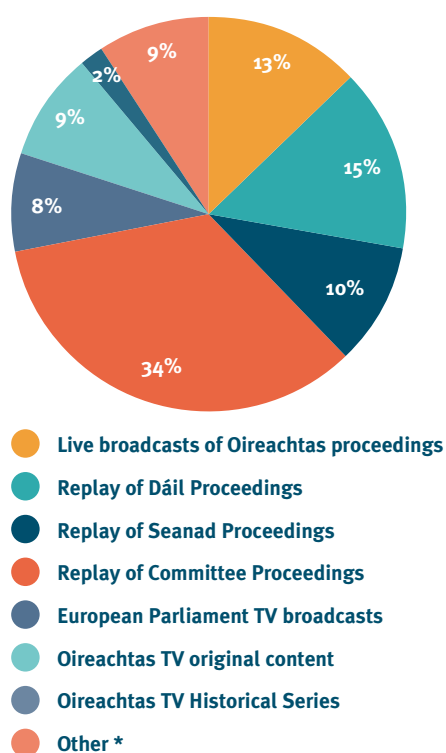
Goal 1: Greater public understanding, trust and pride in the Houses of the Oireachtas

The Broadcasting Unit tendered for a replacement Recording and Archiving system in early 2018. This new system will facilitate the transfer of legacy archive material. A new broadcasting facility including four editing suites, a work station for the legacy archive project, and a green screen Irish Sign Language (ISL) studio was provided. The provision of this new facility will support ISL output on Oireachtas TV, which was the key recommendation made by the Oireachtas Working Group on Irish Sign Language in its report to the Houses in December 2018.



The Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD, taking part in a Ceann go Ceann session with students.

Figure 15: Content of Oireachtas TV, 2018



* Includes Oireachtas Studio Debates, Leinster House Historical Talks, Daily Press Releases, Committee report launches, UK Parliament content, EU Parliament content, and Bills and Debates.

A Parliamentary Education Programme commenced in 2018. The programme is designed to support students and teachers of Politics and Society. *Ceann go Ceann* involves a video call between the Ceann Comhairle and a class of students who are taking Politics and Society as part of the Leaving Certificate curriculum.

In October, Leinster House hosted the Civil, Social and Political Education (CSPE) Teachers' Annual Conference, attended by 80 teachers, with guest lectures and workshops. The conference included a keynote speech in the Seanad Chamber and a workshop on the place of CSPE in the new Junior Cycle school programme.

Following the recruitment of an Archivist and Records Officer in 2018 work progressed on the development of a framework for the establishment of a Parliamentary Archive, including collection, acquisition and access policies.

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* has prioritised new media, including social media networks, for attention during the current strategy period.



The launch of the Vótáil100 commemorative programme.

The Houses achieved greater public engagement through the use of social media in 2018. This was supported by the Vótáil 100 celebrations and through the use of the hashtag #Vótáil100. The use of Facebook and Twitter livestreaming of parliamentary debates continues to raise public awareness of the work of the Houses.

There was an 11% increase in Twitter and Facebook followers since 2017. (Facebook had 5,138 followers and Twitter had 29,284 by the end of 2018.) The @OireachtasNews Twitter account had over 16.5 million impressions (i.e. the number of times a tweet shows up in Twitter timelines), 10 million more than 2017. The Vótáil 100 campaign dominated the top tweets in 2018.

The Twitter live videos of debates in the Dáil, Seanad and Committees gained almost 350,000 views over the last year.

Facebook videos, including livestreams, were viewed over 25,000 times.

Table 8: Top Four Facebook Posts for 2018

Oireachtas TV – Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs: Governance and Child Protection Policy: Scouting Ireland

Budget 2019 live coverage

Oireachtas TV – Joint Committee on Health: National Cervical Screening Programme

Address by H.E. Mr Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, to a joint sitting of the Houses



The Communications Unit won the award for 'Best Facebook for a State Organisation' in the Sockies Social Media Awards 2018.

The Facebook Page won a Social Media Award – a 'Sockie' Award – for 'Best Facebook for a State Organisation'. Instagram has seen a 183% increase in followers and LinkedIn had an 80% increase. The LinkedIn account continues to be an integral tool for advertising career opportunities in the Oireachtas Service.

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

Table 9: Oireachtas Website ¹	2018	2017	2016	2015
Visits to the Oireachtas website	1,543,314	1,869,289	1,489,807	1,699,119
Website page views	5,674,036	6,433,253	6,389,479	7,046,059
Views of livestreams of parliamentary debates	1,919,445	2,727,175	1,270,450	1,673,513
<i>Dáil debates</i>	513,437	834,307	873,186	404,723
<i>Seanad debates</i>	78,179	61,595	21,658	18,393
<i>Parliamentary Committee debates</i>	1,144,773	1,689,805	241,044	1,185,658
<i>Oireachtas TV</i>	183,056	141,009	133,839	64,593

¹ Visits and page views to the Oireachtas website are numerically lower in 2018 as a result of a different way of counting in the earlier years when Oireachtas.ie comprised multiple websites. A more accurate measurement method commenced when the new website launched in May 2018.

The Service continued to publish the Houses of the Oireachtas parliamentary data and information in Open Data formats and engaged with central Open Data Initiative actions. Debates, PQs, and the results of votes in the Houses and Committees are now all publicly available via the [Oireachtas Open Data Website](#). The new [Oireachtas website](#) offers improved information sharing, increased accessibility of data, streamlined content and the creation of a user centred platform. The website opens the democratic process to all and strengthens public engagement with parliament.

The Records Management Unit, in close collaboration with the OPLA, planned and managed preparations for the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the Houses in May 2018. Mandatory training on GDPR was delivered to all staff, and Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA) were conducted across the Service. The Records Management Unit undertakes an advisory and coordinating role, and individual business units manage their GDPR-related activities.

To mark Bliain na Gaeilge in the Houses in 2018, the Commission approved a strategy to facilitate members and staff in engaging with the Irish language in a positive way. The delivery of this strategy and Bliain na Gaeilge events during 2018 ran in parallel with, and complemented, the Houses of the Oireachtas Service Language Scheme. A new Scheme under the *Official Languages Act 2003* was published for the period 2018-2021. The Scheme builds on Oireachtas services currently available and identifies areas for enhanced services through Irish.

The Houses continue to have a high throughput of visitors including international visitors, parliamentary delegations, members' constituents, department officials, members of the public and students to view the Houses. There were 99,197 visitors in 2018. Special events over the course of the year included Vótáil 100, Budget Day, the Irish Association of Former Parliamentarians 9th Annual Seminar, Open House, and Culture Night.

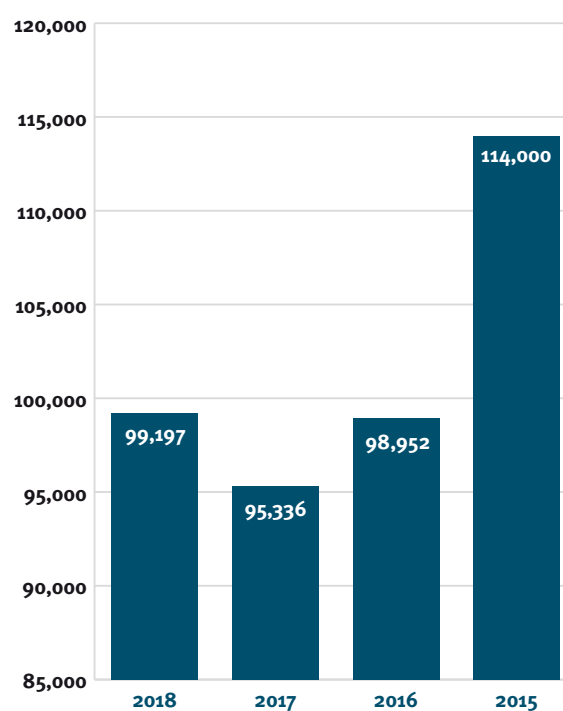
Goal 2: An Open Parliament that strengthens its engagement with the people



Seanad Éireann hosted a student debate, Díospóireacht na nÓg, under the Vótáil 100 programme of events.

Due to the Georgian Leinster House structural programme, the tours of Leinster House were restricted to ensure safety of visitors to the Houses. There were approximately 53,000 visitors on guided tours in 2018.

Figure 16: Visitors to Leinster House



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

In 2018, there was no significant change to the number of full time equivalent (FTE) civil service staff employed by the Commission despite ongoing recruitment campaigns throughout the year. At the end of December 2018, the Commission employed 511 FTE civil service staff out of 529 FTE sanctioned posts. In addition, there were eight Office Holder staff and 44 State Industrial staff employed in the Catering Unit and Print Facility. Sixty-three posts were filled in 2018 in the Service and 52 staff left the service.

The Service's senior management breakdown (i.e. Principal Officer level and above) is 52% female and 48% male across civil service, state industrial, and Office Holders staff. Approximately 9% of the workforce is under 30 years of age and 40% are in the over-50 age category. Fifteen Service staff retired in 2018.

There is a statutory obligation on public bodies under section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014, in performing their functions, to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and treatment for staff and persons to whom it provides services, and protect the human rights of staff and services users.

HR Services continues to address matters raised regarding Equality and Human Rights and has identified the following specific actions for implementation:

- the inclusion of a Strategy on Diversity and Equality in the HR Strategy;
- further development of the Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) Programme for persons with intellectual disabilities, including the possibility of recruitment for permanent positions;
- further actions under the ISL Strategy, including the provision of training in Irish Sign Language; and
- implementation of the Dignity and Respect Policy.

In 2018, HR Services developed an *Oireachtas Dignity and Respect Statement of Principles and Policy*, which was launched by the Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach in March 2019. The aim of the policy is to ensure best practice in preventing bullying, harassment and sexual harassment in the parliamentary workplace and on managing complaints. The Policy operates alongside the Dignity at Work Policy that applies to all civil servants. *The Dignity and Respect Statement of Principles and Policy* sets the standards of respect, dignity, safety, and equality in the parliamentary community.

Goal 1: High performing, engaged and motivated staff

The Service has appointed a Disability Liaison Officer who works with all staff of the Service with a disability and provides reasonable accommodation to support staff with disabilities. A Disability Survey is issued to staff every year. The Service also employs an Access Officer for the Houses.

The Commission approved an Oireachtas Child Safeguarding Statement in principle in accordance with the Children First Act 2015 noting that a Children First Safeguarding Statement Implementation Plan will be put in place. The Commission also approved the Houses of the Oireachtas Service eVetting Protocol as the vetting procedure for members seeking to provide a relevant service under the Act. The Service has appointed a Designated and Deputy Designated Liaison Officer to ensure compliance with the Act and to notify any breaches or reports received to Tusla and/or the Gardaí. The Act also sets out the responsibility of all staff for the reporting of suspected breaches of the Act to the Designated or Deputy Liaison Person, Tusla and/or the Gardaí.

During 2018, the **Pensions Unit** focus was on embedding processes and procedures to meet the requirements under the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme and Other Provisions) legislation for all incoming staff. There were 116 Single Scheme Statements and 26 Leaver Statements issued during the year. Key activities in 2018 included the transfer of certain pension functions from the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) to the Oireachtas Service.

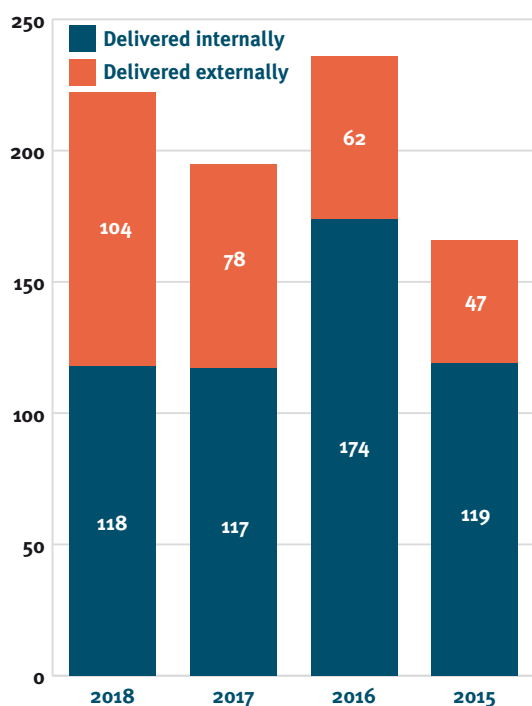
At a strategic level, **HR Services** are responsible for the development of HR policy and strategy to support the achievement of the organisational objectives, including the implementation of the Civil Service Renewal Plan, Public Service Reform, and supports for parliamentary reform. These objectives are primarily achieved through workforce planning, and actions to support staff engagement and well-being. Business process improvements, staff knowledge, and the Service's Learning and Development Strategy also support the achievement of these objectives.

Workforce planning during 2018 focused on recruitment to fill critical posts to implement and embed Dáil reform initiatives and to meet the increased demand for staff across the Service. Seven internal promotion competitions and eleven external competitions/secondment processes were managed. HR also availed of the central Civil Service Mobility Policy and internal mobility to fill posts requiring certain skills and experience as identified in the Service's Role Profile Database.

HR provided training and development opportunities to members and their staff and to the staff of the Service. The focus in 2018 was to finalise a Training Needs Analysis and from this, to produce a Learning and Development Strategy, to be incorporated into an overall HR Strategy.

Goal 1: High performing, engaged and motivated staff

Figure 17: Staff Training and Development



The Commission approved the Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) Programme as a pilot programme for the academic year 2018/2019. This programme is sponsored by the disability support organisations WALK and KARE and is facilitated by the Service. The OWL Programme seeks to provide a safe work learning and educational environment for up to ten adults with intellectual disabilities to allow them to develop their abilities and prepare them for the working environment. This programme was launched in September 2018. It is recognised as the first supported employment programme of its type in a Parliament and is supported by the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETB). The initiative has proved to be a very positive experience for the participants and for the Service.



The Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) Programme was launched in the Houses in September 2018.

Goal 1: High performing, engaged and motivated staff

There was significant reform made to the Oireachtas Internship Programme in 2018. The programme was evaluated and renamed the *Oireachtas Student Placement Programme* to take into account the learning element and extended to include an additional three colleges. The Houses now facilitates the Institute of Public Administration (IPA), Dublin Institution of Technology (DIT), University College Cork (UCC), National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG) and University of Limerick (UL) in their placement of students with members of the Houses. Due to the expansion of the programme, the number of placements has also increased. The Oireachtas now places 73 students with members for a period of applied learning. This learning is acknowledged by the colleges in awarding a grade to the students.

The Service continued to participate in bilateral parliamentary staff exchange programmes. These included a Committees' Secretariat Study Visit to the EU Institutions, participation in the Young Ireland/ Young Scotland programme and participation in the Bundestag Exchange Programme.

A number of initiatives took place under the Service's Organisational Development Initiative (ODI). These included Knowledge Sharing, Learning and Information sessions, and Health and Well-Being seminars and activities. Leadership and Management Development, under the initiative, included a new Mentoring Scheme that will continue into 2019. The Oireachtas Social Club was also relaunched and staff organised and participated in a successful Volunteering Day in August 2018.

The results of the 2017 Civil Service Employee Engagement Survey for the Service were published in 2018. The results show a 7% increase between 2015 and 2017 in the following areas: Commitment to the Organisation; Career Development and Mobility; Manager Career Support; and a 10% increase on Leadership.



Staff from the Houses of the Oireachtas Service volunteering at Cara Cheshire House in August 2018.

Goal 2: Good Corporate Governance

STRATEGY 4: GOAL 2

Good Corporate Governance

The Service's Corporate Governance Framework is designed to support the achievement of the strategic goals as outlined in the Strategic Plan and to meet the Commission's statutory and non-statutory obligations. Work commenced on the development of a new Strategic Plan for 2019 to 2021 and on reviewing the corporate assurance framework that will support the delivery of the new plan. These will be published in early 2019.

The Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2018 was enacted on 27 December 2018 and came into effect on 1 January 2019. The main purpose of the Act is to provide the Commission with its funding allocation for the three-year period 2019 to 2021 to meet the costs associated with the running of the Houses. An allocation of €422.3 million has been made under the new Act. It includes provision for costs associated with a general election that must be held during the three-year strategy period 2019 to 2021; funding to support consolidation and advancement of the programme of parliamentary and organisational reform; and funding for renewed investment in information technology.

The preparation of the amending legislation provided an opportunity to review and propose amendments to the *Commission's legislative framework*. The *Commission (Amendment) Act 2018* included a provision to formally establish the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) on a statutory basis. The legislation also established the Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers (OPLA) on a statutory basis.

The **Commission** met 12 times during the year with meetings regularly attended by senior officials in the Service for the purpose of providing information and answering questions, as appropriate, concerning the implementation of policies, programmes, and other relevant strategic matters in the Service.

The Commission presented its Annual Report for 2017, including its audited annual accounts, to the Houses of the Oireachtas in accordance with section 6 (4) of the Commission Acts. The Commission also presented an annual statement of estimates for 2018 to the Dáil for noting by way of motion in accordance with section 13 of the Commission Acts.

Items considered by the Commission in implementing its work programme over the course of the last year are set out in page 13 of this report.

The Commission's **Finance Committee** met five times and considered quarterly financial and performance reports, the draft Statement of Estimate for 2019, a three-year funding proposal for 2019 to 2021, and a virement request to the Commission. The Commission Finance Committee monitored the financial performance of the Service and reported to the Commission on a quarterly basis.

The **Office of the Commission and Secretary General** supports the work of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission and its Finance Committee, and also supports the work the Management Board. The Office is also responsible for customer service, the corporate governance framework for the Service, coordinating the formulation of the Service's three-year strategic plans, and for performance review and reporting.

Goal 2: Good Corporate Governance

The **Finance Unit** provides financial advice, information and analysis to the Secretary General, Management Board, Commission and line sections. The Unit accounts for the Commission's overall financial performance by means of effective budgeting, monitoring, measurement and reporting mechanisms. The Unit presents quarterly financial reports to the Board, Finance Committee and the Commission. The Unit processed over 6,000 invoices for goods and services in 2018.

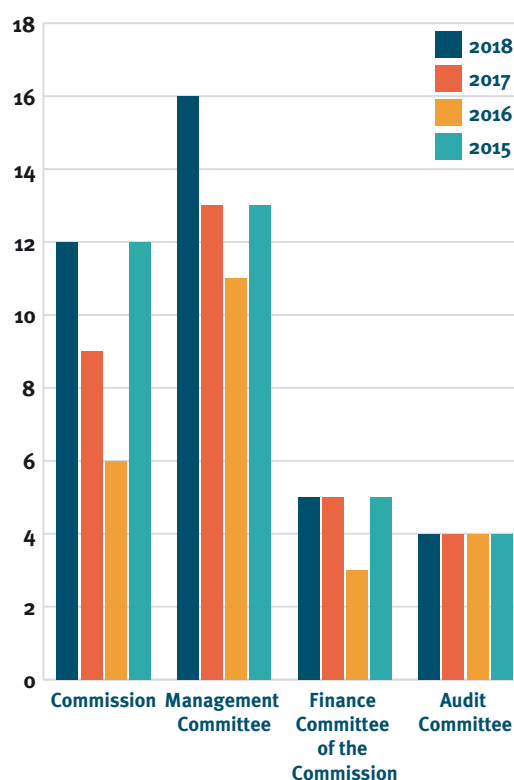
The **Audit Committee** advises the Secretary General on financial matters relating to their function, advises the Commission on matters of corporate governance relating to its functions, and reports to the Commission in writing at least once a year on its activities in the previous year. The Audit Committee also reviews the work of the Internal Audit function. The Audit Committee met four times during the year. Its Annual Report for 2018 is at **Appendix 3**.

The **Internal Audit** function contributes to the oversight and accountability of the Service. The purpose of the Internal Audit Unit is to provide independent assurance to the Secretary General, as Chief Executive and Accounting Officer of the Commission and Head of the Service, on the adequacy and effectiveness of the systems of internal control within the Service and to make recommendations for improvements, as appropriate. The Head of Internal Audit reports directly to the Secretary General. The Audit Unit completed three internal audit reports in the following areas:

- Business Continuity Planning;
- Oireachtas Bars and Restaurants; and
- Use of Oireachtas Social Media.

The Audit Committee considers reports on the implementation of Internal Audit report recommendations twice yearly. Risk materialisation reports are presented to the Audit Committee on a regular basis. The Internal Audit Unit participates in the Heads of Internal Audit Forum (a Civil Service Internal Audit Network) and a group of Heads of Internal Audit of Parliaments and Assemblies in Ireland and the UK.

Figure 18: Governance of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service (Meetings)



The Service's **Management Board** met 16 times during 2018. Following a review of the Management Committee, it was reconstituted into the Management Board and supported by four Strategic Committees. Members of the Board include the Clerk of the Dáil

Goal 2: Good Corporate Governance

and Secretary General (Chair), the Assistant Secretaries, the Clerk of the Seanad, an external member nominated by the Secretary General, and the Chair of the Principal Officers Network.

The purpose of the newly structured Management Board is to provide leadership and direction for the Service, drive the implementation of the Strategic Plan, and review and adjust plans as needed, through collective leadership and performance and accountability.

The Board held an offsite meeting specifically to review its governance and assurance arrangements and the approach it could use to best assess risk management arrangements within the organisation. A new Risk Management Framework, including a new role of Chief Risk Officer, will be put in place in 2019.

The Board has the following functions in the context of its role as set out above:

- Planning, Policy and Service Delivery;
- Performance Reporting and Risk Management;
- Financial, Budget and Project Management;
- Human Resource Management; and
- Governance.

The existing sub-Committees of the former Management Committee were dissolved in May 2018 and the following four Strategic Committees were established to report to the Management Board:

- Governance, Performance and Accountability Strategic Committee;
- Facilities and Engagement Strategic Committee;
- People and Organisation Strategic Committee; and
- Technology and Digital Transformation Strategic Committee.

The purpose of the Strategic Committees is to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach to strategic and operational issues that have a cross-divisional dimension. Each committee is chaired by an Assistant Secretary or external member, supported by a nominated Principal Officer. The frequency of the meetings is determined by the Chair of each committee in consultation with its members. The Board receives an oral update from each Chair at its monthly meeting and written reports from each Strategic Committee on a quarterly basis.

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

STRATEGY 4: GOAL 3

Development of innovative ICT solutions to support our work

In 2018, the Service's *Digital Transformation Programme – Enabling Democracy* continued to deliver significant investment to advance the modernisation of the processes and systems to support the Houses of the Oireachtas. The delivery of the programme is supported by a Change Management Team.

The phased development and delivery of an integrated parliamentary procedural system – *Digital Parliament* – for the Dáil, Seanad, and their Committees continued in 2018. Over the course of the year, the Bills Administration, Committee Schedule and Submissions Management applications were delivered. Work on the Motions application commenced with delivery scheduled for 2019.

In January, a new ICT Call Management System (CMS) was introduced for the members' helpdesk. The purpose of the new system is to provide improved customer service for members and their staff. The organisation also moved from Lotus Notes to Microsoft Outlook in November and over the next year the ICT Unit will deliver new and upgraded software such as Windows 10, Office 365 and Outlook 2016 to members and staff. A Wi-Fi upgrade across the Leinster House complex was completed. The upgraded system provides faster and secure broadband to users.



Technology was upgraded in Committee rooms under the Digital Transformation Programme

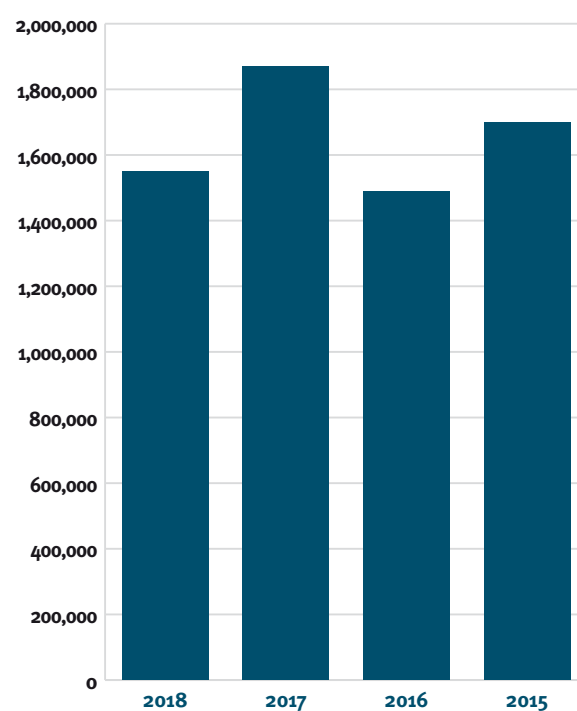
The upgrading of technology in the Chambers continued. The back-up sound system replacement in the Dáil Chamber was completed. Committee Room One was upgraded with delegate units, microphones, a presentation system, and a simultaneous interpretation facility. All Committee Rooms are equipped with simultaneous interpretation facilities. A new Irish Language Translation application for Rannóg an Aistriúcháin was also implemented during the year.

Work commenced on the Integrated Corporate Support Systems (ICSS) programme of projects. These will focus on providing an automated and integrated solution for the provision of HR, Finance, Procurement, Learning and Development, and Time and Attendance modules. These will be delivered in phases over the 2019 to 2020 period. A legal case management system for the OPLA was also procured and is being implemented.

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

A new [Oireachtas website](#) was launched in May. It allows for improved information-sharing, increased accessibility of data, streamlined content and the creation of a user-centred platform. The [Dáil 100 website](#) went live in January 2019 to commemorate the centenary of the first Dáil. This followed on from the 2018 [Vótáil 100 Oireachtas website pages](#) that commemorated the 100th anniversary of the parliamentary vote for women in Ireland.

The Oireachtas digital journey will continue throughout the next strategy period. Prioritised and phased improvements are planned in the coming years.

Figure 19: Visits to the Oireachtas Website

Goal 4: Economic, efficient and effective use of resources

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, reports and makes recommendations as appropriate to the Commission on financial matters.

The Commission's outturn for 2016-2018 was €363 million against a budget of €369 million. The outturn for 2018 was €134 million against a budget of €136 million. €2.3 million of the under-spend in 2018 was linked to staff vacancies and timing of recruitment. The audited accounts of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission are presented at page 69 of this report.

The Commission's budget is provided in legislation on a three-yearly basis. Last year, 2018, was the final year of the budget for the period 2016-2018. The necessary legislation, the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2018*, was enacted on 27 December 2018 to provide the Commission with its funding allocation to meet the costs associated with the running of the Houses of the Oireachtas for the next three years, 2019-2021.

An allocation of €422.3 million was allocated under the new legislation. This represents a 14% increase over the last three-year allocation of €369 million.

In 2018, the focus of the HR Unit was to ensure that appropriate staffing levels, within sanctioned numbers, were available to support the core business of the Houses. Two Independent Capacity Reviews were conducted in two key areas – the Debates Office and *Rannóg an Aistriúcháin*. The review reports were presented to the Management Board in November.

It was agreed that a Debates Office Implementation Group would be established with timelines to implement the *Capacity Review of the Debates Office* report's recommendations. This work will continue into 2019.

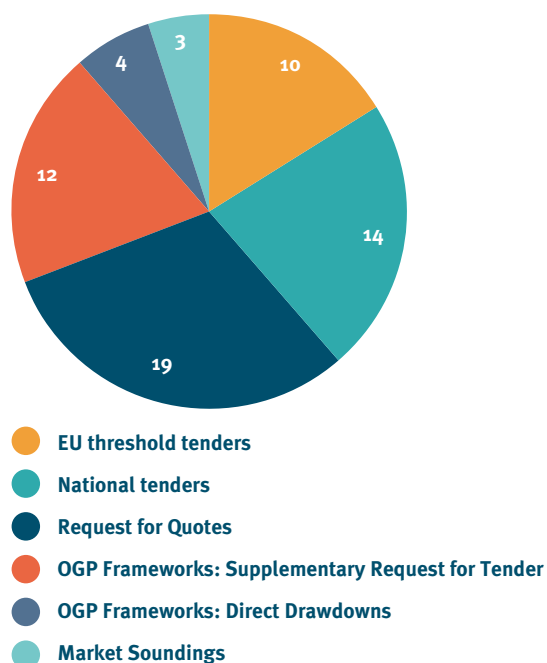
The Capacity and *Workplace Culture Review of Rannóg an Aistriúcháin* report forms the blueprint for a change programme aimed at supporting the delivery of timely and effective translation services while maintaining high-quality service provision. An Implementation Plan for 2019-2024, *Rannóg 2024*, was approved by the Management Board and the Commission. A Steering Group chaired at Assistant Secretary level will be established to oversee the implementation of the plan.

The Service has continued to maximise the use of available resources and enhance its capacity and capability through implementation of its Organisational Development Initiative (ODI). This initiative aims to increase efficiency, improve organisational capacity, and enable the Service to develop as a high-performing organisation. The objectives of the ODI are consistent with commitments under the Public Service Reform agenda and the Civil Service Renewal Plan.

Goal 4: Economic, efficient and effective use of resources

The **Procurement Unit** continues to provide support to business units in the procurement of goods and services and in ongoing contract management. During 2018, 62 public procurement processes were supported by the Unit. Twenty of these processes were central Framework Agreements. The Oireachtas Contracts Committee met nine times during 2018 and its annual report was submitted to the Board. The Procurement Unit held two training sessions in Public Procurement and Contract Management, staff from a broad range of business units attended.

Figure 20: Public Procurement Management, 2018



A review of the Service's Management Information Framework (MIF) was conducted under the Service's Efficiency Review Programme, and a report of the review findings were presented to the Management Board. The review recommendations are being implemented and will help to ensure that the Service's management reporting system provides the information required to inform decision-making regarding the allocation and use of resources and to provide performance information as required. A review of Energy Usage and of the Managed IT Services Contract was also conducted during 2018 and these will be presented to the Management Board early in 2019.

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

Financial Information

The Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2015 provided funding of €369 million for the three-year period 2016-2018. The total outturn for 2016-2018, as detailed below is €363 million, resulting in an underspend of €6 million.

Category	2016 Outturn €000	2017 Outturn €000	2018 Outturn €000
Dáil Éireann	43,710	41,595	43,699
Seanad Éireann	8,431	8,745	9,050
Oireachtas Committees	105	351	123
European Parliament	783	771	780
Pensions and Redundancy	18,678	13,765	12,802
Administration – Pay	26,684	28,455	31,087
Administration – non-pay	17,496	19,006	36,812
Total	€115,887	€112,688	€134,353



**Accounts of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission
for the Period from 1 January to 31 December 2018**
(kept in accordance with the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2015)

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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 2018 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 monies required by the Commission in respect of ongoing expenditure for the year ended 31 December 2018.

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 €1,331,095.

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 €11,795,576 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 standard accounting policies and principles for the production of appropriation accounts, as set out by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in Circular 24 of 2018, have been applied in the preparation of the accounts and the associated notes 1 to 7.

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 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.
- 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 that procedures are in place to ensure compliance with all relevant guidelines.

I have reported in the 2018 return required under circular 40/2002 that 12 contracts with a total value of €1,989,707 were undertaken without a competitive process but are in compliance with relevant procurement guidelines. 11 (€1,957,307) of the contracts were with sole/proprietary suppliers and 1 (€32,400) contract was extended to facilitate transition to a centralised service.

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;

Oireachtas Catering and Bar Services

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

- 1) A strengthened management structure – Restaurant Manager, Service staff and Book keeper, with access to the Service Management Accountant.

- 2) Accounts of the Oireachtas Catering and Bar Services are presented to the Management Board, Finance Committee and Commission on a quarterly basis.
- 3) Procurement compliance – The addendum to the 2018 annual 40/02 return details 8 legacy contracts at a total value of €259,628, which had been procured without a competitive process but extended for continuity of services and support while the competitive procurement processes were ongoing. 5 (€160,927) have been replaced with new contracts following competitive tendering, 1 (€30,288) is a sole supplier and the remaining 2 (€68,413) are in the procurement process and expected to be concluded and in contract in 2019.
- 4) The Commission approved credit policy is being implemented, facilitating automatic credit/debit card or salary deductions.
- 5) An internal audit was carried out in 2018 giving a reasonable level of assurance which was presented to the Management Board and Audit Committee. Its recommendations were considered and implemented as appropriate during 2018.
- 6) The financial results of the Bar and Restaurant activities are summarised in Note 7.3. The Commission has procured the services of an external auditing firm to carry out a financial audit of the Bar and Restaurant Services 2018 Account.

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, with appropriately trained personnel, which operates in accordance with a written charter, which the Management Committee 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. 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 Management Committee and by 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 Management Board 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 Board 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 the Management Board 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 Board 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

I have disclosed an alleged fraud incident in Note 6.2 which is currently under investigation by An Garda Síochána. A review of the Service financial control measures in this area has led to a further strengthening of its controls.



Peter Finnegan

Accounting Officer

Houses of the Oireachtas Commission

11 June 2019

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.

Accordingly, 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 are included by way of a note to these accounts (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 to these accounts (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 catering and bar services accounts are prepared on an accruals basis.

Reporting Period

The reporting period is the year ended 31 December 2018.

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 uninspected 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 and all other properties occupied by Oireachtas staff and members, excluding constituency offices, are managed and accounted for by the Office of Public Works and are 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 that cost less than €318 acquired from 1 January 1995 to 31 December 2003, or assets that cost less than €1,000 acquired since 1 January 2004.
- heritage assets, on the basis that their value cannot be adequately expressed in financial terms.

Valuation of Assets

All assets 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 are included within capital assets in the statement of financial position.

Bank and Cash

Bank and Cash balance includes 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 (Note 2.3). The balance also includes petty cash balances.

Stocks

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

Net Amount due from the Exchequer

The net amount due from 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 2.8).

Commitments

A commitment is a contractual or legal obligation to pay that exists (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 2.9).

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 is 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 2.11).

Superannuation

Superannuation payments for former members of the Houses of the Oireachtas, former secretarial assistants employed by members of the Houses or political 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 Account

General Principles

In general, the other notes to the Account 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 (Variations in Expenditure)

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 (Staffing and Remuneration)

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.

Severance Payments and Payroll Overpayments – Note 5 (Staffing and Remuneration)

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

Compensation and Legal Costs – Note 6 (Miscellaneous)

The components of the legal costs in respect of cases in which the Commission is or was involved should be disclosed in Note 6.1. This does not include the cost of legal advice provided outside of legal proceedings. 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.

Late Payments – Note 6 (Miscellaneous)

In the case of interest payments under the Late Payment in Commercial Transactions Regulations, 2012 (as revised in 2013), information is supplied (Note 6.3) where:

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

Fraud or Alleged Fraud – Note 6 (Miscellaneous)

In the case of losses due to fraud or alleged 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.

Grant 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 ended 31 December 2018, as required under the provisions of section 14 of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Act 2003 (as amended).

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 2018, and
- 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 Houses of the Oireachtas 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 Commission's annual report, the Accounting Officer's introduction, 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

14 June 2019

Appendix to the report of the Comptroller and Auditor General

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 of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Act 2003 (as amended) 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 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 other information presented 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 I identify 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 2018

	2018 Estimate provision €000	2018 Outturn €000	2017 Outturn €000
1. Administration			
(a) Salaries, wages and allowances in respect of staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service.	31,741	29,410	26,882
(b) Travel and subsistence.	490	362	293
(c) Training and development and incidental expenses.	1,924	1,128	862
(d) Postal and telecommunications services.	808	786	587
(e) Office equipment and external IT services.	14,632	22,737	9,760
(f) Office premises expenses.	3,310	3,504	2,418
(g) Consultancy services and value for money and policy review.	3,372	1,481	524
(h) Parliamentary printing.	1,177	614	526
(i) Library and research services.	1,602	651	609
(j) Public relations and communications.	487	254	77
2. Other services			
(a) Payment in respect of catering and bar staff.	1,665	1,677	1,573
(b) Expenses of delegates to other parliamentary assemblies.	195	128	111
(c) Televising of proceedings of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann and other services.	5,497	4,869	2,975
(d) Grant in respect of inter-parliamentary activities.	310	218	152
(e) Grant to British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly.	125	70	100
(f) North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association.	51	–	2
(g) Termination allowances in respect of former members of the Houses of the Oireachtas.	56	34	69
(h) Grant to Irish Parliamentary (former members) Society.	10	10	10
(i) Grant in respect of “Ciste Pinsean Thithe an Oireachtais”.	13,780	11,796	12,808
(j) Pension scheme for secretarial assistants.	921	972	888
3. Membership of Dáil Éireann			
(a) Salaries of members (including Office Holders and Chairpersons of Committees).	15,279	15,250	14,529
(b) Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for members.	19,303	20,432	19,009
(c) Travel and Accommodation Allowance.	3,169	2,920	2,934
(d) Public Representation Allowance.	3,085	2,939	2,933
(e) Other allowances.	2,501	2,158	2,190

	2018 Estimate provision €000	2018 Outturn €000	2017 Outturn €000
4. Membership of Seanad Éireann			
(a) Salaries of members (including Office Holders and Chairpersons of Committees).	4,127	4,159	4,055
(b) Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for members.	2,384	2,813	2,585
(c) Travel and Accommodation Allowance.	1,218	1,143	1,151
(d) Public Representation Allowance.	734	628	655
(e) Other allowances.	310	307	299
5. Membership of Oireachtas Committees			
(a) Travel expenses.	212	85	62
(b) Other expenses relating to Committees.	428	38	289
6. Membership of European Parliament			
(a) Salaries of members of the European Parliament.	93	94	89
(b) Pensions of former members of the European Parliament.	917	686	682
Gross Expenditure	135,913	134,353	112,688
DEDUCT			
Receipts of the Commission (Note 4.1)	(3,000)	(2,771)	(2,494)
Net Expenditure	132,913	131,582	110,194
		2018	2017
		€	€
Surplus for the year		1,331,095	13,438,866
7. Surplus for surrender			
In accordance with the <i>House of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2015</i> , the Commission received a three-year funding allocation of €369 million for the years 2016, 2017 and 2018. Gross expenditure in 2016 was €115.887 million, in 2017 was €112.688 million and in 2018 it was €134.353 million; a total of €363 million. The unspent allocation for the period 2016-18 was €6 million and is not carried over. In accordance with the <i>Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2018</i> , the Commission has received a new three-year allocation of €422 million for the period 2019-21.			



Peter Finnegan

Accounting Officer – Houses of the Oireachtas Commission

11 June 2019

Notes to the Appropriation Account

1. Operating Cost Statement 2018

	Note	€000	2018 €000	2017 €000
Pay			87,323	83,169
Non-Pay			47,030	29,519
Gross expenditure			134,353	112,688
Deduct				
Appropriations-in-aid			(2,771)	(2,494)
Net expenditure			131,582	110,194
Changes in capital assets	2.2			
Purchases Cash		(8,568)		
Depreciation		1,667		
Loss on disposals		11	(6,890)	572
Changes in net current assets				
Decrease in closing accruals		(4,781)		
Increase in stock	2.4	(81)	(4,862)	255
Direct expenditure			119,830	111,021
Expenditure borne elsewhere				
Net allied services expenditure (Cash)	1.1		30,441	25,862
Notional Rents (Non-cash)	1.2		5,423	5,165
Net Programme cost			155,694	142,048

1.1 Net Allied Services Expenditure

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

			2018 €000	2017 €000
Vote 9	Office of the Revenue Commissioners	e	90	75
Vote 12	Superannuation and Retired Allowances		4,054	3,813
Vote 13	Office of Public Works		11,608	7,084
	Central Fund:			
	Parliamentary Activities Allowances to Leaders		8,600	8,654
	Payments to qualified parties under the Electoral Acts 1992 to 2015		5,964	5,964
	Re-imbursements of Electoral Expenses			61
	Pensions in respect of former Cinn Comhairle (No. 38 of 1938, etc.)		125	211
			30,441	25,862

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

1.2 Notional rents

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	2018 €000	2017 €000
Capital Assets	2.2	8,603	1,713
Current Assets			
Net funding due from the Exchequer	2.8	1,728	705
Bank and Cash	2.3	400	1,069
Stocks	2.4	296	215
Prepayments	2.5	5,757	1,303
Accrued income		577	619
Other debit balances	2.6	715	731
Total Current Assets		9,473	4,642
Less Current Liabilities			
Accrued expenses		1,230	1,599
Other credit balances	2.7	2,843	2,505
Total Current Liabilities		4,073	4,104
Net Current Assets		5,400	538
Net Assets		14,003	2,251
Represented By:			
State Funding Account	2.1	14,003	2,251

2.1 State Funding Account

	Note	2018 €000	2017 €000
Balance at 1 January		2,251	3,078
Disbursements by the Commission			
Estimate provision	Account*	132,913	
Surplus	Account*	(1,331)	
Net Provision		131,582	110,194
Expenditure (cash) borne elsewhere	Note 1	30,441	25,862
Non cash expenditure – notional rent	Note 1	5,423	5,165
Net programme cost	Note 1	(155,694)	(142,048)
Balance at 31 December		14,003	2,251

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

2.2 Capital Assets

	IT Equipment €000	Furniture and Fittings €000	Office Equipment €000	Assets under Development €000	Total* €000
Gross Assets					
Cost or valuation at 1 January 2018	6,694	2,731	3,685	–	13,110
Additions	4,365	2	526	3,675	8,568
Disposals	(168)	(144)	(543)	–	(855)
Gross assets at 31 December 2018	10,891	2,589	3,668	3,675	20,823
Accumulated Depreciation:					
Opening balance at 1 January 2018	5,695	2,474	3,228	–	11,397
Depreciation for the year	1,273	40	354	–	1,667
Depreciation on disposals	(159)	(144)	(541)	–	(844)
Cumulative depreciation at 31 December 2018	6,809	2,370	3,041	–	12,220
Net Assets at 31 December 2018	4,082	219	627	3,675	8,603
Net Assets at 31 December 2017	999	257	457	–	1,713

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

2.3 Bank and Cash

	2018 €000	2017 €000
at 31 December		
PMG balances	400	1,060
Commercial bank accounts	–	9
	400	1,069

Other Commercial Bank Accounts

The commercial bank accounts referred to above relate to appropriation account funds. The Oireachtas holds two additional commercial bank accounts. Moneys in these accounts are managed and administrated by the Oireachtas for the provision and operation of bar and catering facilities. No moneys paid from the Commission are transmitted through these bank accounts although some moneys are surrendered to the Commission under schedule 2 of the Houses of the *Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003-2015* and as itemised in Note 4. The amount held at the end of 2018 is €243,166 and is not included in the account (2017: €253,284).

2.4 Stocks

	2018 €000	2017 €000
at 31 December		
Stationery	27	30
IT consumables	190	150
Other	79	35
	296	215

2.5 Prepayments*

	2018 €000	2017 €000
at 31 December	5,757	1,303

* Included in prepayments 2018 are capital equipment costs amounting to €1.793m, which, while purchased in 2018 will not be fully commissioned until 2019, as detailed below:

- Print Equipment – €1.169 million – a delay in delivery and installing the printing equipment was due to a requirement (not originally anticipated) to upgrade the print room to meet health and safety standards which will be completed by July 2019.
- Laptops – €0.612 million – purchased in November and December 2018 as part of the hardware refresh programme. Configuration of the laptops commenced in January 2019. Full roll out to staff, members and their staff commenced at the end of April 2019 and is due to conclude by the end of September 2019.
- Camera and TV Screen – €0.012 million – originally to be installed in the Seanad Chamber and a Committee Room respectively in Q1 2019, but deferred to the summer recess as part of the Leinster House renovation works.

2.6 Other Debit Balances

	2018 €000	2017 €000
at 31 December		
Recoupable salaries	7	7
Recoupment of travel schemes	261	271
Other debit items	447	453
	715	731

2.7 Other Credit Balances

	2018 €000	2017 €000
at 31 December		
Amounts due to the State		
Income tax	1,036	1,058
Pay Related Social Insurance	551	599
Professional Services Withholding Tax	326	80
Value Added Tax	266	103
Pension Contributions	198	207
Universal Social Charge	215	229
Other Credit Items	7	–
	2,599	2,276
Payroll deductions held in suspense	244	229
	2,843	2,505

2.8 Net amount due from the Exchequer

	Note	2018 €000	2017 €000
at 31 December			
Surplus		1,331	13,439
Exchequer grant undrawn		(2,354)	(14,146)
Net Exchequer Funding Due		(1,023)	(706)
Balance brought forward at 1 January		(705)	1
		(1,728)	(705)
Represented by:			
Debtors			
Bank	2.3	400	1,069
Other Debit balances	2.6	715	731
		1,115	1,800
Creditors			
Due to State	2.7	(2,599)	(2,276)
Other Credit balances	2.7	(244)	(229)
		(2,843)	(2,505)
		(1,728)	(705)

2.9 Commitments

	2018 €000	2017 €000
at 31 December		
Global commitments		
Procurement subheads	253	38
Grant subheads	—	—
Multi-annual commitments*	7,765	5,259

* This figure relates to 16 multi-annual contracts in relation to Broadcasting, Facilities and ICT, none of which exceed €6,350,000 individually.

2.10 Matured Liabilities

	2018 €000	2017 €000
at 31 December	1,230	1,599

Estimate of mature liabilities not discharged at year-end.

2.11 Contingent Liabilities

The Commission is involved in a number of legal proceedings which, depending on the outcome, may generate liabilities.

The Supreme Court has delivered judgment in relation to module one of the Kerins' proceedings. The Supreme Court has declared that the PAC acted unlawfully in relation to its examination of Ms Kerins and has awarded the costs of Module 1 (excluding discovery) to Ms Kerins, as against Dáil Éireann. This liability remains to be quantified.

3. Variations in Expenditure

The final gross outturn in relation to the Commission was €1.3 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. In cases of overspend, formal approval for virement was granted by the Commission and the Secretary General.

Description	Sub-Head	(Less)/ more than provided €000	Explanation
Administration			
Salaries, wages and allowances in respect of staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service	1(a)	(2,331)	The underspend relates to delays in filling 31 FTE vacancies throughout the year of which 18 remained unfilled at year end.
Travel and Subsistence	1(b)	(128)	The underspend related to lower than anticipated travel costs, especially in Committees and Interparliamentary activities.
Training and development and incidental expenses	1(c)	(796)	The underspend relates to an unused contingency of €0.5 million provided for exceptional purposes, lower than anticipated expenditure on HR specialists and external translation services.
Office Equipment and External IT Services	1(e)	8,105	The variation relates to approved additional expenditure for digital transformation and modernisation projects and the renewal of software licenses for three years.
Office Premises Expenses	1(f)	194	The overspend arose due to additional costs incurred in relation to the relocation of the Seanad to the National History Museum.
Consultancy services and value for money and policy review	1(g)	(1,891)	The underspend arose due to an unused contingency of €2 million for legal costs and a lower than anticipated demand for consultancy services.
Parliamentary printing	1(h)	(563)	The underspend arose due to a lower than anticipated demand for printing and a delay in the production of bound volumes.
Library & Research Services	1(i)	(951)	The underspend was primarily due to scheduled projects which were deferred to 2019, including the parliamentary archive project (€300k), a new library management system (€135k) and a new records management system (€257k).
Public relations and communications	1(j)	(233)	The underspend is mainly due to an unused provision for centenary commemorations including design costs.

Description	Sub-Head	(Less)/ more than provided €000	Explanation
Other Services			
Televising of Proceedings of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann and Other Services	2(c)	(628)	The underspend was primarily due to scheduled archiving and equipment replacement projects not completed in 2018.
Grant in respect of “Ciste Pinsean Thithe an Oireachtais”	2(i)	(1,984)	The underspend arose due to higher than anticipated contributions and because a contingency for death-in-service gratuity and ill-health retirement was not required.
Membership of Dáil Éireann			
Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for non-office holding Members	3(b)	1,129	The overspend arose due to an underprovision in the estimates for pay increments and overtime.
Travel and Accommodation Allowance	3(c)	(249)	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)	(343)	The underspend relates to a requirement to make a provision for full drawdown of certain allowances which was not claimed, in particular the Special Secretarial Allowance and the Constituency Office Grant.
Membership of Seanad Éireann			
Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for members	4(b)	429	The overspend arose due to an underprovision in the estimates for pay increments and overtime.
Public Representation Allowance	4(d)	(106)	The underspend relates to a requirement to make provision for a full drawdown of the Parliamentary Representative Allowance (PRA) which was not claimed.
Membership of Oireachtas Committees			
Travel expenses	5(a)	(127)	The underspend arose due to less committee travel being undertaken than had been provided for.
Expenses related to Committees	5(b)	(390)	The underspend arose due to a lower than anticipated demand for consultancy than was provided for.
Membership of the European Parliament			
Pensions of former Members	6(b)	(231)	The underspend relates to a lump sum provision for a new pensioner which was not required.

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 2018 financial statements record total receipts of €2,778,133 retained by the Commission and offset against its gross expenditure. Receipts of €6,284 relate to Broadcasting services, receipts of €196,767 relate to Catering and Bar services. The remainder of the receipts are made up of the following categories, receipts of €2,567,693 relate to pension related deductions on public service remuneration and the remaining €755 received in 2018 was retained by the Commission and offset against its gross expenditure. Receipts of €6,634 relate to MEP pension contributions and are off-set against Pensions of former members of the European Parliament.

	Estimated €000	2018 Realised €000	2017 Realised €000
1 Sales of services of Broadcasting Unit		6	9
2 Net income from catering and bar services (Note 6.9)		197	129
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).	3,000	2,568	2,356
Receipts recognised in Appropriation Account	3,000	2,771	2,494
4 Members' contributions under the European Parliament (Irish Representatives) Pension Scheme, 1979	–	7	5
Total Receipts	3,000	2,778	2,499

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 €221,867 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 2018.

5. Staffing and Remuneration

Houses of the Oireachtas Service*

5.1 Employee Numbers

	2018	2017
Number of staff at year end (full time equivalents)	564	546

5.2 Pay

	2018 €000	2017 €000
Pay	26,856	24,402
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	249	359
Other allowances	206	204
Overtime	1,186	1,077
Shift and roster allowances	478	456
Employer's PRSI	2,251	2,023
Severance Payments	—	—
Total pay	31,226	28,521

Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members and Parties

	2018	2017
Number of staff at year end (full time equivalents)	450	445
	€000	€000
Pay	17,791	17,401
Redundancy payments	119**	(18)
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	—	—
Overtime and extra attendance	3,196	2,333
Employer's PRSI	2,203	2,041
Total pay	23,309	21,757

* On the payroll of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service

** See Note 5.6, Severance/Redundancy

5.3 Allowances and Overtime Payments

	Number of recipients	Recipients of €10,000 or more	Highest individual payment 2018 €	Highest individual payment 2017 €
Houses of the Oireachtas Service				
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	79	5	19,317	25,992
Other allowances	92	1	49,010	48,864
Overtime	195	53	29,641	28,967
Shift and roster allowances	73	–	7,839	7,702
Number of individuals who received extra remuneration in more than one category	119	79	32,497	48,864
Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members and Parties				
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	–	–	–	–
Overtime and extra attendance	486	123	18,998	18,661
Number of individuals who received extra remuneration in more than one category	–	–	–	–

5.4 Other Remuneration Arrangements

Payments totalling €35,932 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 €96,050 in 49 instances.

5.5 Payroll Overpayments

In 2018, the Commission identified 42 individuals with payroll overpayments totalling €35,500. Of these cases, at the 31st December 2018:

- 27 with a total value of €15,964 had fully repaid
- 5 with a total value of €7,535 had recovery arrangements in place
- 10 with a total value of €12,001 did not have a recovery arrangement

The carried forward balance at 1 Jan 2018 relating to 23 individuals was €66,272. An adjustment of €1,988 relating to the revision of amounts owing on pre 2018 cases was applied bringing the total to €68,260. Of these cases, at the 31st December 2018:

- 11 with a total value of €13,261 had fully repaid
- 5 with a total value of €6,292 had recovery arrangements in place
- 6 with a total value of €12,122 did not have a recovery arrangement
- 1 with a value of €36,585 was with legal advisors

In line with policy, the Commission continues to pursue recoupment of funds outstanding.

No overpayment debts or recovery plans were transferred to any other Department in 2018.

	2018 €	2017 €
Outstanding balance 1 January	66,272	82,913
Overpayments identified in the year	35,500	43,609
Repayments/Adjustments	(27,237)	(60,250)
Outstanding balance at 31 December	74,535	66,272
Number of cases at 31 December	27	23

5.6 Severance, Redundancy and Termination Payments

A total of €51,004 was paid in redundancy to 6 political staff members. €47,542 was paid to 4 political staff members under the Scheme for Secretarial Assistants. In addition to their redundancy payments these 4 staff members also received €27,145 in pension lump sums. €3,462 was paid to 2 political staff members under the Scheme for Temporary Vouched Employees (TVE).

Following a review by DPER and with effect from the 1st February 2018 the Voluntary Early Redundancy (VER) scheme policy was amended to provide that political staff who return to employment after a period of one year are no longer required to repay any severance payment they have received. Under this new arrangement and with DPERs sanction a total of 8 political staff who had made refunds to the Commission were refunded a total of €51,012. At that time a total of €5,644 in repayments had been recouped from them in 2018 resulting in a net payment figure of €45,368.

A repayment of €616 was recouped from 1 political staff member who returned after a period of less than one year.

All VER recoupments have now been settled.

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 €375 remains outstanding at 31st December 2018 with recoupment arrangements in place.

A total of €45,914 was paid in termination payments to two Senators who had resigned their seats in 2017 and 2018.

6. Miscellaneous

6.1 Compensation and legal costs

	Number of cases	Legal costs paid by the Commission €000	Legal Costs awarded €000	Compensation awarded €000	2018 Total €000	2017 €000
Claims by:						
employees	6	62	–	–	62	
members of the public	3	485	–	–	485	
		547	–	–	547	99

6.2 Fraud or Alleged Fraud

In 2018, the Oireachtas was made aware of one case of alleged fraud, in relation to a salary incremental credit claim over a period of 18 months which is currently under investigation by An Garda Síochána. There is insufficient information available to categorise the incident or provide a financial estimate while investigations are ongoing.

The Service will continue to make every effort to recover exchequer funds where fraud or irregularities have occurred.

6.3 Late Payment Interest and Compensation

	2018 €	2017 €
Total of interest and compensation paid	1,710	1,264

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.

Account of receipts and payments for year ended 31 December 2018

	2018 €	2017 €
Balance at 1 January	33,807	36,709
Grant [subhead 2(e)]	70,000	100,000
Miscellaneous receipts	191	450
Uncashed cheque	249	237
Total Receipts	70,440	100,687
Payments		
Plenary sessions	66,188	81,390
Committees	11,731	20,522
Miscellaneous	1,490	1,677
Total Payments	79,409	103,589
Balance as at 31 December	24,838	33,807

7.2 Cumann Parlaiminteach na hÉireann

Grant in respect of inter-parliamentary activities

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.

Account of receipts and payments for year ended 31 December 2018

	2018 €	2017 €
Balance at the 1 January	30,896	54,218
Grant [subhead 2(d)]	217,408	151,588
Members Subscriptions	2,013	2,737
Total Receipts	219,421	154,325
Payments		
Expenses associated with Irish delegations on foreign visits	67,193	41,731
Expenses associated with foreign delegations visiting Ireland	70,076	49,363
Inter Parliamentary Union Conference expenses	39,515	39,216
Other expenses	49,628	47,337
Total Payments	226,412	177,647
Balance as at 31 December	23,905	30,896

7.3 Accounts of the Catering and Bar Services

Income and Expenditure Account for year ended 31 December 2018

	2018 €	2017 €
Sales	1,301,711	1,250,458
Cost of sales	(766,519)	(736,553)
Gross Surplus	535,192	513,905
Expenses	(406,968)	(374,858)
Net Surplus	128,224	139,047

Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2018

	2018 €	2017 €
Fixed assets	23,760	38,145
Current assets		
Stock	43,778	38,133
Debtors	46,482	45,174
VAT and Prepayments	30,015	55,859
Bank and cash	243,166	253,284
	363,441	392,450
Current liabilities		
Trade creditors	(183,483)	(158,323)
Total net assets	203,718	272,272
Finance by:		
Cumulative surplus/(Deficit) Retained excluding subhead 2(a)	1,011,368	872,321
Surplus/(Deficit) current year excluding subhead 2(a)	128,224	139,047
Cumulative paid to date to Houses of the Oireachtas	(935,874)	(739,096)
	203,718	272,272

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 €1,676,976 (2017: €1,572,940).
- 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 2018 was €196,767 (2017: €128,631).

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 2018 to 31 December 2018

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 8,758 payments were processed with a total value of €40.7 million. Of those payments 25 incurred penalties and interest under the Act totalling €1,710.10. Sixteen of these payments involved invoices in excess of €317.

Reduction of payment period to 15 days

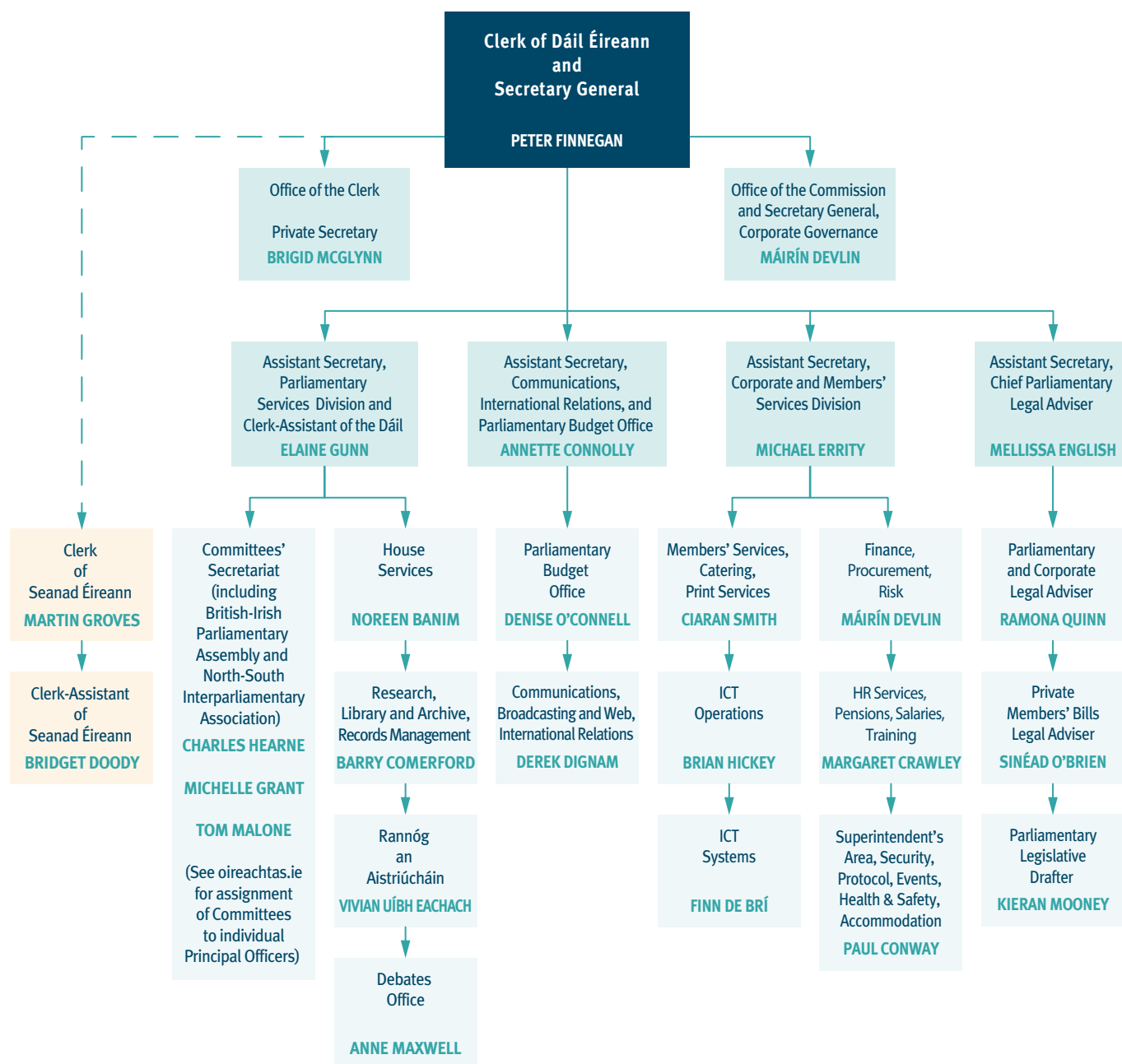
With effect from 15 June 2009, the Service reduced its maximum target period for payments to suppliers from 30 days to 15 days to reflect a change in Government policy. Had the 15-day target been in place on a statutory basis, a further 626 payments would have incurred prompt payment interest, representing 7% of the total number of commercial payments processed from 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2018.



Michael Errity,
Assistant Secretary,
Corporate and Members' Services
11 April 2019

Appendix I:

Houses of the Oireachtas Service Organisation Chart



Appendix II:

Statement of Resources 2018 (Civil Service staff only)

Summary of Numbers by Grade		
Grades	Approved Numbers 2018	Total Numbers in place December 2018
Secretary General	1	1
Assistant Secretary	4	4
Principal Officer (Higher)	1	1
Principal Officer	18	21
Assistant Principal	67	67
Senior Clerk	57	56
Administrative Officer	19	18
Junior Clerk	61	63
Clerical Officer	81	78
Advisory Counsel	9	10
Assistant Parliamentary Counsel	2	2
Deputy Editor	3	3
Assistant Editor	7	7
Reporter	41	38
Reporter (Communications)	0	1
Senior Researcher	12	11
Researcher	16	10
Assistant Librarian	7	7
Aistritheoir Grád 1	2	4
Aistritheoir Grád 2	10	5
Aistritheoir Grád 3	12	9
Usher Grade I	4	4
Usher Grade II	8	8
Usher Grade III	46.5	46.5
Head/Deputy Head Services Officer	2	2
Services Officer	16	17
Services Attendant	2	2
Parliamentary Porter	3	3
Telephonist	3	0.25
Cleaner	9	8
Specialist, Temporary and Other Staff*	5	5
Total Civil Service Staff	529	511**

* Archivist, FOI Officer, Senior Auditor, Education Officer, Third Secretary

** Numbers are rounded

Appendix III:

Annual Report of the Audit Committee of the Commission 2018

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1. Establishment and Membership of the Committee

The Audit Committee was placed on a statutory footing in 2010 under section 14A of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2009.

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. 2018 Membership of the Committee

- Mr Pat McLoughlin (Chairperson)
- Senator Ned O'Sullivan (member of the Commission)
- Senator Catherine Ardagh (member of Seanad Éireann)
- Senator Victor Boyhan (member of Seanad Éireann)
- Senator Kieran O'Donnell (member of Seanad Éireann)
- Mr Cyril Maybury (external member)
- Ms Noreen Fahy (external member)

- Mr Charles Hearne (member of the staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service)

3. Role of the Audit Committee

The role of the Committee is:

- a) to advise the Secretary General on financial matters relating to their 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, 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 2018

The Audit Committee met four times during 2018.

The Committee considered the following Internal Audit Reports in 2018:

(i) Internal Audit on Business Continuity Planning

The audit assessed whether the Service's current Business Continuity Planning can provide for the continuation of Oireachtas business in the event of a disaster.

(ii) Internal Audit on the Oireachtas Bars and Restaurants

The audit reviewed and appraised the adequacy, reliability, and effectiveness of the risk management, control, and governance processes in operation in the Bar and Restaurant. The audit also encompassed a financial review to establish the extent to which the Annual Financial Reports and the Accounts of the Catering and Bar Services gave an accurate reflection of the assets, liabilities, and financial position of the Oireachtas Bars and Restaurants as at 31 December 2017.

(iii) Internal Audit on the Use of Social Media

The principal aim of this audit was to review and appraise the controls surrounding the adequacy, reliability, and effectiveness of the organisation's use of social media.

Other Reports considered by the Committee:

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

The Audit Committee considered the 2017 C&AG Report on the financial 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 Materialisation Reports.

(iv) Public Representation Allowance audit

The Committee considered the independent auditors Report on the Public Representation Allowance (PRA) for 2016. 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) C&AG Reports on the Ciste Pinsean 2016 and 2017

The C&AG's Reports for both 2016 and 2017 stated the accounts properly presented the transactions on the account for each year and that no issues arose in either year with the C&AG that needed to be communicated by way of a Management Letter.

(vi) Protocol for new Credit Arrangement for Members

The Committee noted a protocol for new credit arrangements for members for purchases in the Bar and Restaurant which came into effect from 23 April 2018.

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 2018

No.	Bill Title
1	Industrial Development (Amendment) Bill 2018
2	Vehicle Registration Data (Automated Searching and Exchange) Bill 2018 [Seanad]
3	Trade Union Representation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2018 [PMB]
4	Valuation (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
5	Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
6	Control of Economic Activity (Occupied Territories) Bill 2018 [Seanad] [PMB]
7	Social Welfare (Payment Order) (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
8	Central Bank (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
9	Petroleum and Other Minerals Development (Amendment) (Climate Emergency Measures) Bill 2018 [PMB]
10	Data Protection Bill 2018 [Seanad]
11	Overcrowded Housing Bill 2018 [PMB]
12	Prohibition of Sulky-Racing Bill 2018 [PMB]
13	Telecommunications Services (Ducting and Cables) Bill 2018 [Seanad]
14	Finance (Office of Tax Simplification) Bill 2018 [PMB]
15	Arts (Dignity at Work) (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
16	Extreme Weather (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2018 [PMB]
17	Protection of Employment (Measures to Counter False Self-Employment) Bill 2018 [Seanad] [PMB]
18	Public Service Superannuation (Amendment) Bill 2018
19	Radiological Protection (Amendment) Bill 2018
20	Public Health (Availability of Defibrillators) Bill 2018 [PMB]

No.	Bill Title
21	Consumer Protection (Regulation of Credit Servicing Firms) (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
22	Competition and Consumer Protection (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
23	Maternity Protection (Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas) Bill 2018 [PMB]
24	Industrial Development (Science Foundation Ireland) (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
25	Arts (Dignity at Work) (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2018 [Seanad] [PMB]
26	Gambling Control Bill 2018 [PMB]
27	Criminal Law (Recruitment of Children to Engage in Criminal Activity) Bill 2018 [PMB]
28	Sex Offenders (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
29	Thirty-sixth Amendment of the Constitution Bill 2018
30	Prohibition of Bogus Self-Employment Bill 2018 [PMB]
31	Copyright and Other Intellectual Property Law Provisions Bill 2018
32	Residential Tenancies (Residential Tenancies Board) (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
33	Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
34	Provision of Objective Sex Education Bill 2018 [PMB]
35	Residential Tenancies (Greater Security of Tenure and Rent Certainty) Bill 2018 [PMB]
36	Markets in Financial Instruments Bill 2018
37	National Infrastructure Bill 2018 [PMB]
38	Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
39	Prohibition of Conversion Therapies Bill 2018 [Seanad] [PMB]
40	Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) (Amendment) Bill 2018

No.	Bill Title
41	Local Government Accountability Bill 2018 [Seanad] [PMB]
42	Short-term Lettings Bill 2018 [Seanad] [PMB]
43	Industrial Relations (Collective Action) Bill 2018 [Seanad] [PMB]
44	First Aid and Mental Health in Schools (Initial Teacher Training) Bill 2018 [Seanad] [PMB]
45	Residential Tenancies (Student Rents, Rights and Protections) Bill 2018 [PMB]
46	All Terrain Vehicle Safety Bill 2018 [PMB]
47	Free Education (Prohibition of Fees and Charges) Bill 2018 [Seanad] [PMB]
48	First Aid and Mental Health in Schools (Existing Teachers) Bill 2018 [Seanad] [PMB]
49	Broadcasting (Amendment) Bill 2018 [Seanad] [PMB]
50	National Monuments (The Moore Street Battlefield) Bill 2018 [PMB]
51	Mental Health (Capacity to Consent to Treatment) Bill 2018 [Seanad] [PMB]
52	Residential Tenancies (Rent Pressure Zones and Student Accommodation) (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
53	Údarás na Gaeltachta (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
54	Homeless Prevention Bill 2018 [PMB]
55	Data Sharing and Governance Bill 2018 [Seanad]
56	Civil Liability (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
57	Civil Liability (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2018 [PMB]
58	Home Building Finance Ireland Bill 2018
59	Insurance (Amendment) Bill 2018
60	Emergency Homeless Accommodation and Direct Provision Independent Inspection Bill 2018 [PMB]
61	Management Fees (Local Property Tax) Relief Bill 2018 [PMB]
62	Civil Liability and Courts (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
63	Urban Regeneration and Housing (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]

No.	Bill Title
64	Irish Coast Guard Authority Bill 2018 [PMB]
65	Education (Digital Devices in Schools) Bill 2018 [Seanad] [PMB]
66	Health (General Practitioner Service) Bill 2018 [Seanad]
67	Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
68	Civil Liability (Amendment) (No.3) Bill 2018 [Seanad] [PMB]
69	Tax Law Reform and Codification Advisory Committee Bill 2018 [PMB]
70	Industrial and Provident Societies (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
71	Traveller Culture and History in Education Bill 2018 [Seanad] [PMB]
72	Property Services (Regulation) (Amendment) (Management Company Regulation) Bill 2018 [PMB]
73	Personal Injuries Assessment Board (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
74	Local Government (Restoration of Town Councils) Bill 2018 [PMB]
75	Children and Family Relationships (Amendment) Bill 2018
76	Public Service Superannuation (Age of Retirement) Bill 2018 [Seanad]
77	Affordable Housing and Fair Mortgage Bill 2018 [PMB]
78	Forestry (Planning Permission) (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
79	Child and Family Agency (Foster Care Oversight) Bill 2018 [PMB]
80	Children's Health Bill 2018 [Seanad]
81	Central Bank (National Claims Information Database) Bill 2018
82	Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Climate Change Reporting) Bill 2018 [PMB]
83	Assaults on Older Persons Bill 2018 [PMB]
84	Dublin (North Inner City) Development Authority Bill 2018 [PMB]

No.	Bill Title
85	Shared Maternity Leave and Benefit Bill 2018 [PMB]
86	Road Traffic (Regulation of Rickshaws) (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
87	Thirty-seventh Amendment of the Constitution (Repeal of offence of publication or utterance of blasphemous matter) Bill 2018
88	Charities (Human Rights) Bill 2018 [Seanad] [PMB]
89	Industrial Relations (Amendment) Bill 2018
90	Health Service Executive (Governance) Bill 2018 [Seanad]
91	Local Government Bill 2018
92	Criminal Justice (Mutual Recognition of Probation Judgments and Decisions) Bill 2018
93	Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) (Amendment) Bill 2018
94	Coroners (Amendment) Bill 2018
95	Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Bill 2018 [Seanad]
96	Local Government (Rates) Bill 2018
97	Personal Injuries Assessment Board (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2018
98	Mental Health (Renewal Orders) Bill 2018 [Seanad]
99	Thirty-Seventh Amendment Of The Constitution (Economic, Social And Cultural Rights) Bill 2018
100	Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Emissions Targets) Bill 2018 [PMB]
101	Finance (African Development (Bank and Fund) and Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2018 – changed from African Development (Bank and Fund) Bill 2018
102	Statute of Limitations (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
103	National Lottery (Protection of Central Fund) Bill 2018 [PMB]
104	Local Government (Water Pollution) (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
105	Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Bill 2018

No.	Bill Title
106	Health and Social Care Professionals (Amendment) Bill 2018 [Seanad]
107	Prohibition of Fur Farming Bill 2018 [PMB]
108	Social Welfare Commission Bill 2018 [PMB]
109	Greyhound Racing Bill 2018 [Seanad]
110	Residential Tenancies (Prevention of Family Homelessness) Bill 2018 [PMB]
111	Finance Bill 2018
112	Perjury and Related Offences Bill 2018 [Seanad]
113	Freedom Of Information (Oversight of the Office of the President) (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
114	Dublin Transport Authority (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
115	Farm Safety Agency Bill 2018 [Seanad] [PMB]
116	National Surplus (Reserve Fund for Exceptional Contingencies) Bill 2018
117	Irish Film Board (Amendment) Bill 2018
118	Just Transition (Worker and Community Environmental Rights) Bill 2018 [PMB]
119	Housing Emergency Measures in the Public Interest Bill 2018 [PMB]
120	Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Bill 2018
121	Thirty-Eighth Amendment of the Constitution (Neutrality) Bill 2018 [PMB]
122	Health Insurance (Amendment) Bill 2018 [Seanad]
123	European Investment Fund Agreement Bill 2018 [Seanad]
124	Irish Nationality and Citizenship (Naturalisation of Minors Born in Ireland) Bill 2018 [Seanad] [PMB]
125	Regulation of Intimate Piercing and Tattooing Bill 2018 [PMB]
126	Residential Tenancies (Prohibition on Viewing Fees) Bill 2018 [PMB]
127	Childcare Price Transparency Bill 2018 [PMB]
128	Dublin Transport Authority (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2018 [PMB]

No.	Bill Title
129	Criminal Law (Extraterritorial Jurisdiction) Bill 2018 [Seanad]
130	Aircraft Noise (Dublin Airport) Regulation Bill 2018
131	Anti-Evictions Bill 2018 [PMB]
132	Data Protection (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
133	Children's Digital Protection Bill 2018 [Seanad] [PMB]
134	Multi-Unit Developments (Amendment) (Sinking Fund) Bill 2018 [PMB]
135	Consumer Credit (Amendment) Bill 2018 [PMB]
136	Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Bill 2018
137	Appropriation Bill 2018
138	Housing (Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability) Bill 2018 [PMB]
139	Treatment of Cancer (Advertisements) Bill 2018 [PMB]
140	Residential Tenancies (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2018
141	Criminal Justice (Rehabilitative Periods) Bill 2018 [Seanad] [PMB]
142	Consumer Protection (Gift Vouchers) Bill 2018 [Seanad]

Appendix V:

Bills Passed by the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2018

No.	Act Title
1	Intoxicating Liquor (Amendment) Act 2018 [PMB]
2	Public Service Superannuation (Amendment) Act 2018
3	Technological Universities Act 2018
4	Telecommunications Services (Ducting and Cables) Act 2018
5	Vehicle Registration Data (Automated Searching and Exchange) Act 2018
6	Domestic Violence Act 2018
7	Data Protection Act 2018
8	Radiological Protection (Amendment) Act 2018
9	Criminal Justice (Corruption Offences) Act 2018
10	Mental Health (Amendment) Act 2018 [PMB]
11	Childcare Support Act 2018
12	National Archives (Amendment) Act 2018
13	Health (General Practitioner Service) Act 2018
14	Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018
15	Heritage Act 2018
16	Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018
17	Intoxicating Liquor (Breweries and Distilleries) Act 2018 [PMB]
18	Road Traffic (Amendment) Act 2018
19	Industrial Development (Amendment) Act 2018
20	Children and Family Relationships (Amendment) Act 2018
21	Insurance (Amendment) Act 2018
22	Companies (Statutory Audits) Act 2018
	Thirty-sixth Amendment of the Constitution Act 2018
23	Mental Health (Renewal Orders) Act 2018

No.	Act Title
24	Public Health (Alcohol) Act 2018
25	Markets in Financial Instruments Act 2018
26	Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) (Amendment) Act 2018
27	Children's Health Act 2018
	Thirty-seventh Amendment of the Constitution (Repeal of offence of publication or utterance of blasphemous matter) Act 2018
28	Home Building Finance Ireland Act 2018
29	Fossil Fuel Divestment Act 2018 [PMB]
30	Finance Act 2018
31	Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018
32	European Investment Fund Agreement Act 2018
33	Appropriation Act 2018
34	Irish Film Board (Amendment) Act 2018
35	Health Insurance (Amendment) Act 2018
36	Consumer Protection (Regulation of Credit Servicing Firms) Act 2018 [PMB]
37	Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Act 2018
38	Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2018
39	Public Service Superannuation (Age of Retirement) Act 2018
40	Finance (African Development (Bank and Fund) and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2018
41	Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2018
42	Central Bank (National Claims Information Database) Act 2018

Appendix VI:

Meetings and Reports of Parliamentary Committees in 2018

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Joint Committees of Both Houses

Committee	Number of meetings held	Number of reports presented to the Houses
Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine	35	8
Joint Committee on Business, Enterprise and Innovation	18	4
Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs	20	2
Joint Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment	32	3
Joint Committee on Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	15	1
Joint Committee on Education and Skills	24	5
Joint Committee on Employment Affairs and Social Protection	17	2
Joint Committee on European Union Affairs	21	2
Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform and Taoiseach	45	7
Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence	16	1
Joint Committee on Health	32	6
Joint Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government	41	9
Joint Committee on Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement	14	–
Joint Committee on Justice and Equality	32	11
Joint Committee on Rural and Community Development	14	–
Joint Committee on Transport, Tourism and Sport	28	2

Select Committees of Dáil Éireann

Committee	Number of meetings held	Number of reports presented to the Houses
Select Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine	2	–
Select Committee on Business, Enterprise and Innovation	8	–
Select Committee on Children and Youth Affairs	3	–
Select Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment	3	–
Select Committee on Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	3	–
Select Committee on Education and Skills	2	–
Select Committee on Employment Affairs and Social Protection	4	–
Select Committee on European Union Affairs	–	–
Select Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform and Taoiseach	14	–
Select Committee on Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence	3	–
Select Committee on Health	8	–
Select Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government	5	–
Select Committee on Justice and Equality	14	–
Select Committee on Rural and Community Development	1	–
Select Committee on Transport, Tourism and Sport	5	–

Standing Committees

Committee	Number of meetings held	Number of reports presented to the Houses
Committee on Budgetary Oversight (Dáil)	27	6
Joint Committee on Irish Language, Gaeltacht and the Islands	19	–
Select Committee on Members' Interests of Dáil Éireann	1	–
Select Committee on Members' Interests of Seanad Éireann	2	–
Committee of Public Accounts (Dáil)	41	5
Joint Committee on Public Petitions	15	–

Special Committees		
Committee	Number of meetings held	Number of reports presented to the Houses
Joint Committee on Climate Action ⁷	18	–
Joint Committee on the Future of Mental Health Care ⁸	21	1
Select Committee on the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Seanad)	3	–

Notes

1. 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).

2. The number of reports presented in the tables includes committee reports on review and oversight of public policy matters, financial scrutiny, EU scrutiny, pre-legislative scrutiny, and scrutiny of Private Members' Bills. Internal reports relating to the conduct of committee business, such as its annual work programme, annual report, and reports on official travel undertaken by a Committee are not included in the tables.

⁷ Established on 3 July 2018.

⁸ Established on 18 July 2017 and completed its work on 16 October 2018.

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 2018 to 31 December 2018.

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 2018

No protected disclosures were received by the Houses of the Oireachtas Service in the reporting period 1 January 2018 to 31 December 2018.

Appendix VIII:

Commission Meetings and Attendance in 2018

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 12 meetings in 2018. The Finance Committee held five meetings in 2018.

Members	Meetings	
	Commission	Finance Committee
Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl, Ceann Comhairle (Chairperson)	12/12	–
Senator Denis O'Donovan, Cathaoirleach of the Seanad (Deputy Chairperson)	9/12	5/5
Mr Peter Finnegan, Secretary General (Chief Executive)	12/12	–
Senator Paudie Coffey	7/12	4/5
Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy	12/12	–
Senator Gerard P. Craughwell	9/12	4/5
Deputy Timmy Dooley	7/12	3/5
Deputy Martin Heydon	9/12	2/5
Deputy Catherine Murphy	5/12	–
Deputy Louise O'Reilly	8/12	4/5
Senator Ned O'Sullivan	8/12	–

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 – 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 Board – the Management Board of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service. The role of the Management Board is to provide leadership, and set the strategic direction for the Service.

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 Parliamentary Legal Advisers (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, 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.

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.