



Coimisiún Thithe  
an Oireachtais  
Houses of the  
Oireachtas Commission

# Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Annual Report 2019

### **Houses of the Oireachtas**

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## Centenary Declaration

*On this occasion of the Centenary of the first meeting of Dáil Éireann on 21st January 1919,*

*We, the representatives of the Irish people, acknowledge and reflect on our shared and complex history;*

*We commemorate and honour the vision, bravery and sacrifice of the members of the first Dáil Éireann;*

*We take pride in, and cherish, their legacy of parliamentary democracy; and*

*We solemnly commit, in this Declaration, to safeguarding and strengthening our parliamentary democracy, for the good of our nation, and for the next hundred years.*

*Seán Ó Fearghail*

**Seán Ó Fearghail, T.D.**  
Ceann Comhairle

*Denis O'Donovan*

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

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## Introduction by Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach

**W**e are pleased to present the 2019 annual report to the Houses of the Oireachtas pursuant to the statutory reporting requirement specified in section 6 of the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003-2018* (the Commission Acts).

The report presents an overview of the work of the Commission in performing its functions, specifically in relation to the provision of services to support the work of the Houses of the Oireachtas and members of parliament. The audited financial accounts, presented at page 75, show expenditure incurred in running the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2019.

The annual progress report on implementation of the Strategic Plan, presented to the Commission by the Secretary General in accordance with section 16 of the Commission Acts, is set out at page 19. The report presents progress against the Strategic Plan in 2019. We acknowledge the achievements over the past year, the actions planned to take forward the strategy over the next period of the Plan, and the efforts of staff of the Service in achieving the progress reported.

This year's annual report is presented at an extraordinary time as our nation addresses the profound changes to our lives brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

We express our sincere condolences to the families and friends of those who have died as a result of COVID-19.

We also express our gratitude to all those remarkable workers in the frontline; our health care workers caring for our population; those who returned home from abroad and came out of retirement offering their skills and expertise; our key workers providing essential services; our public servants providing vital public services; and the extraordinary efforts by neighbours and volunteers across our communities who have stepped in to help the most vulnerable.

Thank you for your service to us all.

The Houses of the Oireachtas and parliamentarians have an important role in providing oversight of the measures imposed to protect public health and their impact on lives and livelihoods. At a time when the people have made great sacrifices and shown great determination to support the public health effort, it has never been more important for elected representatives to raise the concerns of their constituents in parliament and ensure that the response to the public health emergency is underpinned by parliamentary scrutiny.

Reflecting more broadly on our work over the last year, the completion of the Georgian Leinster House Restoration Project was an important milestone. The restoration and conservation of the 274-year-old House was a major undertaking that will not only preserve its history for future generations, the upgrade of the building will ensure that Leinster House will meet the needs of our parliament and parliamentarians and continue to be accessible and welcoming to visitors for years to come. We express our appreciation to Commissioner John McMahon, the Chief Architect, Ciaran O'Connor and their team of officials from the Office of Public Works.

The transition of Seanad Éireann back to Leinster House from its temporary chamber in the National Museum of Ireland was the first objective in preparing the building for reoccupation. The work included re-instating the Seanad chamber in the House in time for the resumption of Seanad sittings following the summer recess. We would like to express our appreciation to the Board of the National Museum of Ireland who supported us during this project.

Connecting the public with their parliament and making the Houses more accessible is an integral part of the *Commission's Communications Strategy*. Much has already been achieved to advance this objective and this work continued through a variety of initiatives over the course of the year.

In January 2019, a special sitting of both Houses of the Oireachtas was held in the Mansion House to commemorate the centenary of the first meeting of Dáil Éireann. To commemorate this historic occasion, throughout the year the Houses hosted a programme of public engagements events under the *Dáil 100* commemorative programme to open the institution to the public.

To mark the completion of the restoration project, Leinster House was opened to the public for a programme of special guided tours and cultural activities, allowing visitors to explore the historic House and learn about its restoration and conservation from those involved in the project.

Another area of focus was to facilitate young people in having their voices heard in our national parliament. In November, 157 young people took their seats in Dáil Éireann to convene the first *Youth Assembly on Climate*. The event was a unique opportunity for young delegates from across the country to present their views and proposals on climate action from the floor of the Dáil chamber to TDs, Senators and Ministers. We would like to express gratitude to RTÉ for working with the Houses of the Oireachtas Service in organising the Assembly.

We were also privileged to host *Dáil na nÓg*, the national parliament for young people, for their biannual debate in Leinster House as part of the *Dáil 100* commemorative programme.

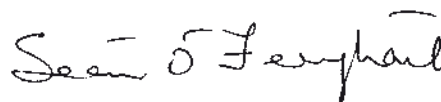
These were important occasions to observe young people's engagement with the democratic process and to hear from the next generation of decision makers on the issues of importance to them. We would like to commend the young people involved for their thought-provoking debates in the Chamber.

We welcomed over 98,000 visitors to Leinster House in 2019. While visitor access to the Houses has been suspended during the current period to comply with public health guidelines, Oireachtas TV will continue to broadcast live coverage of proceedings of the Dáil, Seanad and the parliamentary committees. We will also continue to facilitate engagement by schools and students with our online education programme, and our online and digital communications channels will be further utilised to provide information to the public on the work of the Houses. We invite you to visit the Houses of the Oireachtas online at [www.oireachtas.ie](http://www.oireachtas.ie).

The Commission's financial account for the year ended 31 December 2019, which has been audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General, is set out at page 75. The Commission strives to ensure efficient use of public resources in the performance of its functions. The account shows that expenditure incurred in running the Houses last year was €127 million against a budget of €149 million. This amount included provision for elections to both Houses which was carried over to 2020, resulting in a net underspend in 2019 of €22 million (15%).

Last year was the final year of the 32nd Dáil and 25th Seanad. An important objective of the Commission and the Service at the current time is to support newly elected members in undertaking their legislative roles in the Dáil and Seanad.

In closing, we would like to express our appreciation to former members who served on the Commission over the last four years, and also the Committees who assist the Commission. We welcome new Commission members and we look forward to working with them in the period ahead. We acknowledge the achievements of the Service over the last year. We would like to thank the Secretary General, the Management Board and the staff of the Service for their work in delivering the services required to support the Houses of the Oireachtas and their members. We express particular gratitude to the Service for their work in responding to the exceptional challenge to maintain the vital services required to enable the parliamentary business and the work of members to continue, in a safe manner, during the COVID-19 pandemic.



**Seán Ó Feargháil TD**

*Ceann Comhairle*



**Senator Denis O'Donovan**

*Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann*



## Secretary General's Overview

### Annual Report on Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2019-2021 – A Parliament which Works for the People

I am pleased to present the 2019 Report on the Implementation of the *Strategic Plan 2019-2021 – A Parliament which Works for the People*.

This Strategic Plan is being delivered as we move forward into the second century of Dáil Éireann. However, the world has changed dramatically since the plan was commenced in 2019. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic we are faced with new and unprecedented challenges. In particular we must find new ways to provide services to the members of the 33rd Dáil Éireann and 26th Seanad Éireann to enable them to carry out their parliamentary functions effectively during this challenging period, while ensuring the safety and wellbeing of everyone in our parliamentary community.

This report for 2019 is prepared in accordance with section 16(1)(k) of the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003-2018* (the Commission Acts), which requires me, as Secretary General, to present a progress report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan annually to the Commission.

2019 was a very significant year for the Houses of the Oireachtas as we commemorated the centenary of the first sitting of Dáil Éireann. On 21 January 2019, the Dáil commemorated the centenary with a live televised ceremonial event in the Mansion House that reflected on 100 years of unbroken parliamentary democracy. The event was opened by the Ceann Comhairle. President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins, gave the keynote address and the event concluded with a Joint Sitting of the Houses and the

presentation of the Centenary Declaration to the Sitting. *Dáil 100* events continued throughout 2019 with a focus on commemorating 100 years of political discourse, debate and law-making in Dáil Éireann.

In 2019, the Commission's outturn was €127m. At the end of 2019, the Commission employed 516 FTE staff, 8 Office Holders' staff and 47 FTE State Industrial staff employed in the Catering Services and Print Facility. There are also 544 (454 FTE) political staff that support the work of members in their role as parliamentarians and representatives of the people.

The current Strategic Plan follows a period of significant parliamentary reform and organisational change that continues into the current strategy period. These include the establishment on 1st January 2019 of the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) and the Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers (OPLA) on a statutory basis. The PBO has become an integral part of the financial scrutiny system in the Houses of the Oireachtas, and its services, reports and skills are continuing to evolve over the current strategy period. The PBO produced 78 publications in 2019, gave nine briefings to the Budget Oversight Committee, and published its Pre-Budget 2020 Commentary that provided Members with a fiscal overview ahead of Budget Day.

The OPLA has an important role in delivering legal advice to Office Holders, members, Committees and to the Service and in managing legal proceedings.



There were 438 legal advices issued to the Service in 2019. It has also developed new services to support private members' legislation. Six Private Members Bills were passed in 2019.

The Library & Research Services (L&RS) continues to provide information, research and analysis services for members to a high standard of quality. The L&RS redesigned and redeveloped their internal website. This enables members and staff to quickly and easily find relevant research and information resources published by the L&RS and to submit research requests online. The L&RS Records Management Unit developed and rolled out General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) training to members and staff. The Service received 17 Data Protection Subject Access Requests (SARs) in 2019. It also supported the development and going-live of a new eFOI system for the Service. The Service received 272 FOI requests in 2019.

In 2019, the Houses and their Committees were particularly busy. The Service supported the Dáil on each of its 106 sitting days and the Seanad on each of its 93 sitting days. Forty-eight Government Bills were passed in 2019. The Seanad held 588 Commencement debates and the Seanad Public Consultation Committee published its report *'Travellers Towards a More Equitable Ireland Post-Recognition'*. The committees held 623 meetings, attended by nearly 2,000 witnesses and presented 61 committee reports.

The Service also launched its *Irish Sign Language (ISL) Strategy 2019-2021*. Its purpose is to put Irish Sign Language supports in place for witnesses and visitors attending the Houses and Committees; for viewers of 'Oireachtas TV'; for visitors to our website and social media sites; for visitors on tours of the Houses and for members and staff.

2019 saw the completion of the structural and restoration work programme for the Georgian Leinster House building. This allowed the Seanad to move back to its permanent home in Leinster House. Every aspect of the house from the basement to the attic and roof has been carefully restored and conserved – breathing new life back into the building. With this extensive restoration work carefully managed by the Office of Public Works (OPW) and the Houses of the Oireachtas, Georgian Leinster House has been preserved for future generations of members as the home of Parliamentary democracy and for the many visitors we welcome each year. Visitors include students as part of the Parliamentary Education Programmes and members of parliamentary delegations who visit the Houses of the Oireachtas as we broaden our working engagement with other parliaments.

Ensuring the security and safety of visitors to the Houses and of members and staff is a high priority for the Service. The teams of Parliamentary Ushers and Service Officers ensure correct access to Leinster House and ensure that visitors, officials, and Parliamentary delegations are escorted properly and safely during their visits.

Providing secure and appropriate additional accommodation for the parliamentary community and for public engagement spaces is an ongoing challenge for the Service. Work has commenced on the development of long-term strategies and plans to provide for the future accommodation requirements of the Houses and for promoting and implementing sustainable solutions and practices for the Houses.

Investing in technology is a key strategic objective of the Service. 2019 saw the continuation of the Digital Transformation Programme that aims to make the Service a 'Digital First' organisation.

Over the past twelve months, the organisation has worked together to deliver a number of major projects under the Digital Transformation Programme. We have seen project teams work towards the development of the Motions and Statements applications, forming part of the new Digital Parliament System. The Salaries Unit upgraded their CorePay application and the FOI Unit introduced a new eFOI system. Library & Research Services and Rannóg and Aistriúcháin both launched new internal sites and the Communications Unit redesigned the intranet – The Plinth. The organisation transitioned to Microsoft 365 and Windows 10 and we completed the Technology in the Chambers project. The IT Service Desks for members and staff also dealt with nearly 20,000 requests for assistance and support.

During 2019, we continued to drive the development and delivery of the core parliamentary services for the Houses and their Committees and members and staff. We have put additional supports in place to develop and support our parliamentary community. An ongoing challenge has been to maintain current staff levels and skills. Our *HR People Strategy 2019-2021 – Supporting the Parliamentary Community* will assist the Service in achieving its organisational goals by making effective use of resources, supporting all staff and members, and promoting a culture of dignity and respect, leadership and diversity. This is supported by the *Learning and Development Strategy 2019-2021* that aims to ensure that all staff have the knowledge, skills and attributes to carry out their roles efficiently and professionally. The Members' Services One-Shop-Shop, the Catering and Printing services, and Members' HR all continue to provide vital services to members to support them in their work and as employers of staff.

We further developed the Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) Programme for young people with intellectual disabilities. We have also engaged with government departments regarding work placements and employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities in the wider civil service.

All our services are supported by our Corporate Units that ensure economic, efficient, and effective administration of the Service.

I am pleased to report that the Service made significant progress in supporting the work of the Houses and its members; in further modernising our digital services, in enabling easier public access and engagement with the Houses of the Oireachtas, and in supporting our parliamentary community.

I would like to extend my appreciation to the Management Board and Audit Committee for their ongoing commitment and support.

I would especially like to acknowledge the outstanding work and professionalism of my staff. It is a privilege to work alongside them and I greatly value their commitment to our National Parliament.

With the support of the Commission and staff I look forward to the delivery in 2020 of year two of the *Strategic Plan 2019-2021*.



**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 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 516 Civil Servants of the State and 55 State industrial staff (full-time equivalents) whose terms and conditions of employment are set down in the General Civil Service Statutory Code, the Staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Act 1959 and the Commission Acts 2003 to 2018.

There are 454 political staff working full time in either Leinster House or in members' constituency offices who are employed directly by the members, or the relevant political party, and who are paid by the Commission.

### The Secretary General 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 Commission 2019



*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 Fearghail 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.

The Management Board comprises the Secretary General (chair of the Board), four Assistant Secretaries, the Clerk of Seanad Éireann, a Principal Officer who is the chair of the Principal Officer Network in the Service, 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 five strategic committees, each chaired by a board member, to support it in carrying out its functions: Governance, Performance and Accountability Committee; Openness, Public Engagement and Campus Development Committee; People and Organisation Committee; Technology and Digital Transformation Committee; and Rannóg 2024 Committee. The Strategic Committees were established to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach to the management of strategic and operational issues in the Service that have a cross-divisional dimension. The Rannóg 2024 Committee was established to provide oversight of implementation of the translation arrears clearance strategy for Rannóg an Aistriúcháin, the Irish Translation Service in the Houses of the Oireachtas Service.



## Members of the Management Board



*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, Parliamentary Information and Research Services; 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, Principal Officer, Chair of the Principal Officer Network.*

The work of the Management Board and its committees is driven 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 in 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 2003-2018* 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 2019-2021.

## 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; and
- 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; and
- control or manage any building works – this function is carried out by the Office of Public Works (OPW) for all Government Departments and Offices.

In addition, the Commission does not have a role in the day-to-day management of the Service. This is the responsibility of the Secretary General and the Management 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 that particular year.

The Commission, through the Secretary General, submits its accounts to the Comptroller and Auditor General by 31 March each year for auditing. 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 Houses of 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 Houses of 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 website [www.oireachtas.ie](http://www.oireachtas.ie). The Commission's Finance and Audit Committees meet on a quarterly basis. Further details on the work of the Audit Committee in 2019 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: Membership of the Commission (2019)**

Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl, Ceann Comhairle	Chairperson <i>Ex officio</i> member
Senator Denis O'Donovan, Cathaoirleach of the Seanad	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 2019

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.

In carrying out its statutory responsibility to oversee the running of the Houses of the Oireachtas, 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 website [www.oireachtas.ie](http://www.oireachtas.ie). Attendance at meetings in 2019 is set out in Appendix VIII of this report.

The Commission held 15 meetings, including two incorporeal meetings, in 2019. The matters dealt with can be summarised as follows:

### *Financial Performance*

- Quarterly financial reports from the Finance Committee and examination of detailed information on spending by the Houses against spending forecast
- Commission's Annual Accounts for 2018
- Commission's Statement of Estimates for 2020

### *Strategy*

- Houses of the Oireachtas Service Strategic Plan 2019-2021
- Rannóg 2024 Strategy and Implementation Plan 2019-2024
- Houses of the Oireachtas Library Strategic Plan 2019-2024
- Parliamentary Research Service Strategic Plan 2019-2021
- Georgian Leinster House Restoration Project: Oversight of the programme of work and the accommodation strategy for the Houses
- Public Engagement Strategy: Programme of public engagement events to mark the reopening of Georgian Leinster House following completion of the restoration project
- ICT Strategy Implementation
- Communications Strategy Implementation
- Cyber Security Briefing

### *Policy and Services*

- Digital Transformation Work Plan and Budget 2019
- Data Protection Governance
- Houses of the Oireachtas Education Programme
- Freedom of Information
- Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members: Provision of additional resources to political groups represented on the Joint Committee on Climate Action

- Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) Programme
- Transition Year Students Work Experience Programme in the Houses of the Oireachtas
- Parliamentary Budget Office: Annual Work Programme 2019
- Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers: Private Members' Bills Services
- Library & Research Service Rules and Statement of Services
- Dignity and Respect Statement of Principles and Policy for the Parliamentary Workplace: Implementation of the Policy
- Customer Service Charter and Action Plan for the Houses of the Oireachtas Service
- Public Representation Allowance (PRA): Guidelines for Members of the Houses on allowable expenditure under the PRA
- Guidelines for Members on the use of services and facilities provided by the Commission out of public funds during a European election campaign
- Guidelines for Members on the use of services and facilities provided by the Commission out of public funds in relation to a bye-election to Dáil Éireann
- Report on the purchase of a printing press for the Print Facility
- Review of the system for recording members' attendance at Leinster House

#### *Annual Reporting*

- Commission's Annual Report 2018 to the Houses of the Oireachtas in accordance with section 6 of the Commission Acts

- Audit Committee Annual Report 2018 to the Commission in accordance with section 14A(10)(c) of the Commission Acts
- Secretary General's Annual Report to the Commission on implementation of the Strategic Plan in accordance with section 16(1)(k) of the Commission Acts

#### *Human Resource Strategy for the Service*

- Report on the Houses of the Oireachtas Service Workplace Behaviour Survey
- Filling of the post of Superintendent of the Houses of the Oireachtas

#### *Legal*

- Legal proceedings involving the Houses of the Oireachtas

#### *Business Case Approval*

- ICT Digital Projects
- ICT Desktop Refresh Project
- Irish language Legislative Editing Services
- Provision of additional staff resources to support members of the Parliamentary Committees
- Proposal to host the 12th Annual Meeting of the OECD Network of Parliamentary Budget Officials and Independent Fiscal Institutions
- Proposal to host the 2021 Autumn Meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE
- Proposal to host the 36th Annual Pre-conference of the Parliamentary Library and Research Services Section of the International Federation of Library Associations

## Annual Report on Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2019-2021 – A Parliament which Works for the People

# Our Vision, Our Mission, Our Values

## Our Vision

*A Parliament which works for the People*

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## Our Mission

*A high performing Parliamentary Service that enables the Houses of the Oireachtas to discharge their constitutional functions, supports members as parliamentarians and representatives of the people, and promotes an open and accessible Parliament.*

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## Our Values

*Impartial | Accountable | Open  
Collegiate | Innovative*

## Key Parliamentary Activities 2019

Key Parliamentary Activities	2019	2018	2017	2016
<b>Sittings of the Houses</b>				
Dáil sitting days	102	106	104	91
Seanad sitting days	93	98	86	62
Dáil sitting hours	914	989	923	772
Seanad sitting hours	511	615	506	349
<b>Meetings of Parliamentary Committees</b>				
Committee meetings	623	625	665	324
Committee sitting hours	1,329	1,406	1,498	729
Committee witnesses	1,986	2,223	2,179	990
Reports presented by Committees	61	75	80	31
<b>The Legislative Process</b>				
Bills initiated in both Houses	108	142	156	121
<i>Government Bills</i>	40	48	33	36
<i>Private Members' Bills</i>	68	94	123	85
Bills initiated in the Dáil	80	105	123	88
<i>Government Bills</i>	28	31	27	24
<i>Private Members' Bills</i>	52	74	96	64
Bills initiated in the Seanad	28	37	33	33
<i>Government Bills</i>	12	17	6	12
<i>Private Members' Bills</i>	16	20	27	21
Bills passed by both Houses	54	44	41	22
<i>Government Bills</i>	48	39	37	22
<i>Private Members' Bills</i>	6	5	4	0
Amendments proposed to Bills	2,660	3,622	3,166	1,684
<b>Parliamentary Questions</b>				
PQs Processed	57,697	58,727	58,820	44,942
<i>Questions for Written Answer</i>	47,197	47,673	48,641	28,963
<i>Questions for Oral Answer</i>	2,018	2,008	1,958	1,071
<b>Official Debate</b>				
Hours of parliamentary debate	2,754	3,010	2,939	1,850
<b>Divisions recorded (votes in the Houses)</b>				
Dáil Divisions	161	198	194	147
Seanad Divisions	173	193	94	78
<b>Staff of the Service at Year End (FTEs)<sup>1</sup></b>	516	511	495	449
<b>Members' Staff at Year End (FTEs)</b>	454	450	448	439
<b>Net Expenditure (€000)</b>	126,979	131,581	110,194	113,557

<sup>1</sup> Staff of the Service at Year End (FTEs) refers to Civil Service staff only (numbers are rounded).



## Secretary General's Report

### Annual Report on Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2019-2021 – A Parliament which Works 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.*

*2019 was a very significant year for the Houses of the Oireachtas as we commemorated the centenary of the first sitting of Dáil Éireann with a key event in the Mansion House on 21 January 2019 and with a programme of commemorative events throughout the year.*

*The Strategic Plan 2019-2021 is being delivered against a background of reviewing and consolidating parliamentary and organisational reform initiatives in order to strengthen their effectiveness. In 2019, the Service made significant progress towards achieving the 14 goals set out under the four key strategy outcomes outlined in the Strategic Plan.*

*The Houses of the Oireachtas Service made significant progress on planning for the Dáil and Seanad elections during the strategy period and preparing for the new Dáil and Seanad Éireann; investment in ICT and rolling out new IT systems and applications; promoting greater diversity and inclusion; and on strengthening and broadening interparliamentary relations and developing greater public engagement with the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Houses and their Committees also continued their work on managing the impact of the decision of the United Kingdom to withdraw from the EU.*

*Another important focus of our work over the past year was the return to our restored Georgian Leinster House while maintaining the key support services for the Houses of the Oireachtas.*

## Four Key Strategic Outcomes

### *Strategy Outcome 1:*

#### *An Effective Parliament*

- Goal 1:** Provide Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann with the support and advice necessary to assist them in conducting their business effectively
- Goal 2:** Provide Oireachtas Committees with the support and advice necessary to assist them in conducting their business effectively
- Goal 3:** Strengthen the legislative oversight and scrutiny capacity of the Houses and their Committees

### *Strategy Outcome 2:*

#### *An Open and Engaged Parliament*

- Goal 1:** Develop greater public engagement with the Houses of the Oireachtas
- Goal 2:** Strengthen our EU, UK and other international relationships
- Goal 3:** Enhance engagement with Government Departments

### *Strategy Outcome 3:*

#### *A Digital Parliament*

- Goal 1:** Transform the technology used by the Houses and Committees
- Goal 2:** Enable easier public access to the work of the Oireachtas and its members
- Goal 3:** Modernise our Technical Infrastructure

### *Strategy Outcome 4:*

#### *A Well-Supported Parliamentary Community*

- Goal 1:** Develop a Parliamentary Community that is valued, engaged, and supported
- Goal 2:** Provide a secure and safe physical environment that meets the needs of the Parliamentary Community
- Goal 3:** Foster a culture of dignity and respect, diversity and inclusion
- Goal 4:** Deliver quality services to all our customers
- Goal 5:** Ensure high standards of corporate governance

## Strategy Outcome 1: An Effective Parliament

### Our Goals

#### Goal 1:

Provide Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann with the support and advice necessary to assist them in conducting their business effectively

#### Goal 2:

Provide Oireachtas Committees with the support and advice necessary to assist them in conducting their business effectively

#### Goal 3:

Strengthen the legislative oversight and scrutiny capacity of the Houses and their Committees

### Our Key Activities and Achievements 2019

A Joint Sitting of both Houses of the Oireachtas in the Round Room of the Mansion House was convened on Monday, 21 January 2019 to mark the centenary of the inaugural public meeting of Dáil Éireann on 21 January 1919.

Dáil Éireann sat for 102 days (914 hours).

161 Dáil divisions were recorded.

361 topical issues were selected for debate in the Dáil.

57,697 Parliamentary Questions were processed.

Seanad Éireann sat for 93 days (511 hours).

173 Seanad divisions were recorded.

588 Commencement matters were tabled for debate in the Seanad – a maximum of four are selected for debate each sitting day.

108 Bills were initiated in the Houses – 37% were Government Bills and 63% were Private Members Bills (PMBs).

48 Government Bills were passed during 2019 and 6 PMBs were passed during 2019.

The Debates Office published 35,500 pages of the Official Report of public proceedings of the Dáil, Seanad and Parliamentary Committees. It also hosted the annual symposium of the British-Irish Parliamentary Reporting Association (BIPRA) in Leinster House in July 2019.

Rannóg an Aistriúcháin (the Service's Translation Section) provided simultaneous translation services during 914 hours of Dáil debate, 511 hours of Seanad debate, and to Committee meetings when requested. It also provided the official translation of material in respect of 260 Dáil and Seanad Order Papers.

623 Parliamentary Committee meetings (1,329 hours) were supported.

1,986 witnesses attended Committee meetings.

61 Committee reports were presented.

A Special Committee on *Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community* was established and presented an interim report in November 2019.

The Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers (OPLA) issued 99 legal advices to Committees and 9 advices in relation to pre-Committee Stage scrutiny. Additionally, the OPLA provided 31 legal advices to individual members in respect of their Private Members' Bills. Sixteen Private Members' Bills were assigned to the legislative drafting service.

The Library & Research Service (L&RS) provided 240 customised research briefings and 1,302 information briefings for members and other users. It produced 103 publications, consisting of 31 Bills Trackers, 34 Bills Digests on Government Bills, 14 Notes and Spotlight papers, 21 Infographics, and its Research Matters Quarterly. It completed detailed scrutiny of 13 PMBs and 17 Pre-Legislative Scrutiny outputs of general schemes of Government Bills for Committees.

The Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) produced 78 publications and prepared 9 briefings for the Budget Oversight Committee.

## Strategy Outcome 2: An Open and Engaged Parliament

### Our Goals

#### Goal 1:

Develop greater public engagement with the Houses of the Oireachtas

#### Goal 2:

Strengthen our EU, UK and other international relationships

#### Goal 3:

Enhance engagement with Government Departments

### Our Key Activities and Achievements 2019

A programme of 'Dáil 100' public initiatives and events was delivered that included the following:

- A key commemorative event in the Round Room of the Mansion House addressed by the President Michael D. Higgins and followed by a joint sitting of the Houses;
- An address by U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi to members and former members of the Houses;
- A new collection of documents from the Irish revolutionary period (1918-1923) available online following a collaborative digitisation project between the Oireachtas and the National Archives of Ireland;
- A *Dáil 100* website that provides access to information on the first Dáil, its people and its debates; and access to the Treasures of the Oireachtas Library, to Parliamentary reporting over the decades, and to teaching resources;
- The Oireachtas/RTÉ Youth Assembly on Climate brought 157 students from across Ireland to discuss how Ireland needs to address the climate crisis;
- A Dáil na nÓg meeting to discuss the climate change agenda; and
- A tour of the *Dáil 100* Exhibition throughout Ireland.

The structural and restoration work programme for the Georgian Leinster House building was completed and the Seanad moved back to its original chamber in Leinster House.

There were 2,789 tours conducted in 2019 with 41,610 visitors. Almost 100,000 visitors in total were welcomed to Leinster House.

Activity on openness and engagement with the Houses increased in 2019. There were:

- 2.3m visits to the website;
- 2.2m views of live streaming of parliamentary debates of which 1.6m were committee debates.

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service social media team won the Best Team NGOs/SMEs/Public Body award in the Sockies Social Media Awards 2019.

The Service launched its Irish Sign Language (ISL) Strategy 2019-2021 to put ISL supports in place for the Oireachtas's engagement with the public, members and staff. The Strategy was nominated and shortlisted for the Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards 2019 in the Excellence in Culture, Values and Diversity Category.

## Strategy Outcome 2: An Open and Engaged Parliament *(continued)*

### Our Goals

### Our Key Activities and Achievements 2019

At the end of the school year 2018/19:

- 36 schools had availed of Parliamentary Education Programme workshops with over 1,000 students attending;
- Eight schools participated in the ‘*Ceann Go Ceann*’ initiative where the Ceann Comhairle takes part in a video call with a class of *Politics and Society* students in their own school;
- 15 students delivered TED-Ed Club talks in Dublin Castle; and
- The Parliamentary Education Programme was expanded to offer structured programmes to Transition Year students.

Overall, there has been an increase in the level of interparliamentary engagement, including:

- 16 incoming bilateral meetings;
- Four incoming Speaker led delegations;
- Nine incoming Parliamentary Friendship Groups; and
- 65 outgoing interparliamentary engagements, including Friendship Groups visits.

Parliamentarians from eight countries participated in the proceedings of the 3rd International Grand Committee (IGC) meeting on *Disinformation and Fake News* in Dublin on 6 and 7 of November 2019.



## Strategy Outcome 3: A Digital Parliament

## Our Goals

**Goal 1:**

Transform the technology used by the Houses and Committees

**Goal 2:**

Enable easier public access to the work of the Oireachtas and its members

**Goal 3:**

Modernise our Technical Infrastructure

## Our Key Activities and Achievements 2019

The development and delivery of the Digital Transformation Programme continued throughout 2019.

18 Digital Transformation Projects were completed.

Key projects completed:

- An upgrade of the Wi-Fi system with new technology installed in the Chambers;
- New applications for 'Motions' and 'Statements' were developed for the digital parliament system;
- The Library and Research Services (L&RS) launched a new internal site and the Communications Unit redesigned the Service's intranet, *The Plinth*;
- The Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers (OPLA) introduced a new case management system, *Legal Evolve*; and
- The FOI Unit introduced a new eFOI system which is cloud based. The new system was developed under the *Build to Share* (BTS) applications programme.

The ICT Service desks provided support for approximately 20,000 calls – 11,217 calls from members and their staff and 8,711 calls from Service staff.

### Strategy Outcome 4: A Well-Supported Parliamentary Community

#### Our Goals

##### Goal 1:

Develop a Parliamentary Community that is valued, engaged and supported

##### Goal 2:

Provide a secure and safe physical environment that meets the needs of the Parliamentary Community

##### Goal 3:

Foster a culture of dignity and respect, diversity and inclusion

##### Goal 4:

Deliver quality services to all our customers

##### Goal 5:

Ensure high standards of corporate governance

#### Our Key Activities and Achievements 2019

At the end of 2019, the total number of FTE staff (Civil Servants, State Industrial, Printers and Office Holders' staff) was 572.43.

HR Services published the following key documents:

- *People Strategy 2019-2021*;
- *Learning & Development (L&D) Strategy 2019-2021*;
- *Line Managers Guide to Effective Staff Management*.

206 training courses were delivered.

454 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) political staff were employed by members of the Houses.

Pensions were payable to 208 former political staff and 419 former members.

In August 2019, the conservation and restoration of the Georgian Leinster House Project was completed following a two year programme of works that was managed by the Office of Public Works (OPW) and the Houses of the Oireachtas.

A 2-part documentary "The Restoration of Historic Leinster House" was produced.

The *Dignity and Respect Statement of Principles and Policy* was published.

A Child Safeguarding Statement and a Child Safeguarding Implementation Plan was published.

The results of A Parliamentary Workplace Survey were published.

The first participants in the Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) Programme graduated at an awards ceremony in Leinster House. Seven of the graduates had already secured part-time employment following their participation in the programme.

A new Customer Charter and Action Plan was developed and published.

The Service published its Strategic Plan for 2019-2021.

The following governance meetings were held:

- 15 Houses of the Oireachtas Commission meetings;
- Five Finance Committee meetings;
- Four Audit Committee meetings;
- 20 Management Board meetings;
- 38 Management Board's Strategic Committees' meetings.

The Finance Unit processed over 5,700 invoices for goods and services.

36 procurement processes were undertaken.

272 Fol requests were received, up from 167 in 2018.

Six Data Protection Processes were carried out and 17 Data Protection Subject Access Requests (SARS) were processed.

## STRATEGY OUTCOME 1: An Effective Parliament

*The Service has three strategic goals to achieve this strategy outcome.*

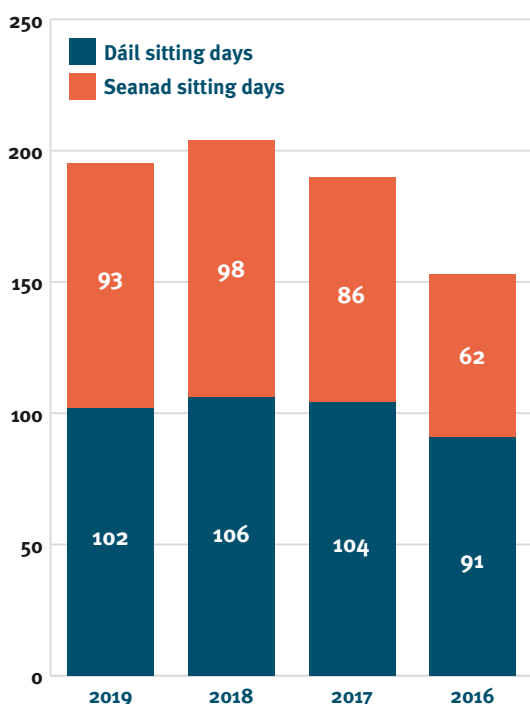
### STRATEGY OUTCOME 1: GOAL 1

Provide Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann with the support and advice necessary to assist them in conducting their business effectively

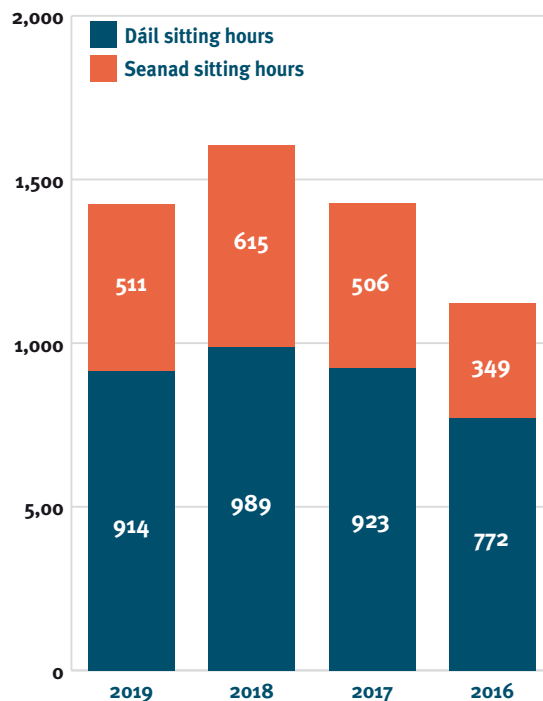
Providing high quality procedural support and advice to Office Holders, Chairs of Committees, and to members of the Houses is an essential function of the Service. The manner by which the Houses conduct debate is guided by the rules and precedents as set out in Standing Orders and in salient Rulings of the Chair. During 2019, 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.

The Service supported Dáil Éireann on each of its 102 sitting days and Seanad Éireann on each of its 93 sitting days.

**Figure 1: Sitting Days of the Houses**



**Figure 2: Sitting Hours of the Houses**



A Joint Sitting of both Houses of the Oireachtas was convened in the Round Room of the Mansion House on 21 January 2019 to mark the centenary of the inaugural public meeting of Dáil Éireann on the 21 January 1919.

**Goal 1: Provide Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann with the support and advice necessary to assist them in conducting their business effectively**



*Members of the Dáil and Seanad met in the Round Room of the Mansion House for a special centenary sitting on 21 January 2019, 100 years after the first meeting of Dáil Éireann was convened in the Mansion House on 21 January 1919.*

The Ceann Comhairle and the Cathaoirleach welcomed U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Leinster House on 17 April 2019. Speaker Pelosi delivered an address to members and former members of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann in the Dáil chamber as part of the centenary celebrations for Dáil Éireann.



*US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi delivered an address in the Dáil chamber to members and former members of Dáil and Seanad Éireann. The Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach extended the invitation to Speaker Pelosi as part of the Dáil 100 commemorative programme in the Houses.*

Five bye-elections were held during 2019 to fill the vacancies in the Dáil and Seanad caused by the election of members to the European Parliament (held on 24 May 2019).

The Clerk and Clerk-Assistant of the Dáil and 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.

The **Journal Office** provides a range of procedural support services to the Dáil. In 2019, it produced 150 Dáil Order Papers, including Supplementary Order Papers, and recorded 161 Dáil divisions (votes in the House).

Procedural briefings were prepared for each sitting of the Dáil to guide the Chair through each item of business. Chairs were briefed before proceedings in the House, and Committee Chairs were briefed at their request, on procedural rulings in relation to Bill amendments.

The Journal Office also provided support to the Dáil Committee on Procedure, which held eight meetings and the Dáil Business Committee, which held 44 meetings.

<b>Table 1: Meetings of Dáil Standing Committees</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2016</b>
Business Committee	44	43	50	25
Committee on Procedure	8	7	6	7
Dáil Reform sub-Committee	5	7	8	26
Committee of Selection	3	7	7	6

**Goal 1: Provide Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann with the support and advice necessary to assist them in conducting their business effectively**

In response to the judgments delivered by the Supreme Court in 2019 in the cases of *O'Brien v. Clerk of Dáil Éireann & Ors* and *Kerins v. McGuinness & Ors (No. 2)*, the Dáil Committee on Procedure and the Seanad Committee on Procedure and Privileges established a **Working Group on Parliamentary Privilege and Citizens Rights**. The Working Group was established to review the procedures of the Houses of the Oireachtas, particularly their Standing Orders (rules of procedure), to ensure that the rights of citizens are respected throughout the parliamentary process.

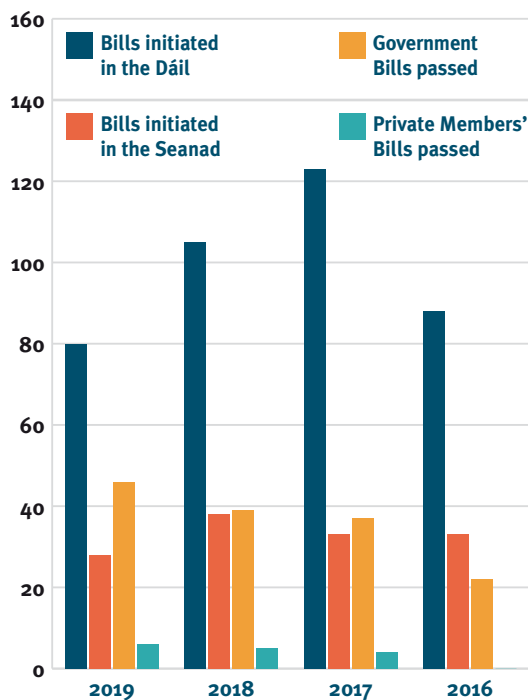
The Working Group is considering the implications of the judgments and will report back to the Committees, with recommendations, in due course.

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

In 2019, the Houses passed 48 Government Bills and 6 Private Members' Bills (PMBs). A total of 108 Bills were initiated in both Houses, 68 of which were PMBs. **Appendix IV** lists Bills initiated in the Houses and **Appendix V** lists Bills passed.

The Bills Office examines the text of all Bills and amendments and supports the Chairs and Clerks of both Houses in rulings on admissibility in accordance with Standing Orders. All PMBs are examined by the Bills Office prior to publication, and all Bills are examined for financial implications prior to proceeding to Dáil Committee Stage. The Bills Office also examines 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 the admissibility of Bills and amendments. In December 2018, the Government and the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform agreed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in relation to PMBs that was subsequently adopted by the Dáil<sup>1</sup>.

**Figure 3: Bills Initiated in Both Houses and Bills Passed**



<sup>1</sup> Report of the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform – Memorandum of Understanding Between the Government and Dáil Éireann on Private Members' Bills, 2018.



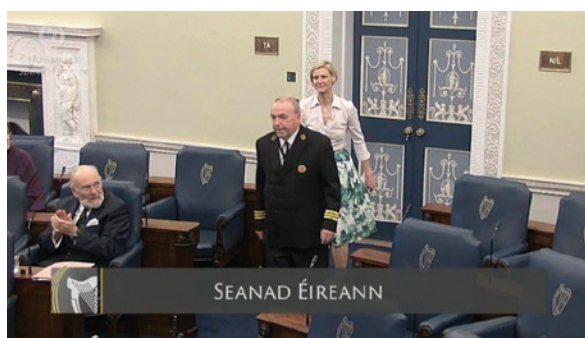
**Goal 1: Provide Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann with the support and advice necessary to assist them in conducting their business effectively**

Table 2: Parliamentary Questions	2019	2018	2017	2016
PQs Processed <sup>1</sup>	57,697	58,727	58,820	44,942
Questions for Written Answer	47,197	47,673	48,641	28,963
Questions for Oral Answer	2,018	2,008	1,958	1,071

<sup>1</sup> The number of PQs processed includes questions for written answers, questions for oral answer, questions withdrawn and questions disallowed.

The **Questions Office** processed 57,697 Parliamentary Questions (PQs), of which 2,018 were for oral answer. Dáil reform measures continued to offer the opportunity for Deputies to submit written questions for answer during the Summer recess period. There were 5,091 questions submitted during the recess, an increase of 11.5% on the same period in 2018.

The Clerk and Clerk-Assistant of the Seanad and 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. The Seanad Office also supports the Clerk in discharging their duties as *ex officio* Returning Officer for Seanad elections.



*New members joined the Houses following bye-elections in 2019: Senator Pippa Hackett, Pádraig O'Sullivan TD, Joe O'Brien TD, Mark Ward TD and Malcolm Byrne TD.*

**Goal 1: Provide Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann with the support and advice necessary to assist them in conducting their business effectively**

Following a two-year restoration project, the Seanad moved back to the original Seanad Chamber in Georgian Leinster House in September 2019. The Cathaoirleach of the Seanad expressed particular gratitude to the Director, Board and staff of the National Museum of Ireland for facilitating Seanad sittings in the Ceramics Room of the Museum during the two-year project. The Cathaoirleach commended, in particular, the Office of Public Works which oversaw the restoration project.



*Mr. Ciarán O'Connor, OPW State Architect, briefing members of the Commission on the restoration work undertaken to Georgian Leinster House to preserve the building's heritage character.*

The Seanad typically sits three days per sitting week. Twenty-six per cent of the 108 Bills initiated in the Houses in 2019 were initiated in the Seanad, 12 were Government Bills and 16 were Private Members' Bills.

The Seanad Office supported eight meetings of the Seanad Committee on Procedure and Privileges, and four meetings of the Seanad Committee of Selection. The Seanad Public Consultation Committee held four meetings during the year. The Committee presented its Report on *Small and Medium Sized Businesses in Ireland* in May 2019. The Committee also presented its Report on *Travellers Towards a More Equitable Ireland Post-Recognition* in January 2020 following a public consultation process. On 9 July 2019, members of the Traveller community spoke in the Seanad for the first time since Travellers were formally recognised as an ethnic minority group by the Irish State in March 2017.

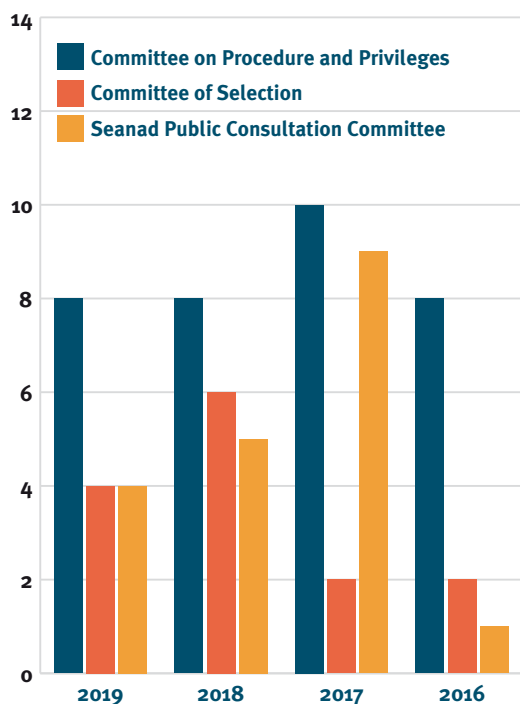


*The Seanad Public Consultation Committee held public hearings on the topic: Travellers towards a more equitable Ireland post recognition as an ethnic minority.*

The Seanad Special Select Committee on the *Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union* concluded its work and presented its final report at the end of 2019.

**Goal 1: Provide Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann with the support and advice necessary to assist them in conducting their business effectively**

**Figure 4: Meetings of Seanad Committees**



The **Debates Office** reports and publishes the proceedings of the Dáil, Seanad, and Joint and Select Committees in the floor language (Irish or English) within set deadlines.

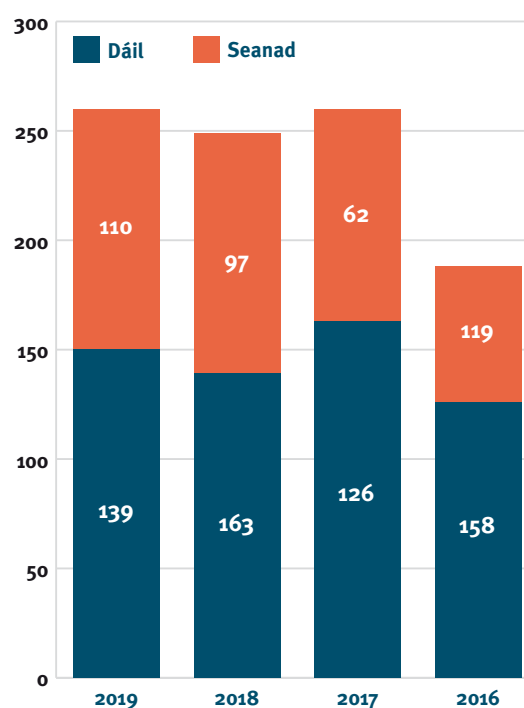
In 2019, the Debates Office reported 2,754 hours of Dáil, Seanad, and Committee debate. This amounted to 35,500 pages of Official Report across Dáil, Seanad and Committees and 57,697 Parliamentary Questions. It published these debates to the website in HTML, PDF and XML. It also reported the official proceedings of meetings in the UK and Ireland of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly and the Joint Sitting of both Houses of the Oireachtas in the Round Room of the Mansion House on 21 January 2019. The Joint Sitting was held to mark the centenary of the inaugural public meeting of Dáil Éireann.

The Debates Office hosted the British-Irish Parliamentary Reporting Association's annual symposium in July 2019. It also participated in a staff exchange programme with the House of Lords, UK Parliament, in June 2019.

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 914 hours of Dáil debate, 511 hours of Seanad debate, and to Committee meetings when requested. It also provided the official translation in respect of 260 Dáil and Seanad Order Papers.

**Figure 5: Bilingual Order Papers**



**Goal 1: Provide Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann with the support and advice necessary to assist them in conducting their business effectively**

Rannóg an Aistriúcháin also provides the official translations of the Acts of the Oireachtas, Long and Short Titles of Bills, and Statutory Instruments. During 2019, an external Irish language legislative editing framework was established to increase Irish language editing capacity required in the section. This framework is being used to support the availability of the official Irish language translation of Acts. A five-year strategy plan *Rannóg 2024* for publishing official translations of Acts of the Oireachtas in a timely manner and clearing historic arrears by 2024 was also approved. A Steering Committee of the Management Board (*Rannóg 2024*) was established to ensure progressive and effective delivery of this plan.



An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar TD addressed Seanad Éireann on the theme the 70th Anniversary of the Republic.

Table 3: Translation Services	2019	2018	2017	2016
Simultaneous translation provided on sitting days for the parliamentary proceedings	102	106	104	91
Bilingual Order Papers produced <sup>1</sup>	257	249	260	188
<i>Dáil Order Papers</i>	150	139	163	126
<i>Seanad Order Papers</i>	110	110	97	62
Bilingual Titles of Bills <sup>2</sup>	108	142	156	121
<i>Government Bills</i>	39	48	33	36
<i>Private Members' Bills</i>	69	94	123	85

<sup>1</sup> Includes supplementary Order Papers.

<sup>2</sup> Includes long and short titles of Bills formally initiated in the Houses.



**Goal 2: Provide Oireachtas Committees with the support and advice necessary to assist them in conducting their business effectively**

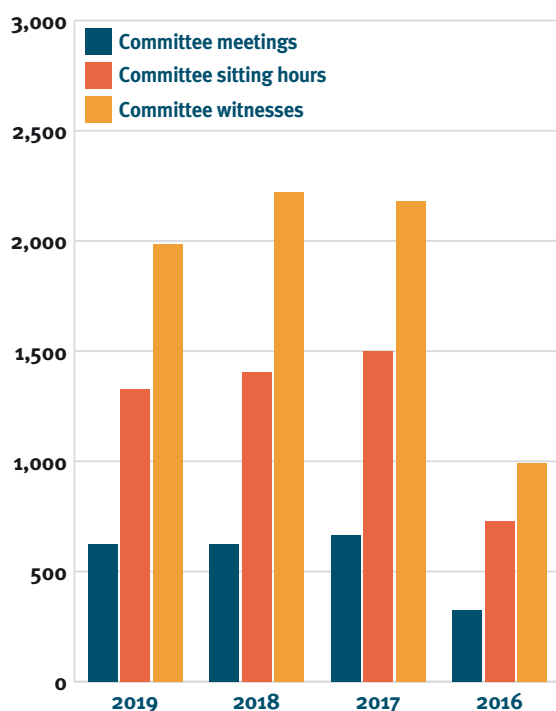
## STRATEGY OUTCOME 1: GOAL 2

Provide Oireachtas Committees with the support and advice necessary to assist them in conducting their business effectively

The Committees' Secretariat teams of Clerks, Policy Advisers, and administrative staff continued to provide support to 40 Parliamentary Committees (comprising of Joint Committees (16), Select Committees (15), Standing Committees (6) and Special Committees (3)) and bodies.

The Secretariat supported 623 parliamentary committee meetings at which 1,986 witnesses contributed.

**Figure 6: Parliamentary Committees**



Committees receive submissions from a number of organisations and individuals including government departments and state bodies, stakeholder groups and members of the public. Their public meetings are broadcast live and they may publish reports on specific issues. Committees also scrutinise Government expenditure and debate proposed legislation.

The Committees also had access to a wide range of information, research services and supports from the Library & Research Service (L&RS), the Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers (OPLA) and the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) as required.

The **Committees' Press Officers** worked to increase media coverage of the Parliamentary Committees by promoting and providing information such as press releases and reports to national and local media. They responded to media queries, monitored media coverage of committee work and assisted in organising events, report launches and press briefings on behalf of committees.

The Taoiseach appeared before the **Working Group of Committee Chairs** (WGCC) on 30 May 2019 to discuss matters of public policy. The WGCC meet, liaise and consult on matters affecting services to Committees and on matters of common interest to Chairs of committees. It met four times in 2019.

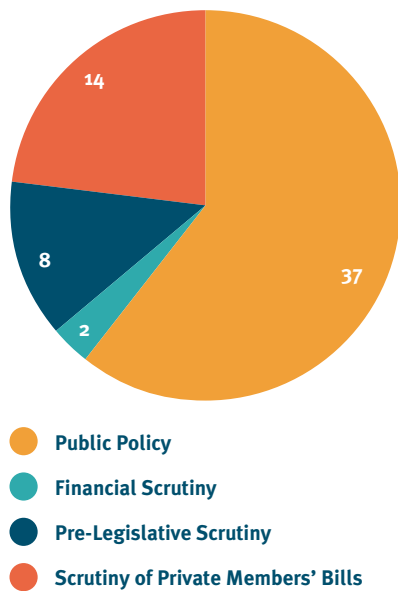
In May 2019, the Houses established a Special Joint Committee to consider policy directions in respect of key issues affecting the Traveller community. **The Joint Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community** presented an interim report to the Houses in November 2019.



**Goal 2: Provide Oireachtas Committees with the support and advice necessary to assist them in conducting their business effectively**

During 2019, the Committees presented 61 reports setting out findings and recommendations in their respective policy areas to both Houses of the Oireachtas. The Joint Committees of both Houses presented 48 reports, the Select Committees of Dáil Éireann presented 1 report, the Standing Committees presented 9 reports, and the Special Committees presented 3 reports to the Houses in 2019.

**Figure 7: Committee Reports Presented in 2019**



The **Joint Committee on Climate Action** published its cross-party report entitled, *Climate Change: A Cross-Party Consensus for Action* in March 2019. The Committee was established in July 2018 to consider the third report and recommendations of the Citizen’s Assembly, *How the State can make Ireland a Leader in Tackling Climate Change*. The Joint Committee Report contains 42 priority recommendations in the area of climate action.

The **Joint Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment** hosted the third International Grand Committee on *Disinformation and Fake News (IGC)* in Dublin on the 6 and 7 of November 2019. Parliamentarians from eight countries participated in the proceedings. The theme of the meeting was how to advance international collaboration in the regulation of harmful content, hate speech and electoral interference online. Each country signed up to a set of principles at the end of the meeting to advance international collaboration.

To mark **Europe Day** a special meeting of five Joint Committees took place in the Seanad Chamber to engage with third-level students from a range of universities and colleges across the country. This presented an opportunity for invitees to engage in dialogue and input directly to the Joint Committees of the House in relation to issues which are considered and decided at both national parliament and European Parliament level.



*A special joint meeting of five Committees was held in the Seanad Chamber to mark Europe Day 2019: the Joint Committees on European Union Affairs; Agriculture, Food and the Marine; Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Defence; Climate Action; and Justice and Equality. The Committees heard from third level students on the current challenges facing the European Union.*

**Goal 2: Provide Oireachtas Committees with the support and advice necessary to assist them in conducting their business effectively**

The Joint Committees which participated in this special meeting and the policy issue involved were:

- **Joint Committee on European Union Affairs** (Oversight role in relation to European Union Affairs and challenges for the EU generally);
- **Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine** (CAP Reform);
- **Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Defence** (Common Security and Defence Policy);
- **Joint Committee on Climate Action** (Climate Action and Sustainable Development); and
- **Joint Committee on Justice and Equality** (Migration).

The **Joint Committee on the Irish Language, the Gaeltacht and the Islands** presented a report on the challenges which Irish language broadcasting faces. The report provided an insight into the status of Irish language broadcasting within the broadcasting sector and draws particular attention to areas of legislation, regulation, funding, expenditure, content, viewership, listenership, and subtitling.

The **Joint Committee on Justice & Equality Committee** published its report on police forces from both sides of the border, international and local policing reform advocates, and community and farming leaders from across Ireland. The report contained 20 recommendations to promote community policing and to reduce rural crime.

The **Joint Committee on Tourism, Transport and Sport** held a series of meetings during 2019 in relation to matters pertaining to the Football Association of Ireland.

The **Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement** met with Representatives of the Integrated Education Fund (IEF) and the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), who were jointly nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, to discuss their ground-breaking work on integrated education.

The **Seanad Special Select Committee on the Withdrawal of the UK from the EU** considered the withdrawal negotiations of the UK from the EU and the implementation of recommendations made by the previous Special Committee (of the same name) which considered the implications for Ireland of the UK's withdrawal. The work of the Committee ceased after it published its final progress report entitled, *Brexit Progress Report, December 2019*.

A full list of meetings held and reports presented by the Parliamentary Committees in 2019 can be found at **Appendix VI**. Further information on the work of the Parliamentary Committees is available on the **Committees' web pages** through the website of the Houses of the Oireachtas.

A review of the Committee system of the 32nd Dáil and 25th Seanad commenced in 2019. A report of the review will be presented to the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform following the Dáil and Seanad elections in 2020.

**Goal 3: Strengthen the legislative oversight and scrutiny capacity of the Houses and their Committees**

**STRATEGY OUTCOME 1: GOAL 3**

**Strengthen the legislative oversight and scrutiny capacity of the Houses and their Committees**

At the end of 2018, the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform adopted a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Government and Dáil Éireann on Private Members' Bills (PMBs).

The stated 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 to requests for Money Messages within a reasonable time (generally within 6 weeks).

The MoU stipulated that the parliamentary scrutiny process would be underpinned by appropriate amendments to the Standing Orders of Dáil Éireann relative to Public Business. The necessary amendments to Standing Orders of Dáil Éireann were agreed by the Dáil in 2019.

Under the new procedures, PMBs may not be referred to the relevant Select Committee for Committee Stage of the Bill, unless they have either undergone pre-Committee Stage scrutiny, or the Business Committee has waived this requirement. Sixty-eight PMBs were initiated in both Houses in 2019. Six PMBs were passed by the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The **Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers** (OPLA), which was placed on a statutory basis on 1 January 2019, provides a full range of independent legal services to the Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach, members and Parliamentary Committees and the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission.

The OPLA now comprises three constituent parts; Parliamentary and Corporate, PMB Advisory and PMB Drafting.

The OPLA issued 546 legal advices in 2019, including 99 legal advices to Committees and 9 in respect of pre-Committee Stage Scrutiny of Private Members' Bills. Additionally, the OPLA provided 31 legal advices to individual members in respect of their Private Members' Bills. Sixteen Private Members' Bills were assigned to the legislative drafting service.

Table 4: Private Members' Bills	2019
PMB advice to individual members	31
Legal advice on PMBs	9
Private Members' Bills assigned to the legislative drafting service	16

The OPLA also published a Step-by-Step Guide for members, in which it outlined the services the OPLA could provide to support them with their legislative work. The OPLA has also begun to assist members and Committees in scrutinising Government policy through the provision of legal advice regarding Government Bills.

The **Library & Research Service** (L&RS) provides impartial analysis to support members of the Houses in their role as legislators. Its legislative analysis service includes briefings on Government Bills (Bill Digests) and Private Members Bills (PMB briefing). The purpose of Bill Digests is to support TDs and Senators in preparing for Second Stage

**Goal 3: Strengthen the legislative oversight and scrutiny capacity of the Houses and their Committees**

debates on Bills in the Houses of the Oireachtas. PMB briefings are provided to all members to support pre-Committee Stage scrutiny of PMBs. The L&RS also provides briefings to assist with the scrutiny of a general scheme of a Government Bill as part of pre-legislative scrutiny (PLS).

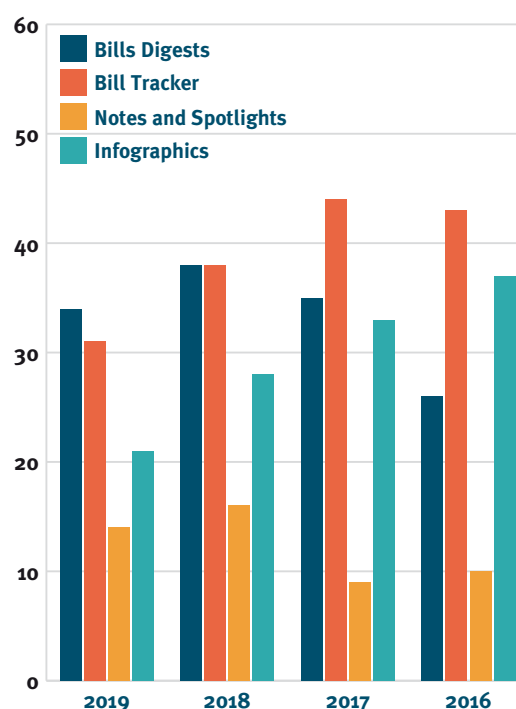
In addition, the L&RS continued to provide services to members and their staff to assist them in their scrutiny role by providing them with:

- customised research, analysis, enquiry and reference services;
- customised policy research for Private Members' Bills;
- information skills training for political staff on conducting research of legislation and legal resources;
- current awareness services, such as press monitoring, media alerts and blog posts;
- access to high quality digital and print collections including books, news resources and online databases; and
- access to the Library Reading Room which is staffed by professional librarians.

During 2019, the L&RS produced 34 Bills Digests, and 31 online Bills Tracker pages on Government Bills. The L&RS supported detailed scrutiny of 13 PMBs and pre-legislative scrutiny of 17 general schemes of Government Bills for the Parliamentary Committees. The L&RS provided 240 customised research briefings and 1,302 information briefings for members and other users.

The L&RS also launched a new internal website in 2019. The website provides access to all L&RS research and online subject resources to support parliamentary scrutiny and oversight.

**Figure 8: Parliamentary & Library Research Service Research Publications**



The *Docs Laid* team manages the procedures relating to the laying of documents before the Houses. The team supports members by preparing the lists of recently laid documents for the Order Papers and by producing and publishing a weekly list of documents laid before the Houses to the Oireachtas website. In 2019, 2,029 documents were laid before the Houses and made available electronically to members and to the public.

### Goal 3: Strengthen the legislative oversight and scrutiny capacity of the Houses and their Committees

In 2019, the L&RS liaised directly with specialist areas such as the Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers and the Parliamentary Budget Office to provide access to relevant information resources, and to provide support and training.

The **Parliamentary Budget Office** (PBO), which is an independent specialist unit within the Service, supports members of the Houses 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 establishment of an independent parliamentary budget office has been a key priority for the Houses of the Oireachtas and an essential element of the programme of Dáil reform.

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 placed on a statutory basis on 1 January 2019.

The functions of the PBO, as set out in the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2018, are 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.

In 2019, the PBO produced 78 briefings, commentaries, notes and other publications. The PBO also published its Pre-Budget 2020 Commentary which provided an overview of the current macroeconomic and fiscal position of the State and highlighted key issues for consideration ahead of Budget Day.

All PBO publications are made available on the 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. Printed copies of other PBO publications are also made available to members or provided to particular Committees as relevant.

The PBO provided nine briefings to the Dáil Committee on Budgetary Oversight in 2019.

In 2019, the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission considered and approved a proposal by the PBO to commence the delivery, within available resources, of a policy costing service in respect of policy proposals from members of the Houses and parliamentary groups.



*The Chairman, Mary Butler TD, and members of the Joint Committee on Business, Enterprise and Innovation at the launch of the Committee's report: The Case for Irish Membership of CERN.*



**Goal 3: Strengthen the legislative oversight and scrutiny capacity of the Houses and their Committees**

<b>Table 5: Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO)</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>Aug-Dec 2017</b>
Publications	78	62	11
<i>Economic and Fiscal Commentaries</i>	5	5	3
<i>Briefing Papers</i>	13	16	3
<i>Notes</i>	43	28	3
<i>Infographics</i>	16	6	1
<i>Other PBO publications</i>	1	7	1
Briefings provided to the Dáil Committee on Budgetary Oversight	9	7	3
Presentations at external events (Speakers)	6	5	4

## STRATEGY OUTCOME 2: An Open and Engaged Parliament

*The Service has three strategic goals to achieve an open and engaged Parliament.*

40

### STRATEGY OUTCOME 2: GOAL 1

#### Develop greater public engagement with the Houses of the Oireachtas

In 2019, the Houses commemorated the centenary of the first sitting of Dáil Éireann – *Dáil 100*. The anniversary was supported by a wide-ranging programme of events, with an emphasis on public engagement. The programme was based on the themes of celebrating, commemorating and educating people about the first Dáil and 100 years of Irish parliamentary democracy.

The commemorations started with an event in the Round Room of the Mansion House on 21 January 2019. The event was opened by the Ceann Comhairle. President Michael D. Higgins delivered a keynote address to mark the centenary. The President encouraged the people of Ireland to celebrate the centenary of Irish democracy and to reflect on our collective past, our successes and our failures. This was followed by a visual montage of the members of the first Dáil Éireann and a performance of the Declaration of Independence.

The event closed with a Joint sitting of both Houses of the Oireachtas and the presentation of the Centenary Declaration to the Houses followed by contributions from Party Leaders. The Centenary Declaration was signed by the Ceann Comhairle and the Cathaoirleach and presented to representatives of Comhairle na nÓg (the National Body of Child and Youth Councils) to symbolise the continued adherence to the principles of parliamentary democracy.



*President Michael D. Higgins delivered a keynote address at the special joint sitting of the Dáil and Seanad in the Mansion House to mark the centenary of the first sitting of Dáil Éireann.*



*At the special sitting in the Mansion House to commemorate the centenary of the First Dáil, the Centenary Declaration was signed by the Ceann Comhairle and the Cathaoirleach and presented to representatives of Comhairle na nÓg to symbolise the continued adherence to the principles of parliamentary democracy.*

Numerous other events took place throughout 2019:

- The Ceann Comhairle and Speaker of the Northern Ireland Assembly hosted an event in which historian and Emeritus Professor of Irish Politics at Queen's University, Belfast, Lord Paul Bew delivered a lecture on the topic of Edward Carson and the principle of consent. Lord Paul Bew is also a member of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly;

### Goal 1: Develop greater public engagement with the Houses of the Oireachtas

- A visit and address by U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi to members and former members of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann to mark the centenary of the First Dáil;
- Leinster House hosted two special *Dáil 100* lectures to mark Seachtain na Gaeilge;
- President of the GAA, Seán Ó hÓráin, addressed Seanad Éireann on 29 January 2019, to discuss the important role the GAA has played in the civic life of Ireland;
- The launch of the *Dáil 100* Exhibition that toured throughout Ireland;
- The online publication, in collaboration with the National Archives of Ireland, of historical Dáil Éireann documents;
- 15 students delivered TED-Ed Club talks in Dublin Castle;
- A Youth Assembly on Climate, in collaboration with RTÉ, brought 157 students aged 10-17 years from across Ireland to discuss how Ireland needs to address the climate crisis; and
- A Dáil na nÓg meeting in the Dáil Chamber brought 155 young people together to discuss the Climate Change Agenda.

These and other events combined to help develop greater engagement with the Houses and raise awareness of the work of the Oireachtas.

In January 2019, the new [Dáil100.ie website](http://Dail100.ie) was launched. 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.



*The Youth Assembly on Climate took place in the Dáil chamber in November 2019. The event was organised by RTÉ in association with the Houses of the Oireachtas. The proceedings were chaired by the Ceann Comhairle.*



*Mr. John Horan, President of the GAA, addressed Seanad Éireann on the role of the GAA in Irish civic life.*



*Seachtain na Gaeilge event in Leinster House: Members of Joint Committee on the Irish Language, the Gaeltacht and the Islands (Aengus Ó Snodaigh TD, Catherine Connolly TD, Senator Niall Ó Donnghaile, Aindrias Ó Muimhneacháin TD) with students and their teacher from Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne, Dingle, Co. Kerry.*

### Goal 1: Develop greater public engagement with the Houses of the Oireachtas

The historic material available on the website includes information and documents on the first Dáil, its people and its debates, the Treasures of the Oireachtas Library; and information on Parliamentary reporting over the decades.

A new collection of documents from the Irish revolutionary period (1918-1923) *The National Archives – A collection of records from the early Dáil Éireann* is now available online following a collaborative digitisation project between the Houses of the Oireachtas and the National Archives of Ireland. The records comprise more than 1,100 records (66,000 pages) and are classified into two sub-collections, one being the records of the Dáil Éireann Secretariat and the second being the session papers and proceedings of the First and Second Dáileanna.

Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghail TD, welcomed the initiative saying, *“The publication of these records allows scholars and the public alike to peer inside the workings of Ireland’s fledgling parliamentary administration, to see and possibly better understand how our forebears strove to build a functioning democracy.”*

The Oireachtas Library holds a collection of historical material dating from the 16th century. To celebrate the centenary of the First Dáil, the Oireachtas invited guest curators to explore the treasures in the collection and to choose their favourites. The **Treasures of the Oireachtas Library** is now available publicly on the *Dáil 100* website.

The **Special Collections** at the Oireachtas Library reflect the varying ways in which the demand for self-governance was asserted over time. The items selected for this gallery include a 17th century pamphlet on the need for Ireland’s autonomy in law-making, an 18th century treatise on the same topic and a 19th century appeal to America to support Irish independence.

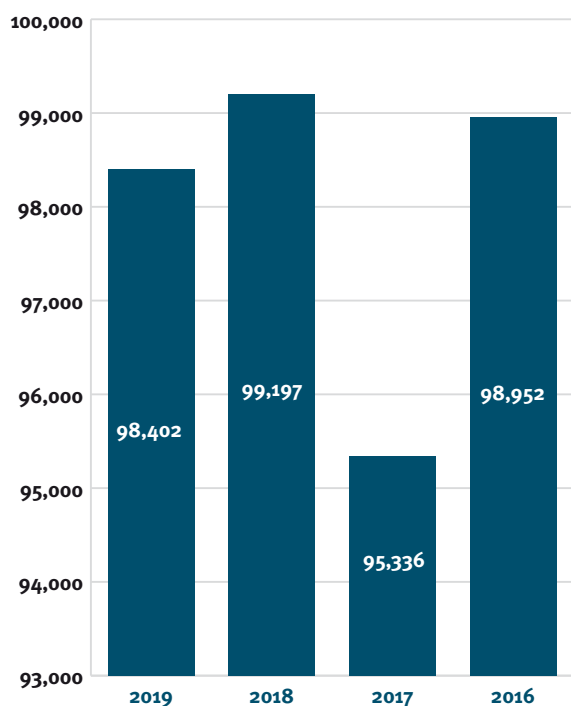
The first Dáil produced a report of each of its 21 sessions. This official report was seen as documentary evidence that something of significance was happening. Although real-time official reports of proceedings of the first Dáil did not become the norm during its lifetime, its members and officials were keenly aware of the importance of publicising its work and of emphasising its legitimacy at home and abroad. The **Parliamentary Reporting over the Decades** project on the *Dáil 100* website outlines the history of parliamentary reporting in the Houses, including reporting on Irish-language contributions in the Official Report.

The Georgian Leinster House Restoration Project was completed in 2019 and a two-hour documentary on the restoration of Leinster House was produced and broadcast on Oireachtas TV.

About 100,000 people visit Leinster House each year. The **Ushers’ Service** conducted 2,789 tours, with 41,610 visitors taking a tour. Approximately 800 visitors celebrated “Culture Night” in Leinster House on 18 September 2019.

### Goal 1: Develop greater public engagement with the Houses of the Oireachtas

Figure 9: Visitors to Leinster House



The [oireachtas.ie](http://oireachtas.ie) website was further developed in 2019. The website contributes to greater engagement, access to parliamentary information, transparency and openness in relation to the business of the Houses. There was over 2.3m visits to the Oireachtas website in 2019.

The *Commission's Communications Strategy* prioritises new media, including **social media** networks, for attention. The use of Facebook and Twitter livestreaming of parliamentary debates continues to raise public awareness of the work of the Houses. The Houses of the Oireachtas Service won the Best Team NGOs/SMEs/Public Body award in the Sockies Social Media Awards 2019. The social media channels had 32,000 Twitter followers and over 5,700 Facebook followers in 2019.

Table 6: Oireachtas Website <sup>1</sup>	2019	2018	2017	2016
Visits to the Oireachtas website	2,338,948	1,543,314	1,869,289	1,489,807
Website page views	7,044,427	5,674,036	6,433,253	6,389,479
Total views of live streams of parliamentary debates <sup>2</sup> (as follows):	2,204,366	1,919,445	2,727,175	1,270,450
<i>Dáil debates</i>	291,600	513,437	834,307	873,186
<i>Seanad debates</i>	30,587	78,179	61,595	21,658
<i>Parliamentary Committee debates</i>	1,666,112	1,144,773	1,689,805	241,044
<i>Oireachtas TV</i>	216,067	183,056	141,009	133,839

<sup>1</sup> 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](http://oireachtas.ie) comprised multiple websites. A more accurate measurement method commenced when the new website launched in May 2018.

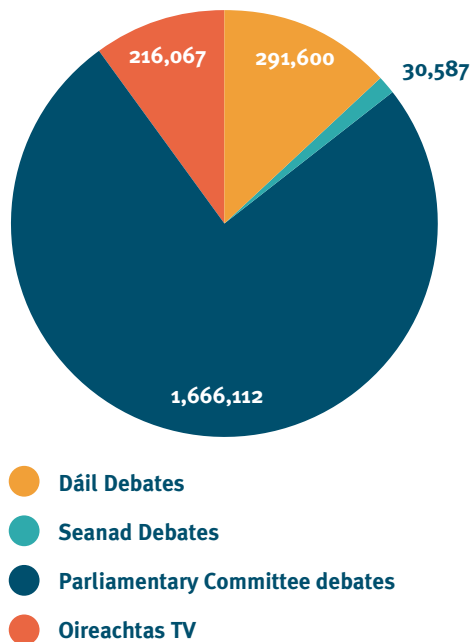
<sup>2</sup> The number of views of live streams of parliamentary debates for 2019 is not directly comparable with previous years. People's viewing behaviours have changed – there has been a shift to viewing live streams via Facebook or Twitter, or via the Oireachtas app and these streams are not captured in this table. Furthermore, spikes caused by high profile events in the chambers and committees distort annual viewing patterns and a new Oireachtas web structure since 2018 has removed some double counting in the analytics. A review of how to capture all live stream views of parliamentary debates will be carried out in 2020.



### Goal 1: Develop greater public engagement with the Houses of the Oireachtas

During 2019, there was 2.2m views of live streaming of parliamentary debates of which 1.6m were committee debates.

**Figure 10: Oireachtas Website Views of Live Streams of Parliamentary Debates, 2019**



**Oireachtas TV** features both live and replay content in addition to content developed by the Service or provided by some broadcast partners. Major events such as Budget Day, the first day of a new Dáil and new Seanad, speeches on issues of national concern and special events such as *Dáil 100* are broadcast on Oireachtas TV. The Special Joint Sitting of the Houses for *Dáil 100* in the Mansion House on 21 January was a production that included elements of musical performance, drama and video art. It was carried simultaneously on Oireachtas TV and RTÉ1 and was not only a celebration of the Houses of the Oireachtas but of the creative and technical resources within the Oireachtas Broadcasting Unit (OBU) and its contract partners.

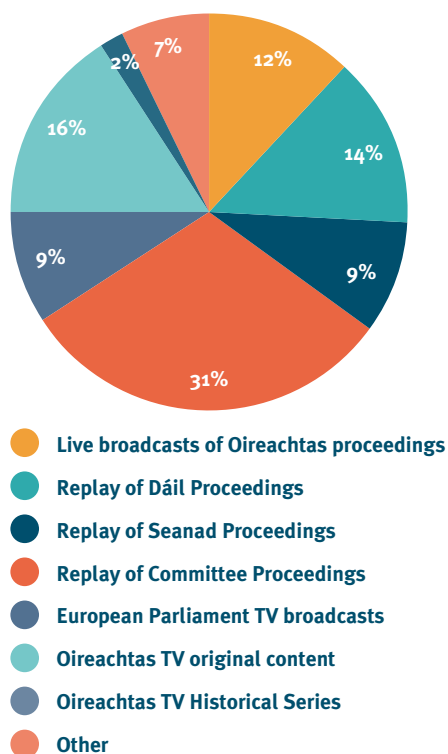
Oireachtas TV provides access to an online archive that contains daily videos of Dáil, Seanad and Committee debates. It also produces a range of programmes including documentaries, studio debates on important parliamentary issues and historical talks. During 2019, it produced the 2-part documentary *The Restoration of Historic Leinster House*. The Oireachtas Broadcasting Unit (OBU) also continued its engagement with the Broadcasting Authority Ireland (BAI) Sound and Vision Fund, which allowed Oireachtas TV to help produce and broadcast *Dáil Day One* in association with Paper Owl Films. This is an animated film detailing the lead up to the sitting of the first Dáil in 1919. It is also a valuable educational tool for outreach programmes.

During 2019, the OBU continued to produce its monthly round up of events in the Oireachtas *Around the Houses*. This included Oireachtas TV Debates on topics such as climate change, disinformation, and Brexit; and the launch by the Ceann Comhairle of the publication *What's the Story? – 25 Stories about Ireland and Europe*, that highlights some of the ways that Ireland benefits from European Union membership. Oireachtas TV also launched a weekly preview programme, *The Weekly Brief* in order to keep its viewers apprised of upcoming business in the Houses.

The Service produces Irish Sign Language (ISL) and subtitling content. The Service is meeting and exceeding its BAI targets for Oireachtas TV. The recruitment of in-house ISL interpreters will help to make parliamentary proceeding and other Oireachtas TV content accessible to a wider audience.

### Goal 1: Develop greater public engagement with the Houses of the Oireachtas

Figure 11: Content of Oireachtas TV, 2019



The **Oireachtas Education Programme** continued to be delivered throughout the year. The programme is led by the Parliamentary Education Officer. The Education Programme provides access to online parliamentary education resources and to on-site workshops. The programme also promotes the role of the Houses among teaching professionals and with the public through the publication of education programmes on Oireachtas TV. The target audience is second level students however, as the programme developed a number of initiatives for primary level students also commenced.

The Education Programme is made up of a number of strands that include the following:

- the **Parliamentary Education Workshops** that support the introduction of the new *Politics and Society* course for senior cycle students. School groups visit on a Monday or Friday, get a tour and then take part in a debate in one of the Committee Rooms. At the end of the school year 2018/19, 36 schools had availed of the workshops with 1,004 students attending;
- **Lesson plans** are produced to provide teachers with effective and practical resources to teach key concepts of the Democracy element of the CSPE course at Junior cycle level;
- **Film Animations**, with the support of the Broadcasting Authority Ireland, have been produced for primary and second level students to support teacher and student engagement with the work of the Oireachtas;
- Under the **Ceann Go Ceann** initiative, the Ceann Comhairle takes part in a video call with a class of *Politics and Society* students in their own school. In the 2018/19 school year eight schools took part; and
- **Dáil na nÓg** took place in Leinster House on Saturday, 23 November. Dáil na nÓg is a biennial event. One hundred and fifty-five delegates attended from the 31 local Comhairle na nÓg. Delegates attended the Dáil chamber and workshops took place in the Committee Rooms. For the first time young people had the opportunity to cast their vote in the Dáil Chamber and to set out a climate change agenda for the Comhairle na nÓg National Executive.

### Goal 1: Develop greater public engagement with the Houses of the Oireachtas



*Dáil na nÓg 2019 took place in Leinster House as part of the Dáil 100 commemorative programme. The Opening Ceremony in the Dáil chamber was chaired by the Ceann Comhairle.*



*The Ceann Comhairle and members of Dáil na nÓg planting a tree in the lawn of Leinster House to mark the event (Dáil na nÓg 2019).*

In 2019, a **Transition Year** Student Work Experience Pilot Programme was initiated in the Oireachtas. The first intake to the programme commenced in November 2019. The programme provides a one-week work experience placement in the Service. The purpose is to provide Transition Year students with an opportunity to experience, at first hand, everyday life in the Houses of the Oireachtas and to research an area of parliamentary business.

The Commission also approved the hosting of eight one-day workshops in Leinster House to facilitate the ‘Politics in Action’ schools programme for students from cross-community schools in Northern Ireland.

The workshops provide an opportunity for students participating in the programme to discuss current political and social issues affecting young people with members of both Houses of the Oireachtas.

The Oireachtas Service continues to work closely with 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 for the Oireachtas **Internship Programme**. The Oireachtas 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.

This Internship Programme and other parliamentary education initiatives help to increase understanding, awareness and engagement with the work of the Oireachtas.

The Service continued to support the implementation of the Oireachtas **Irish Language Strategy** and the Service’s Irish Language Scheme (*Scéim na Gaeilge*) throughout 2019. The Service provided training to improve Irish language skills among existing staff and ran a number of competitions to recruit staff with Irish language skills. Irish language social events were also organised for members and staff with a primary focus on bilingual events and events for those with only *cúpla focal* – *a few words*. An Irish language library, *Taisce na Leabhar*, was created to assist members and staff in improving their language skills. All committee rooms are now fitted with simultaneous translation (interpretation) technologies.

**Goal 2: Strengthen our EU, UK and other international relationships****STRATEGY OUTCOME 2: GOAL 2****Strengthen our EU, UK and other international relationships**

The Interparliamentary and Travel Unit and the Committees Secretariat supports members in the ongoing development of Interparliamentary relations. Overall, there was an increase in the level of interparliamentary engagement.

During 2019, the Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach welcomed distinguished visitors to the Houses of the Oireachtas.

- On 17 April, U.S. House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi was welcomed to Leinster House where she delivered an address to members and former members of the Houses to mark the centenary of the first Dáil. Oireachtas TV produced a special programme on the visit.
- On 22 May, their Majesties King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia of Sweden visited Leinster House as part of their State Visit to Ireland. They met with the Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach and a representative group of TD's and Senators.
- On 12 June, their Majesties King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima of the Netherlands visited Leinster House during their State Visit to Ireland. During the visit they met with the Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach and were joined by a cross-party delegation of TD's and Senators.
- On 17 September, the Ceann Comhairle welcomed Mr. Carlos Holmes Trujillo García, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Colombia to Dáil Éireann and a bilateral meeting was held. The Foreign Minister

was accompanied by the Ambassador of Colombia to Ireland, H.E. Patricia Cortés; the Ambassador of Ireland to Colombia, H.E. Alison Milton; and Deputy Head of Mission of the Embassy of Colombia, Mr. Andrés Echeverri.



*King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia of Sweden visited the Houses of the Oireachtas during their state visit to Ireland in May 2019.*



*King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima of The Netherlands visited the Houses of the Oireachtas during their state visit to Ireland in June 2019.*



**Goal 2: Strengthen our EU, UK and other international relationships**

*The Chairman, Pat Deering TD, and members of the Joint Committee on Agriculture Food and the Marine attending the interparliamentary conference on Common Agricultural Policy and Cohesion Policy organised by the Romanian EU Presidency.*

As part of the ‘Dáil 100’ commemorative events held in the Round Room of the Mansion House, 35 Speakers, Deputy Speakers or their representatives attended from the national Parliaments of the European Union, the United States and the Assemblies and Parliaments of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly.

On 30 January, the Ceann Comhairle joined Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) Northern Ireland Assembly speaker Robin Newton at a special event in Stormont which recalled the first sitting of the Irish Parliament. The Ceann Comhairle was among invited guests for ‘Perspectives on the first sitting of Dáil Éireann’, organised as part of the Assembly Commission’s Decade of Centenaries series.

The Ceann Comhairle led delegations abroad to Morocco and Nepal. He also visited Brazil as part of Ireland’s St. Patrick’s Day Programme and visited the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh at the invitation of the Presiding Officer.

The Cathaoirleach led a delegation to Washington and also led the delegations to the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) General Assembly in Belgrade and the annual IPU/UN meeting in

New York. He also visited Japan, representing Ireland at the inauguration of the new Emperor and visited Russia as part of Ireland’s St. Patrick’s Day Programme. He also represented the Houses of the Oireachtas at parliamentary conferences in Paris and Vienna.



*Cathaoirleach, Senator Denis O’Donovan, Deputy John Brassil, Senator Pádraig Ó Céidigh and Senator Michelle Mulherin attended the IPU Parliamentary Hearing at the UN in New York.*

The Leas-Cheann Comhairle led a delegation to the IPU General Assembly in Doha and also represented the Houses of the Oireachtas at the European Conference of Speakers in Strasbourg.



*Leas-Cheann Comhairle, Pat the Cope Gallagher TD, with Deputy James Lawless, Deputy Louise O’Reilly and Senator Gerard Craughwell attending the 140th IPU Assembly in Doha (Qatar).*



## Goal 2: Strengthen our EU, UK and other international relationships

The Leas-Chathaoirleach represented the Houses of the Oireachtas at the annual opening of Tynwald, the parliament of the Isle of Man.



*Leas-Chathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann, Senator Paul Coghlan with the President of Tynwald (parliament of the Isle of Man), the Hon. Stephen Rodan MLC., and the Speaker of the Isle of Man's House of Keys, the Hon. Juan Watterson, at Tynwald Day's ceremonial proceedings 2019.*

The Houses also hosted nine incoming **Parliamentary Friendship Groups**. The Houses of the Oireachtas Parliamentary Friendship Groups undertook three official visits to the parliaments of their partner Friendship Groups. Parliamentary Friendship Groups give the members of the Houses opportunities to engage with legislators from other countries and enhance relations with other parliaments.

During 2019, the Houses received 20 incoming parliamentary delegations from Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas, including Speaker led delegations from Brazil and Morocco.



*The Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Feargháil TD, welcomed the Speaker of the House of Representatives of the Kingdom of Morocco, H.E. Mr. Habib El Malki, and a parliamentary delegation from Morocco, to the Houses of the Oireachtas.*

On 21 November 2019, the Ceann Comhairle and the new Chinese Ambassador to Ireland H.E. Mr. He Xiangdong co-hosted a 'Taste of Ireland-China' reception in Leinster House. The reception was a celebration of the work TDs and Senators undertake as part of the Ireland-China Friendship Group and an opportunity to celebrate growing social, economic and political links between Ireland and China.

Table 7: International and Interparliamentary Functions	2019	2018	2017	2016
Outgoing Parliamentary Delegations <sup>1</sup>				
<i>IPU General Assemblies and related meetings</i>	6	6	5	1
<i>PACE plenary and committee meetings</i>	38	23	24	13
<i>Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE</i>	8	6	6	5
<i>Speaker-led delegations and bilateral meetings</i>	10	14	9	8
Incoming Parliamentary Delegations				
<i>Speaker-led Delegations</i>	4	4	5	2
<i>Bilateral meetings</i>	16	7	10	8
Friendship Groups				
<i>Incoming visits by parliamentary Friendship Groups</i>	9	7	1	1
<i>Outgoing visits by parliamentary Friendship Groups</i>	3	2	1	–

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

<sup>1</sup> Outgoing Delegations include speaker-led delegations by the Ceann Comhairle or the Cathaoirleach.

**Goal 2: Strengthen our EU, UK and other international relationships**

The **Interparliamentary and Travel Unit** also provided ongoing support to the Houses of the Oireachtas delegations that participated in 38 Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) week-long plenary sessions and committee meetings; and supported eight meetings of Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe – Parliament Assembly (OSCE-PA).

**Parliamentary Committees** undertook 33 official visits during the year and hosted 26 incoming parliamentary delegations through formal and informal engagement.



*Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy, Senator Ivana Bacik and Deputy Margaret Murphy O'Mahony with Ms Silvana Koch-Mehrin, President of the Women Political Leaders Global Forum at the WPL Summit 2019 hosted by the Parliament of Japan.*

On 13 March, the **Dáil Committee on Budgetary Oversight** met European Commission representatives, including Deputy Director General of the Economic and Finance Division of the European Commission, Carlos Martinez-Mongay to consider the Commission's new *Country Report Ireland 2019* as part of the European Semester process.

Members of the **Joint Committee on Education and Skills** welcomed a delegation from the Slovak Republic to Leinster House on Thursday, 26 September. Leading the delegation was the State Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic Ms. Ol'ga Nachtmannová.

On 6 Nov 2019, the **Joint Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment** hosted an International Grand Committee (IGC) meeting. Ireland, Australia, Finland, Estonia, Singapore, the United Kingdom and the United States were represented. The seven countries represented at the meeting agreed a set of principles to advance international collaboration in the regulation of social media.

**Goal 2: Strengthen our EU, UK and other international relationships**

In addition to the interparliamentary activities summarised in Table 7 the **British Irish Parliamentary Assembly** (BIPA) met in Wicklow on the 13 and 14 of May for its 58th Plenary session. The opening day session featured addresses by Minister for Communications, Climate Action and the Environment, Richard Bruton TD, as well as H.E. Mr. Robin Barnett, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Ireland. Representatives from the National Youth Council of Ireland also addressed the Assembly on their work on Sustainable Development Goals. On 21 October, the 59th Plenary of BIPA opened in Warwickshire, United Kingdom with a focus on Brexit and UK-Irish relations.

The 2019 **Inter-Parliamentary Research and Information Network** (IPRIN) conference was hosted by the Oireachtas Library and Research Service (L&RS) in Dublin over 2 days on the 12 and 13 of September 2019. In addition to Irish delegates, 36 delegates attended from parliamentary library and research services of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the UK House of Commons and House of Lords, the Welsh Parliament, the Northern Ireland Assembly and the Scottish Parliament. The keynote address was delivered by Professor Michael Laffan entitled *An Improbable Stability: The Revolutionary Background to an 'Ordinary' Democracy*.

The Debates Office hosted the **British-Irish Parliamentary Reporting Association's** annual symposium in Leinster House from 28-31 July 2019. It also participated in a staff exchange programme with the House of Lords, UK Parliament, in June 2019.

**Goal 3: Enhance engagement with Government Departments****STRATEGY OUTCOME 2: GOAL 3****Enhance engagement with Government Departments**

During 2019, the Service continued to engage with Government Departments and public bodies in relation to legislation and parliamentary procedures, including with the following:

- the Parliamentary Liaison Unit of the Department of the Taoiseach on the implementation of the legislative programme;
- the Office of the Government Chief Whip;
- the Department of the Taoiseach on the operation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in relation to private members' Bills (PMBs) that was agreed between the Government and the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform and was adopted by the Dáil in December 2018;
- Government Departments on the processing of Parliamentary Questions and Replies; and
- Government Departments and public bodies on items and documents before Parliamentary Committee meetings and the attendance of witnesses at committee meetings.

As part of its overall objective of facilitating greater engagement by the Oireachtas with academia and experts, the L&RS began the process of building networks and strategic partnerships. A number of initiatives were undertaken:

- Outreach activities and presentations were made on the work of the L&RS and how academics and scientists could engage with the Oireachtas to inform members, Committees and the work of specialist units within the Oireachtas;

- In collaboration with the Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) a series of on-site seminars commenced for members and the L&RS also became a partner in SFI's pilot 'Public Service Fellowship Programme';
- Presentations were delivered at the SFI Annual Summit and Irish Research Council workshops. Presentations were also given to undergraduate and post-graduate students in Trinity College Dublin (TCD), Maynooth University and University College Dublin (UCD);
- There was collaborative engagement with academic expertise to scope and produce L&RS research briefings. In December 2019, the L&RS in conjunction with TCD published a *Spotlight* entitled *The Impact of anti-abortion protests on women accessing services – A Rapid Evidence Assessment*; and
- Work with the **Royal Irish Academy** (RIA) was undertaken to support the launch of the 2019 *Oireachtas Science Pairings Scheme*. The scheme was launched in Academy House in November 2019 and matched Oireachtas members and active scientists working on the island of Ireland.

The **Parliamentary Budget Office** (PBO) continued to develop links with relevant government departments and external agencies including the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council (IFAC), the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI).

The Office also continued to nurture relationships with international networks of Independent Fiscal Institution (IFIs) and Parliamentary Budget Offices (PBOs) while developing further interaction with bodies such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and EU institutions.

The PBO also hosted presentations for members and staff with speakers from the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES).

## STRATEGY OUTCOME 3: A Digital Parliament

*The Service has three strategic goals to achieve this strategy outcome.*

The Oireachtas continued on a transformation journey under its Digital Transformation Programme – *Enabling Democracy – Work that Matters*. This journey has been shaped and developed in consultation with staff from across the Service and in line with key strategic objectives set out by the Commission in its Strategic Plan 2019-2021, *A Parliament which Works for the People*. The programme is being delivered by the Digital Transformation Team working collaboratively with the staff of the business units who are shaping the design of the systems to meet evolving parliamentary challenges and corporate business needs. The delivery is supported by the Oireachtas Digital Network, a Change Management Team and the ICT Help Desk and Support Teams.

The Transformation Programme is made up of the following seven key elements:

- 1) Technology in the Chambers
- 2) Digital Parliament
- 3) Informing the Citizen
- 4) Digital Modernisation

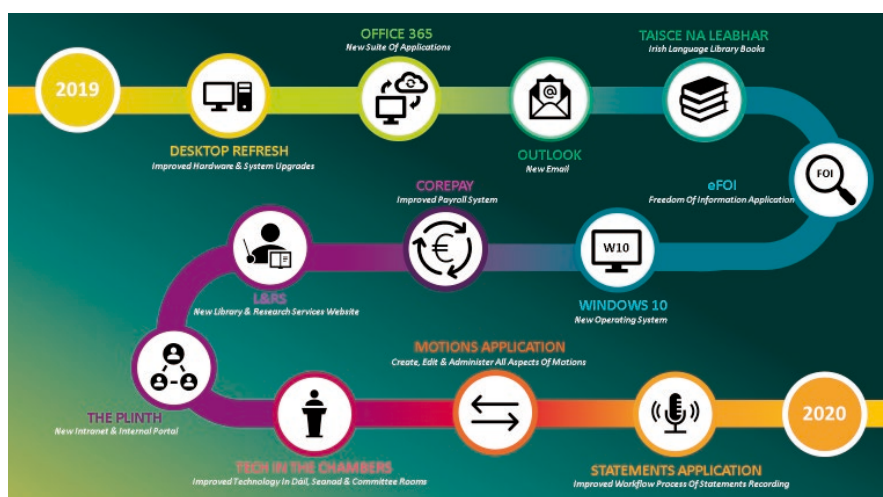
- 5) Informing the Debate
- 6) The Corporate Organisation
- 7) Data Integration and Analytics

Digital Transformation is enhancing the technical landscape of the Oireachtas, creating improved ways of working for members and staff and facilitating greater public engagement with the democratic process.

Digital Transformation focuses on meeting the needs and expectations of members and staff, by providing them with the latest modern technologies and tools to do their work; it focuses on parliamentary democracy by providing the citizen with greater access and opportunities to engage with the work of the Oireachtas 365 days a year. Staff across business units are playing a critical part in the design, development and delivery of these projects.

Significant improvements across the organisation have been delivered in 2019.

### Digital Transformation 2019





**Goal 1: Transform the technology used by the Houses and Committees****STRATEGY OUTCOME 3: GOAL 1****Transform the technology used by the Houses and Committees**

During 2019, the final phase of the **Technology in the Chambers Programme** was successfully delivered with the completion of the Committee Rooms project and the Seanad restoration project. This programme involved the improvement of ICT infrastructure in the Dáil Chamber, the Seanad Chamber and Committee Rooms. This upgrade provides the latest sound and audio technology to the Chambers enhancing how members and staff carry out their business, in Irish or in English.

For citizens, the new technology streamlines the delivery of data and supports public engagement with the democratic process. This is the first programme to be completed under the Oireachtas Digital Transformation Programme.

The phased development and delivery of the **Digital Parliament Programme** continued throughout 2019. The objective of this programme is to digitise existing processes and ways of working collaboratively, as well as providing modern tools to support members and staff when carrying out parliamentary activities. As the transformation progresses, the programme will set the foundations for future functionality and provision of further services to members, staff and citizens.

During 2019, project teams worked on the phased development and delivery of the **Motions and Statements** applications of the new Digital Parliament Programme. Both projects were delivered in 2019.

The **Motions** application provides a means for staff of the Journal Office, the Bills Office and Committee Secretariat to electronically manage Motions and their processes. The Motions application is built within the new Digital Parliament System which allows for an integrated approach to all procedural business. The application enables Business Units to move away from manual processes to a system that is designed to simplify complex tasks. The application will provide Journal Office staff with the ability to create, edit, apply updates and automatically associate Motions to Bills, Standing Orders, Committee Reports and Documents Laid before the Houses.

The **Statements** application is another key component of the new integrated Digital Parliament System. The application enables Journal Office staff to create, review, search and request translated Statements in one easy-to-use system. In addition, the application extends functionality to allow the Government Chief Whip's Office staff to submit Statements. The Statements application will improve workflow processes allowing users to digitally manage the processing of Statement records.

As a bilingual parliament, Irish and English are the official languages of parliamentary business. Rannóg an Aistriúcháin (The Translation Service) with assistance from the L&RS launched **Taisce na Leabhar**, an online resource that was developed under the **Digital Parliament Programme** to provide members and staff with a library of Irish language books to support and encourage members and staff to enhance their Irish language skills.

**Goal 2: Enable easier public access to the work of the Oireachtas and its members**

**STRATEGY OUTCOME 3: GOAL 2**

**Enable easier public access to the work of the Oireachtas and its members**

The Digital Transformation Programme sets out to achieve an over-arching objective, 'Enabling Democracy'. This objective is at the centre of the strategy and is supported across all seven elements of the transformation programme.

**Informing the Citizen** element of the Digital Transformation Programme focuses on improving transparency between the Oireachtas and the general public. It will ensure that even more of the workings of the Oireachtas and the democratic system in Ireland are accessible to the public 365 days a year. As the work progresses, the **Informing the Citizen Programme** will encompass a number of projects that raise citizens' awareness, engagement and understanding of the Oireachtas.

In 2019, the new **Oireachtas.ie website** (launched in 2018) had 2.3m visits, up from 1.5m visits in 2018. The website is contributing to greater engagement, easier access to parliamentary information and transparency and openness in the business of the Houses. The website is a vital, public-facing tool for the organisation that presents content to over 40,000 users per week. The website is not static, its functionality, layout and presentation of content are continually enhanced. The ongoing management and improvement of the website is a key priority of the digital transformation approach.

In 2019, we celebrated **Dáil 100**, the centenary of the first sitting of Dáil Éireann. A key initiative of the commemorative programme was the launch of the **Dáil100.ie website**. It commemorates the 100th anniversary of political discourse, debate and law-making in Dáil Éireann. The website provides public access to a range of material and treasures from the Oireachtas Library, historic parliamentary debates, and papers from the first Dáil.

Live streaming of Oireachtas proceedings allows the public to view the work of the Oireachtas and their Committees in real time on the **oireachtas.ie website**, Oireachtas social media channels and on the Oireachtas app. The phased delivery of the **Media Services Redesign** project during 2019 and 2020 has involved the replacement of live streaming infrastructure. This project will ensure that live streams will be fully resilient and easily accessible across devices and channels. There were 2.2m views of live streams of parliamentary debates in 2019.

The Digital Parliament Programme that is in development will facilitate easier public access to the work of the Oireachtas and will allow for the complete recording and categorisation of all Parliamentary activities.

**Goal 3: Modernise our Technical Infrastructure****STRATEGY OUTCOME 3: GOAL 3****Modernise our Technical Infrastructure**

The Digital Transformation Programme will allow members and staff to work in a more integrated manner.

Under the **Digital Modernisation Programme** systems were upgraded to Outlook 2016, Windows 10 and Microsoft Office 365. The migration to Windows 10 has resulted in several key benefits, including enhanced functionality, greater mobility across workplace devices and increased options and capacity for remote meetings and working. The introduction of Microsoft Office 365 has improved security and reliability. Together, these upgrades are providing overall better user experience for members and staff of the Oireachtas.

The ICT Service Desks continue to support the digital transformation process; they supported 20,000 calls from members, their staff and Service staff in 2019. The increase in the number of calls during 2019, compared to 2018, coincided with the roll out of the Desktop Refresh Project to members and the move to Windows 10.

A key action in the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission's Strategic Plan 2019-2021 is to implement advanced technology and digital tools to enhance information, research, analysis and advisory capabilities.

- During 2019, the L&RS under the **Informing the Debate Programme** launched a redesigned, redeveloped and improved L&RS internal website. This enables members and staff to find relevant research papers and briefings published by the L&RS, in addition to content held in the library's print and online collections.
- The publications of the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) are available on the website, including its *Expenditure Analysis Series* of publications. Members of the Houses, staff and the public are also invited to receive automatic notifications of the latest PBO publications.
- *Legal Evolve*, is a new case management system for the Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers (OPLA). This was developed under the **Informing the Debate Programme** and work was completed on this system in December 2019. The system improves overall workflow management for the staff of the OPLA in meeting their parliamentary and corporate legal obligations.

**Table 8: ICT Helpdesk Support**

	2019	2018	2017	2016
Support provided for calls from staff of the Service	8,711	8,215	8,325	7,081
Support provided for calls from members and their staff	11,217	10,398	8,828	11,290

### Goal 3: Modernise our Technical Infrastructure

- The **Debates Office** continues to liaise with colleagues in other parliaments who are researching best practice in *Automated Speech Recognition* (ASR) technologies. In 2019, staff of the Office gave a presentation at the British-Irish Parliamentary Reporting Association (BIPRA) conference and at the Hansard Association of Canada (HAC) conference on a pilot it conducted in ASR for capturing parliamentary proceedings.



*The 2019 annual symposium of the British-Irish Parliamentary Reporting Association was hosted by the Debates Office (Houses of the Oireachtas Service).*

As the digital transformation progresses, the benefits of the **Informing the Debate Programme** will be further extended to the citizens of Ireland building greater parliamentary engagement.

The Oireachtas Digital Strategy, in line with the Public Service ICT Strategy 2019, has moved towards cloud-based service delivery models. The Government Cloud Platform (GCP) allows Government Departments and Organisations access to centrally deployed applications developed under the *Build to Share* (BTS) applications programme.

Through the Digital Transformation Programme the Oireachtas has begun transitioning to cloud based systems including Freedom of Information (eFOI), Risk (eRisk), Records Management (eDocs) and Data Protection (eGDPR). A number of these systems have and are being created centrally under the BTS applications programme.

The **eFOI** is an application system provided by the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) under the *Build to Share* applications programme. This application, in conjunction with the Oireachtas Records Management Unit, was tailored under the **Corporate Organisation Programme** to meet the needs of the parliamentary service. This solution has streamlined the management of FOI requests by the Records Management Unit and the FOI decision-makers.

The **Salaries Unit** also completed an upgrade of the **CorePay** payroll system to a cloud-based system that offers greater functionality. This upgrade has assisted in streamlining payroll processes.

The **Finance Unit** completed an upgrade of the Integra Financial Management system to a web-based portal. The upgraded system provides a better user interface and facilitates improved reporting. This upgrade has also provided better records management which has the facility to assist in the movement away from paper files in the future.

## STRATEGY OUTCOME 4: A Well-Supported Parliamentary Community

*We have five strategic goals to achieve this strategy outcome.*

### STRATEGY OUTCOME 4: GOAL 1

#### Develop a Parliamentary Community that is valued, engaged, and supported

At the end of 2019, the total number of FTE staff (Civil Servants, State Industrial, Printers and Office Holders' staff) was 572.43 – the total number of persons was 595.

Workforce planning during 2019 focused on recruitment to fill critical posts. This included the recruitment of Irish language translators (Aistritheoirí) required to increase the Service's capacity to provide translation services for the Houses. Recruitment of Irish language translators took place in a very competitive Irish language services job market.

A Capacity Review of the Seanad Office was commissioned by the Service to review the capacity of the Office in meeting its functions and responsibilities. The Management Board accepted the Report and agreed to implement the recommendations.

**HR Services** managed five internal promotion competitions and 24 external competitions and secondment processes. HR also availed of the central Civil Service Mobility Policy to fill posts. These competitions allowed the Service to fill key vacancies and to maintain its overall staffing level during the year. During 2019, a total of 65 staff (Civil Service and State Industrial) joined the Service.

During 2019, HR Services launched its *'People Strategy 2019-2021'*. The focus of the Strategy is on the services provided to Service staff. The Strategy was developed in consultation with staff and is aligned with the Houses of the Oireachtas Strategic Plan, the Civil Service Renewal Plan and the Civil Service People Strategy.

"A well-supported parliamentary community" is a key objective of the Strategic Plan for HR Services. The challenges identified include retaining skilled staff and utilising the opportunities offered by new technologies effectively while continuing to provide services to a high standard. The aim of the HR People Strategy sets out six priority actions to ensure that the Service has the resources required and that all staff have the skills and supports to provide high quality parliamentary services.

In tandem, with the launch of the HR People Strategy, the HR Service's Training and Development Unit launched its *Learning & Development (L&D) Strategy 2019-2021*. The purpose of the Strategy is to link learning and development activities systematically with business needs and to establish priorities for activities and resources.

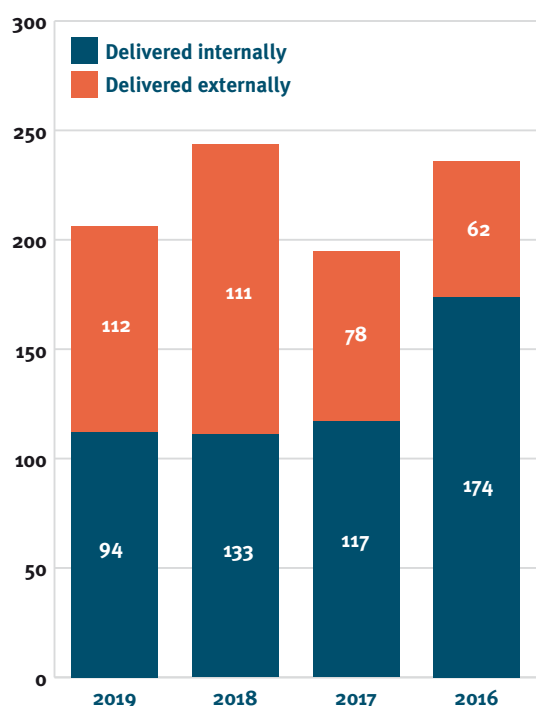
The L&D Strategy identifies the key initiatives to be taken by staff, managers and the Training and Development Unit to meet the skills and knowledge gaps identified in its Training Needs Analysis Survey completed in 2018. It also identifies how to develop staff competencies through programmes such as Leadership Coaching, Mentoring and High-Performance Teams that are focused on performance improvement.



**Goal 1: Develop a Parliamentary Community that is valued, engaged, and supported**

During 2019, the Training and Development Unit provided 206 courses. Seventy-one staff pursued courses under the central Refund/Advance of Fees Scheme that is promoted by the Service with a particular emphasis on organisation-critical subject areas.

**Figure 12: Staff Training and Development**



During 2019, HR Services developed its *Line Managers Guide to Effective Staff Management*. The handbook identifies the current roles and responsibilities in the area of HR management. The handbook provides line managers with guidance to assist them in their people management role, to comply with legal obligations and to promote good people management practices.

Initiatives under the Service’s **Organisational Development Initiative (ODI)** continued throughout 2019. These included Health and Well-Being Group seminars and activities and promoting and supporting

the operation of the Oireachtas Mentoring Programme. During 2019, 38 staff participated in the mentoring programme, and two sessions of the *Coaching for Performance* course were delivered.

The **Oireachtas Social Club** organised a programme of events throughout the year. Events included cultural excursions, music nights, table quizzes, hill walks, treasure hunts and the Oireachtas book club amongst other activities. The Social Club also organised its second volunteering day that was held at the beginning of the summer. This year the group volunteered at WALK in Walkinstown, Dublin, the intellectual disability organisation that is one of the Service’s partners in the OWL programme.



*Staff from the Houses of the Oireachtas Service volunteering at WALK Association for People with an Intellectual Disability in August 2019.*

**Goal 1: Develop a Parliamentary Community that is valued, engaged, and supported**

**Members' HR Services** provide members of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann with a range of HR services in respect of their staff to support their Parliamentary work. At the end of 2019, there were 454 FTE political staff (544 persons) employed by members and parties under the **Scheme for Secretarial Assistance**.

Members and parties are the employers of these staff and have obligations to them as employers. The HR Unit for Members has responsibility for the effective operation of the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance, in partnership with the Minister for the Public Expenditure and Reform, who sets the terms and conditions of the Scheme. The services to members include the administration of payroll and the conditions for staff employed under the Scheme, as well as training.

The **Party Administrators/Group Coordinators Forum** operates as a consultation group on issues affecting political staff. In 2019 discussion focused on policy issues relating to the *Scheme for Secretarial Assistance* and on the *Oireachtas Dignity and Respect Statement of Principles*.

Members' HR Services, through the **Pensions Unit**, also provides services for the administration of members' pensions under the Ciste Pinsean Scheme, and under the Single Public Sector Pension Scheme. As part of the administration of the Single Scheme, the Service issued annual benefit statements to 74 members detailing the pension and lump sum amounts accrued to the end of 2019. In 2019, pensions were payable monthly to 208 former political staff and 419 former members of the Oireachtas.

Additionally, the Pensions Unit provides pension services for the staff of the Service. In 2019, 15 civil service retirements were processed and forwarded to the Payroll Shared Services Centre for payment and 182 annual benefit statements were issued to Service staff.

Members HR Unit facilitates the **Student Placement Programme** which provides members with additional support while providing work experience which is evaluated by the colleges for the purposes of achieving a QQI qualification. Colleges included in the placement programme are the Institute of Public Administration (IPA), the Technical University of Dublin (TUD), University College of Cork (UCC), University of Limerick (UL) and National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG).

The Election Planning Steering Group, which was established to develop a planning strategy for the next general election, met frequently during 2019 as the Dáil was nearing the end of the parliamentary cycle. The Steering Group chaired by the Head of Members' HR Services and comprised of senior managers met to lead and co-ordinate the activities required to prepare for the period from the dissolution of the Dáil and Seanad to the establishment of the next Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann.

Key outputs of the Service's Election Plan included the following:

- **Dissolution and Cessation Guidelines** that provided details of the services to be provided by the Service following the dissolution of the 32nd Dáil and cessation of the 25th Seanad; the charges that apply to some of the services and the information that is required for Standards in Public Office Commission (SIPO) returns.

**Goal 1: Develop a Parliamentary Community that is valued, engaged, and supported**

- **The Members Liaison Officers (MLOs)** initiative. The role of the MLO is to assist new Members and act as a point of contact in their first days and weeks in Leinster House. All MLOs receive mandatory training on their role and responsibilities.
  - **Information Services**
  - **Information Packs** for all members when signing the roll in the Clerk's Office,
  - **Information Desks** attended to by Members' HR staff,
  - **ICT Hot Desks** attended to by ICT staff, and
  - **Information Seminars** for members and their staff covering key topics, including office services, facilities, and legal requirements; briefings by former members of the Oireachtas; and orientation tours given by the Parliamentary Ushers Service.
- **Accommodation and ICT Facilities** for members, including the allocation of office accommodation to members of the incoming Dáil and Seanad.

**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 including information on allowances and payments applicable to their position. It also provides information on the policies and guidelines governing the use of such resources.



*Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann, Senator Denis O'Donovan, meeting with H.E. Mrs. Ekaterini Simopoulou, Ambassador of Greece to Ireland.*

The **Print Facility** provides a printing service for members of both Houses and qualifying parties. During 2019, the printing equipment was also upgraded to meet current and future needs of the Oireachtas. A Service Level Agreement (SLA) is in place between the members and the Commission in relation to the provision of printing facilities. **The Print Users Council** reviews the operation of the SLA agreement and makes recommendations to the Commission, as appropriate. The Print Facility completed over 2,800 print orders in 2019.

**Goal 2: Provide a secure and safe physical environment that meets the needs of the Parliamentary Community**

#### STRATEGY OUTCOME 4: GOAL 2

Provide a secure and safe physical environment that meets the needs of the Parliamentary Community

In August 2019, the centenary year of the first Dáil, the conservation and restoration of the **Georgian Leinster House Project** was completed following a two year programme of work that was managed by the Office of Public Works (OPW) and the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The footprint of the original house dating from 1745 was the focus of the restoration works which incorporated the Ceann Comhairle's Office, the Cathaoirleach's Office, the General Office and the Enquiries Office. Every aspect of the house from the basement to the attic and roof has been carefully restored and conserved, breathing new life back into the building.

The works required co-operative management between the OPW and the Service (Facilities Management Unit, Superintendent's Section and ICT Unit). The structural work that took place included fireproofing, conservation work, stone repairs, restoration of plaster work and the replacement of water, heating and ventilation services. The works also provided for modern accessibility standards.

Visitors to Leinster House can view the following historical artefacts that were discovered during the work:

- Wooden children's toys from the 19th century including a whistle, solid ball, a toy soldier and a spinning top;
- A pamphlet, entitled *The Glasnevin Grass*

*Garden* dated 1818;

- A glass photographic negative of an unknown couple in 1920's dress;
- A credit-card size notice of a charity sermon dated January 1791;
- A pair of leather shoes; and
- Boxes of shells, between floorboards joists, used as soundproofing material. Shells were also found lodged between joists on the second floor, possibly as an early form of noise or heat insulation.

*A number of the historical artefacts discovered during the renovation project:*



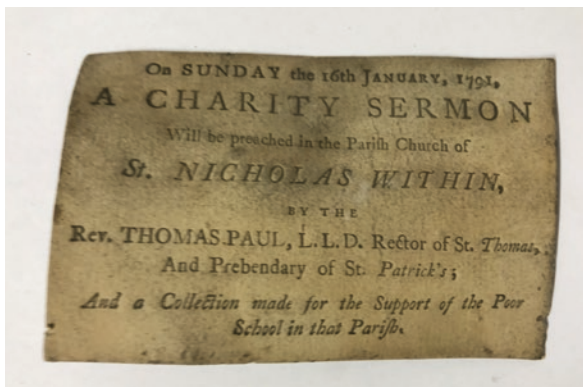
*Wooden toys from the 19th century*



*A pamphlet titled *The Glasnevin Grass Garden*, dated 1818*



**Goal 2: Provide a secure and safe physical environment that meets the needs of the Parliamentary Community**



*A notice of a Charity Sermon, dated January 1791*



*A pair of leather shoes*



*Boxes of shells placed between floorboard joists, used as soundproofing material*

*Photographs courtesy of the Office of Public Works.*

With this extensive restoration work, Georgian Leinster House has been preserved for future generations of members and for the thousands of visitors to Leinster House each year. A series of Open Weekends took place in 2019 to allow the public to see the restoration and conservation of their National Parliament. A two-part documentary *The Restoration of Historic Leinster House* was produced and broadcast on Oireachtas TV.

The documentary is available to view on the Oireachtas.ie website and further information about the conservation and restoration works on Georgian Leinster House is available on: [www.oireachtas.ie/en/visit-and-learn/history-and-buildings/conservation-and-restoration/](http://www.oireachtas.ie/en/visit-and-learn/history-and-buildings/conservation-and-restoration/)

The Oireachtas is committed to ensuring a safe, secure and sustainable workplace that meets the needs of the parliamentary community. Following the completion of the restoration project, the Service is now focusing on the development and implementation, in collaboration with the OPW, of an **Accommodation and Renovation Strategy for Oireachtas Buildings**.

There are continuing pressures on the limited accommodation available within the Leinster House complex. The immediate need for additional office space is as a result of the increase in staffing levels to support the programme of parliamentary and organisational reform. The OPW on-site teams work closely with the Superintendent's Section, the Facilities Management Unit and the ICT Unit to maintain the Leinster House complex of buildings and to improve the facilities provided.



**Goal 2: Provide a secure and safe physical environment that meets the needs of the Parliamentary Community**

The Management Board's Strategic Committee on Openness, Public Engagement and Campus Development (OPED) is tasked with leading the development and scoping of new fit for purpose Campus facilities.

The **Superintendent's Section** has responsibility for managing protocol and security, including Garda vetting, the electronic pass card system, visitor access to the Houses and protecting the safety and health of all those who work in and visit Leinster House. The Section provides operational support and security for sittings of the Houses and the Oireachtas Committees and high-level parliamentary meetings.

Despite the access restriction due to the restoration project, there was a high throughput of visitors during 2019. The Ushers conducted 2,789 tours for 41,610 visitors. The Superintendent's Section and Facilities Management Unit provided security, protocol and logistical support for official events hosted by the Houses, including the special Centenary Joint Sitting of the Houses at the Mansion House on 21 January 2019 and the *Dáil 100* commemorative events held in the Leinster House complex during 2019.

The **Health and Safety Committee** met quarterly to discuss health & safety issues, to take necessary measures and to act as a communications forum for all stake holders. The Annual Health & Safety Audit was completed. The Service commenced a review of the Health and Safety Policy Statement and risk assessments. The occupational risk management focuses primarily on health and safety, preventing harm to people and damage to property.

The Oireachtas's **Service Officers, Telephonists, Parliamentary Porters, Stationery Stores and on-site and contract Cleaners**, all facilitated the smooth running of the Houses by the essential services they provided to members and staff to enable them to carry out their work efficiently and safely.

The **Bar and Catering Services** provide quality in-house food and beverages and dining services for members, members' staff, Service staff, contractors, and visitors across five venues in the Leinster House complex. The Catering Services team facilitated a number of events throughout 2019 such as the *Dáil 100* commemorations and Europe Day. Catering was also provided for visiting delegations from Morocco, China and Peru, as well as visitors including the United States House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi; their Majesties King Carl XVI Gustaf and Queen Silvia of Sweden, and their Majesties King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima of the Netherlands. Members' Services (Catering) continued to promote sustainability by increasing recycling opportunities, eliminating single-use plastics and encouraging customers to switch to reusable cups. A programme of food and beverage procurement contracts was put in place, and catering equipment was updated. The new credit arrangements approved by the Commission for users of the catering facilities were implemented and further embedded during the year.

**Goal 2: Provide a secure and safe physical environment that meets the needs of the Parliamentary Community**

The **Health and Well-being Working Group** was set up by HR Services with the aim of bringing together staff to contribute to a Health and Well-being Initiative. The group delivered a calendar of events and activities for 2019 to promote health and well-being in the workplace, including a campaign to promote the Cycle-to-Work Scheme, self-care packs for staff, and seminars on various aspects of health and well-being.

**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 Oireachtas Service participates in the OPW's *Optimising Power at Work* scheme, and the Facilities Management team works closely with the OPW to implement methods to reduce energy usage and improve data collection.

The Service reports to the SEAI annually on energy 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 Annual Report 2019 on the Public Sector, reports that the Houses of the Oireachtas Service Energy Consumption (Primary) was 13.1 GWh for 2018. Overall performance indicators show a marked improvement on previous years.

An Efficiency Review of Energy Usage and Costs was conducted during 2019. This review has shown that significant improvements have been made in energy usage in the Houses of the Oireachtas and there is assurance that energy management is focused on long-term sustainability and creating a culture of energy awareness. The report included recommendations to support energy management planning and administration.

The Service continues to work with the OPW to implement energy management, waste management and sustainability actions.

**Goal 3: Foster a culture of dignity and respect, diversity and inclusion****STRATEGY OUTCOME 4: GOAL 3****Foster a culture of dignity and respect, diversity and inclusion**

The Houses of the Oireachtas Commission is committed to ensuring that safety and equality are to the forefront of our values, and that bullying, harassment, and sexual harassment will not be tolerated in any form. The Commission agreed to adopt common standards to ensure that all those working in the Houses of the Oireachtas are treated with dignity and respect.

In March 2019, following a consultation process, the Commission's *Dignity and Respect Statement of Principles and Policy* was published. The Statement won broad support from the political parties and groups and from staff representatives, including contributions from the Members' Dignity and Respect Forum, the Party Administrators/Group Co-ordinators Forum and the Women's Caucus.

The Statement sets out common standards of respect, dignity, safety and equality that apply to the Parliamentary Community – members of the Houses, their staff, the staff of the Service, interns and those on work placements, as well as political correspondents working in the Houses.

The principles apply in the Parliamentary Workplace, which includes Leinster House and its environs, constituency offices, meetings, conferences, training events, official travel, and work-related social occasions. These principles build on the standards of behaviour in the codes of conduct and value statements of the Houses of the Oireachtas, the political parties and the Oireachtas Service. The implementation of the strategy is supported by the Workplace Support Programme that includes provision of mediation services and the Dignity and Respect Helpline. Following the launch of the Principles and Policy, the Training and Development Unit organised training for staff.

Under the requirements of the Children First Act 2015, the Houses of the Oireachtas has developed a *Child Safeguarding Statement*, supported by a *Child Safeguarding Implementation Plan* that was published in March 2019. The Safeguarding Statement sets out a number of key principles and information on the role of the Designated Liaison Persons in ensuring the safety and well-being of children within the Oireachtas complex. The Statement also includes the contacts and procedures for reporting concerns.

The Child Safeguarding Implementation Plan sets out the key requirements of the Act which includes the Garda vetting of any member, political staff or staff seeking to provide services to children. The Service will continue to monitor and review the implementation of the policy as detailed in the Plan.

### Goal 3: Foster a culture of dignity and respect, diversity and inclusion

An independent, confidential online survey ‘*The Parliamentary Workplace Survey*’ was conducted, on behalf of the Commission, between the 25 March – 15 April 2019 for those who work in the parliamentary community. There was a 37% response rate. Fifty-four percent of Oireachtas staff and 25% of members and political staff responded. The Oireachtas published the results of the survey in October 2019.

The survey results indicated that 78% of respondents felt that the Houses of the Oireachtas is a safe place to work and 61% felt that they are treated with respect. The findings allow the Houses of the Oireachtas to focus on areas for continuous improvement and to work together to implement the policy.

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 of staff and persons to whom it provides services. The Service throughout 2019, continued to address matters regarding Equality and Human Rights.

In September 2018, the Commission launched the **Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) Programme** as a pilot programme for the academic year 2018/2019. The programme provides a safe work, learning and educational environment for up to ten adults with intellectual disabilities to support their development and prepare them for the workplace.

On 25 September 2019, the first participants in the Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) Programme graduated at an awards ceremony in Leinster House. Seven of the graduates secured part-time employment following their participation in the programme; four with the Oireachtas Service, two with the Public Appointments Service and one in the private sector.

The OWL programme is monitored by the Service and its sponsoring partner organisations, KARE and WALK and is supported by the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDET). The initiative has proven to be a very positive experience for the participants and for the Service.

Following an evaluation of the programme in 2019, the Service liaised with the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) and with the HR Managers network to promote the development of the programme in the wider civil service.

On 12 February 2019, the Service formally launched its *Irish Sign Language (ISL) Strategy 2019-2021*. The strategy was developed following the establishment by the Dáil Business Committee of a Working Group on Irish Sign Language. The Working Group engaged with stakeholders from the Irish Council for Sign Language Interpreters; the Irish Deaf Society; the Centre for Deaf Studies, and Chime (formerly ‘DeafHear’); and with other parliaments, government departments and public offices.

**Goal 3: Foster a culture of dignity and respect, diversity and inclusion**

Recommendations contained in the report included the following:

- to provide regular ISL signed tours for visitors
- to provide training supports for staff and members
- to provides support for placement opportunities for members of the Deaf Community, and undergraduate interpreter students
- to continue to meet broadcasting access rules targets, develop facilities for broadcasting and provide ISL access to archived material
- to recruit two ISL interpreters to provide in-house interpretation covering the needs of the Houses, the Committees, Oireachtas Broadcasting Unit and other in-house events.



*The Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD, and members of the Working Group on Irish Sign Language at the launch of the Irish Sign Language Strategy 2019-2021 for the Houses.*

Following a recruitment competition advertised towards the end of 2019, two ISL Interpreters will take up their positions in 2020. The Ceann Comhairle at the launch of the strategy said:

*‘The implementation of this Strategy will allow for greater equality by ensuring that the work of Parliament is being communicated to deaf people and those who are hard of hearing. It is vital that members of the deaf community are able to access State services in their own language. The Houses of the Oireachtas Service aims to be a leader in the provision of ISL services in order to enhance the rights and entitlements of citizens who are deaf.’*

In 2019, a competition was advertised to fill the new role of **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer** (EDI Officer) for the Service. The successful candidate took up their new position in early 2020.

Working with the HR Services team, the EDI Officer will progress the work of the Service in building an inclusive organisation and creating a diverse workforce through a programme of actions. A key remit is to work with key stakeholders to develop an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy to achieve the organisation strategic objective of promoting greater diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

On 27 June 2019, the Pride Flag was flown at Leinster House to mark the culmination of the nationwide Pride festival that coincided with the establishment of an LGBT+ group within the Houses of the Oireachtas.



**Goal 4: Deliver quality services to all our customers****STRATEGY OUTCOME 4: GOAL 4****Deliver quality services to all our customers**

In supporting the work of the Houses, the Service is committed to providing the highest standard of service to our customers. 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. This commitment is consistent with our vision of *A Parliament which works for the People*.

During 2019, the Service reviewed and updated its **Customer Charter and Action Plan** aligned to the Strategic Plan 2019-2021. The updated Charter and Action Plan were drafted in accordance with the Quality Customer Service Guidelines issued by DPER in December 2018.

The Service's Customer Charter and Action Plan sets out our service delivery commitments to customers in an objective, open and accountable manner and outlines the standard of service that users can expect to receive. The Houses of the Oireachtas Service aims to provide services that are customer-focussed, accessible and inclusive, underpinned by the organisational values set out in the *Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour*.

The updated Customer Charter and Action Plan approved by the Management Board is being supported by the delivery of customer service training for all staff of the Service.

HR Services published an updated *Staff Handbook* that provides new and existing staff with information on the Service's employment policies and learning and development opportunities to support understanding of what the Service expects from employees, and what employees can expect from the Houses of the Oireachtas Service.

The Service has a system of staff networks at various grade levels that is supported by HR Services. The networks facilitate internal communication and information sharing; organise talks on topics that support staff; and raise awareness of new or updated policies and strategies. The Secretary General also holds information sessions for staff on new and key initiatives of the Service.

Members of the Oireachtas are provided with a *Handbook of General Information for Members* that includes information on the services available to assist them, and their staff, in their parliamentary work.

The intranet, '**The Plinth**' is a valuable tool for the Service that has improved internal communications; allows members and staff to find information quickly; provides greater clarity about the work of the Service and encourages knowledge sharing. The Service developed this in collaboration with the OGCI, and it was launched in September 2019. It provides access to topical news; information about upcoming events; a corporate directory; business areas' knowledge bases; latest media releases; and displays content directly from the Oireachtas Twitter Feed.

**Goal 5: Ensure high standards of corporate governance****STRATEGY OUTCOME 4: GOAL 5****Ensure high standards of corporate governance**

In 2019 the Service published its **Strategic Plan 2019-2021**. The Commission's three-year budget is €422m for the period 2019-2021. The allocation includes provision for costs associated with a general election; funding to support consolidation and advancement of the programme of parliamentary and organisational reform; and funding for renewed investment in information technology.

The Secretary General in his foreword to the Strategic Plan said:

*'As we move into the second century of Dáil Éireann, a key challenge for the Service is to continue to deliver core parliamentary services efficiently and effectively within available resources, while simultaneously adapting to significant political, social, economic and technical changes. The vision for this Strategic Plan 2019-2021 is to be a 'Parliament which works for the People'.*

To achieve this vision the Service set itself four objectives, namely, to be:

- An Effective Parliament
- An Open and Engaged Parliament
- A Digital Parliament
- A Well-Supported Parliamentary Community.

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.

The **Commission** held 15 meetings, including two incorporeal meetings during 2019. The meetings were attended by senior officials for the purpose of providing information and answering questions on the implementation of policies, programmes, and other relevant strategic matters in the Service. Items considered by the Commission regarding its work programme in 2019 are set out in page 15 of this report.

The Commission presented its Annual Report for 2018, 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 2019 to the Dáil for noting by way of motion in accordance with section 13 of the Commission Acts.

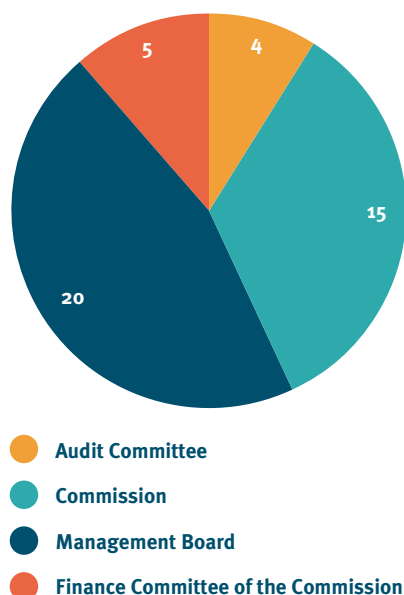
The Commission's **Finance Committee** met five times and considered quarterly financial and performance reports and the draft Statement of Estimate for 2019.

The Service's **Management Board** met 20 times during 2019, including four incorporeal meetings and two off-site meetings. The off-site meetings focused specifically on:

- Strategic Objectives and Goals for 2019-2021
- Compliance with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)
- Procedural Knowledge Capacity
- the Report on the Capacity Review of the Seanad Office
- National Cyber Security Policy and Internet Policy, and
- Diversity, Equality and Inclusion.

### Goal 5: Ensure high standards of corporate governance

**Figure 13: Governance of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service Meetings in 2019**



The Management Board is assisted in its work by **Strategic Committees**. The purpose of 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 by a person nominated by the Secretary General, and supported by Principal Officers. The Management Board receives an oral update from each Assistant Secretary at its monthly meetings and considers written reports on a quarterly basis.

The following are the Strategic Committees of the Management Board:

- 1) Governance, Performance and Accountability (GPA)
- 2) Openness, Public Engagement, and Campus Development (OPED, formerly Facilities & Engagement (F&E))
- 3) People and Organisation (P&O)
- 4) Technology and Digital Transformation (TDT)
- 5) Rannóg 2024 Steering Committee.

The Board's Strategic Committees held 38 meetings during 2019.

The **Office of the Commission and Secretary General (OCSG)** supports the work of the Oireachtas Commission, Finance Committee, Audit Committee and the Management Board. The Office is also responsible for the corporate governance framework for the Service, customer service, coordinating the Service's three-year strategic plans, and performance review and reporting. The Head of the OCSG is the Service's Chief Risk Officer (CRO) and Head of Audit.

The Service's **Risk Management Strategy** and practices are guided by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's (DPER) *Risk Management Guidelines for Government Departments and Offices*. During 2019, the Management Board established the role of Chief Risk Officer (CRO) for the Service.

The overall goal of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service risk management strategy is to ensure that:

- all risk management activities contribute to the achievement of the Service's objectives;

And that the risk strategy:

- is aligned with the Service's corporate governance framework; and
- articulates the Service's approach and expectations in relation to the management of risk across the organisation.

A review of the Service's Governance and Risk Management Framework and Risk Management Strategy took place in 2019 and will be published in 2020.

Staff of The Service also participated in an e-Risk Working Group in the OGCI0 where a centralised application system on Risk is in the final development stages and a pilot of the system will commence in early 2020.

**Goal 5: Ensure high standards of corporate governance**

The **Audit Committee** met four times during 2019.

The role of the Audit Committee is to ensure effective arrangements are in place for governance, audit and risk management.

The 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;
- considers reports on the implementation of Internal Audit report recommendations twice yearly, and reviews the work of the Internal Audit function; and
- considers Risk materialisation reports.

Its Annual Report for 2019 is at **Appendix III**.

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 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. The Internal Audit Unit presented three internal audit reports during 2019.

An Internal Audit External Quality Assessment (EQA) was prepared for the Commission in June 2019 and presented to the Audit Committee. The EQA of the internal audit service was commissioned as part of a process of continuous improvement and to determine the extent to which the Service complies with the Internal Audit Standards. The Audit Committee agreed the report and accepted its recommendations for implementation.

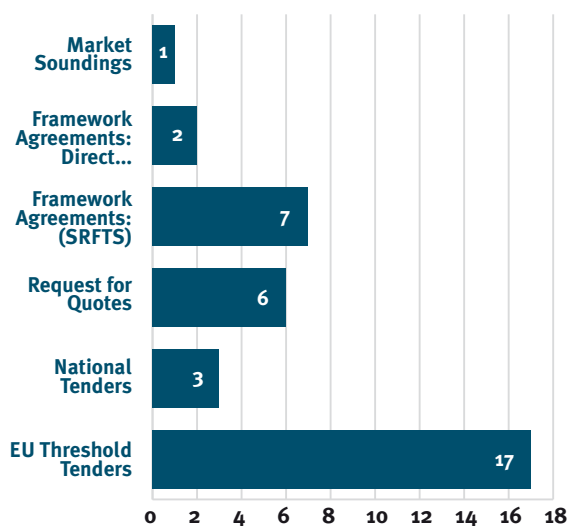
The **Finance Unit**, led by a Chief Financial Officer (CFO) recruited in 2019, provides financial advice, information and analysis to the Secretary General, Management Board, Commission and line sections. The Commission's outturn for 2019 was €127m which was managed by effective budgeting, monitoring, and reporting. The Unit processed over 5,700 invoices for goods and services.

The audited accounts of the Commission are presented at page 75 of this report. The Secretary General appeared before the Committee on Public Accounts (PAC) on 11 July 2019 on the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Appropriation Account 2018 and on 12 December 2019 on related matters.

The **Procurement Unit** continued to provide support to business units in the procurement of goods and services and ongoing contract management. During 2019, the Service conducted 36 procurement processes, including Requests for Tender (RFTs), Requests for Quotes (RFQs); Office of Government Procurement (OGP) Frameworks and Market Soundings. The Procurement Unit provided in-house training courses to 24 staff engaged in procurement processes and contract management.

### Goal 5: Ensure high standards of corporate governance

Figure 14: Public Procurement Management, 2019



The **Oireachtas Contracts Committee** (OCC) reviews contracts above specified values where it is proposed for exceptional reasons not to have a competitive process; where only one tender was received in response to an advertisement or invitation to tender, or where it is proposed not to accept the lowest priced tender. The Committee met ten times during 2019 to consider 17 submissions. The OCC's annual report was submitted to the Board.

The Service reviewed and updated its **Performance Evaluation Framework** aligned to the Strategic Plan for 2019-2021. A quarterly report on the Service's key parliamentary and operational measures is submitted to the Management Board. The Management Board also considered two reports of reviews conducted under the Service's Efficiency Evaluation Programme.

The Library and Research Service (L&RS) has a corporate information management role with responsibility for **freedom of information, data protection and records management**.

During 2019, the Management Board adopted an updated framework for the management of FoI requests. The Service operates a centralised

co-ordination and decentralised decision-making model for FoI requests. The Training Unit and the Records Management Unit (RMU) provided FoI training to decision-makers and Principal Officers. There was a marked increase in the number of FoI requests received in 2019. The Service received 272 FoI requests, up from 167 in 2018.

The Service's e-FoI database is the central repository for FoI documentation and it is available to all decision-makers and Principal Officers.

Table 9: Records Management Unit	2019	2018
FoI requests received	272	167
<i>Non-Personal</i>	261	164
<i>Personal</i>	10	2
<i>Mixed</i>	1	1

The RMU, working closely with the Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers (OPLA), updated the Service's existing data protection policies and breach procedures. This includes the rules laid down in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) that were established across the EU in 2018, and measures and policies put in place to comply with the GDPR. The updated suite of documents include (i) the Data Protection Policy, (ii) Breach Procedures, (iii) Data Protection Governance, and (iv) the Privacy Notice for Service staff. The privacy notice provides details of what processing is done in respect of the personal data of Service staff.

Following the publication of the updated policy on 1 August 2019, Data Protection Awareness Training was rolled out to Management and all staff.

During 2019, the RMU managed six Data Protection Processes and 17 Data Protection Subject Access Requests (SARS).



## Financial Performance over the Commission's Three-Year Budget Framework 2019-2021

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The Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2018 provided funding of €422.3 million to meet the costs associated with running the Houses of the Oireachtas for the three-year period 2019-2021. The table below summaries the financial position to date (April 2020).

Category	2019	2020	2021
	Outturn €000	Published Estimate €000	Forecast €000
Dáil Éireann	44,477	51,041	48,601
Seanad Éireann	9,113	10,303	9,886
Oireachtas Committees	121	428	428
European Parliament	771	733	744
Pensions and Redundancy	13,152	19,625	15,241
Administration – pay & pensions	32,606	36,335	37,043
Administration – non-pay	26,739	33,438	31,446
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>€126,979</b>	<b>€151,903</b>	<b>€143,389</b>

# Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Appropriation Account 2019

**Accounts of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission  
for the Period from 1 January to 31 December 2019**  
(kept in accordance with the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2018)

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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 2019 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 2003-2018* (“the Acts”), of the amount of monies required by the Commission in respect of ongoing expenditure for the year ended 31 December 2019.

There was a surplus for the year of €21,441,059 which has been carried over. Provision had been made for a General Election in 2019 which did not occur in the year.

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

Grant funding of €12,270,645 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 27 of 2019, have been applied in the preparation of the accounts and the associated notes 1 to 7.

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.

## 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.

### *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:

- 1) There is an appropriate budgeting system with an annual budget which is kept under review by senior management;
- 2) There are regular reviews by senior management of periodic and annual financial reports which indicate financial performance against forecasts;
- 3) A risk management system operates within the Service;

- 4) There are systems aimed at ensuring the security of the ICT systems;
- 5) There are appropriate capital investment control guidelines and formal project management disciplines;
- 6) 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 2019 return required under circular 40/2002 that 15 Contracts with a total value of €2,182,634 were undertaken without a competitive process.

Of these 15, 11 (€2,031,519) of the contracts were with sole/proprietary suppliers, 1 (€28,715) contract was extended to facilitate transition to an in house model, and 1 (€54,000) was in relation to replacement of equipment that was not operational. In addition, there were two procurements not in compliance with procurement guidelines as follows: in one case involving spending of €28,600, it was originally estimated that a contract would cost less than €25,000 therefore requests for quotes were obtained under the OGP Multi-supplier framework agreement, rather than holding a tender competition. In a further case, a service was inadvertently drawn down from an expired contract in the amount of €39,800.

#### *Print Facility*

I presented two reports to the Committee on Public Accounts in 2019 relating to the purchase of a Komori printing press and related matters. The printing press and certain ancillary equipment, which were purchased in 2018, could not be installed or commissioned as modifications were required to the Print Facility to meet health and safety standards. These costs

were reported and presented as prepayments in the 2018 Appropriation Account. Additional storage (€15,000) and outsourcing (€100,000) costs which arose as a result have been accounted in the 2019 Appropriation Account.

The structural modifications to the Print facility along with the legacy works were subsumed into the OPW programme of works for 2019. It will be 2020 before the OPW is reimbursed by the Houses of the Oireachtas Service for the expenditure incurred on these (estimated to be €314,000) and this will therefore be accounted for in the 2020 Appropriation Account.

The costs of additional works on the building carried out by OPW have not been finalised and will fall to be accounted for in 2020 through agency services.

During my review I identified the need to strengthen internal processes and controls in a number of areas. These matters are being addressed by the Houses of the Oireachtas Service.

#### *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 2019 annual 40/02 return details 2 legacy contracts at a total value of €84,512, which have been procured without a competitive process but extended for continuity of services and support while the competitive procurement processes were ongoing. Both are in the procurement process and expected to be concluded and in contract in 2020.
- 4) The Commission approved credit policy has been implemented, facilitating automatic credit/debit card or salary deductions.
- 5) An external audit was carried out in 2019 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 2019.
- 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 2019 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 as approved by Management. 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 by 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 and 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.

### *Governance and Risk Framework*

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service has a risk management strategy in place which ensures risk management activities contribute to the achievement of the Service's objectives and that the risk strategy is aligned with the Service's corporate governance framework. A new centralised e-Risk system is in place to support this strategy, the system details the controls and actions needed to mitigate risks.

The Service has also assigned a Chief Risk Officer (CRO), with responsibility for the strategic oversight of risk management at strategic and operational level. An important aspect of this role is to further develop a risk aware culture, providing training to staff and ensuring that risk management performance is reported at least quarterly to the Governance Performance & Accountability Strategic Committee (GPA), Management Board (MB) and Audit Committee (AC) for their consideration and review.

### *Ongoing Monitoring and Review*

The entire risk management process is monitored and led by the CRO who has responsibility for co-ordinating the various functional activities which advise on risk management issues within the organisation. The approach is management led and demonstrates leadership from the Board.

Risk assurance and advice continues to be provided to the Secretary General and Commission through the Audit Committee 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 best practice standard adopted is "ISO 31000:2009, Risk Management – Principles and Guidelines".

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. Risk management and internal control is incorporated into normal management and governance processes and not treated as a separate compliance exercise.

### *Internal Financial Control Issues*

A suspected fraud incident, which was reported in Note 6.3 to the 2018 Appropriation Account continues to be under investigation by An Garda Síochána. A review of the Service's financial control measures in this area has led to a further strengthening of its controls.



**Peter Finnegan**

*Accounting Officer*

*Houses of the Oireachtas Commission*

**23 June 2020**

## 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 are included by way of a 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 2019.

### *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, showing expenditure on assets being developed within the Commission, e.g. software development or construction projects.

### *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 2003-2018*, the Commission is obliged to retain all receipts. The note separately identifies PMG from commercial bank accounts (Note 2.2). The balance also includes petty cash balances.

### *Stocks*

Consumables are stated at the lower of cost or Commission valuation (Note 2.3).

### *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 2.6).

### *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 2.10).



### *Superannuation*

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

Superannuation payments for retired civil servants and catering and bar staff are met on a current basis from Vote 12 – Superannuation and Retired Allowances.

### *Foreign Currency Transactions*

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

## **Other Notes to the 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 are 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 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.

### *Petty Cash*

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

### *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 2019, 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 2019, 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*

**25 June 2020**

## 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 of 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 2019

	2019 Estimate provision €000	2019 Outturn €000	2018 Outturn €000
<b>1. Administration</b>			
(a) Salaries, wages and allowances in respect of staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service.	31,361	30,833	29,410
(b) Travel and subsistence.	476	350	362
(c) Training and development and incidental expenses.	1,335	896	1,128
(d) Postal and telecommunications services.	969	282	786
(e) Office equipment and external IT services.	17,808	15,948	22,737
(f) Office premises expenses.	3,570	2,288	3,504
(g) Consultancy services and value for money and policy review.	2,180	437	1,481
(h) Parliamentary printing.	916	515	614
(i) Library and research services.	1,460	975	651
(j) Public relations and communications.	392	443	254
<b>2. Other services</b>			
(a) Payment in respect of catering and bar staff.	1,842	1,773	1,677
(b) Expenses of delegates to other parliamentary assemblies.	197	167	128
(c) Televising of proceedings of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann and other services.	4,028	4,094	4,869
(d) Grant in respect of inter-parliamentary activities.	310	239	218
(e) Grant to British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly.	125	90	70
(f) North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association.	12	–	–
(g) Termination allowances in respect of former members of the Houses of the Oireachtas.	2,278	0	34
(h) Grant to Irish Parliamentary (former Members) Society.	15	15	10
(i) Grant in respect of “Ciste Pinsean Thithe an Oireachtais”.	15,496	12,271	11,796
(j) Pension scheme for secretarial assistants.	1,006	881	972
(k) Single Public Service Pension Scheme for Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas.	12	–	–
<b>3. Membership of Dáil Éireann</b>			
(a) Salaries of members (including Office Holders and Chairpersons of Committees).	15,661	15,300	15,250
(b) Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for members.	26,124	21,279	20,432
(c) Travel and Accommodation Allowance.	3,319	2,890	2,920
(d) Public Representation Allowance.	3,200	2,912	2,939
(e) Other allowances.	2,771	2,096	2,158

	2019 Estimate provision €000	2019 Outturn €000	2018 Outturn €000
<b>4. Membership of Seanad Éireann</b>			
(a) Salaries of members (including Office Holders and Chairpersons of Committees).	4,230	4,222	4,159
(b) Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for members.	4,028	2,894	2,813
(c) Travel and Accommodation Allowance.	1,202	1,139	1,143
(d) Public Representation Allowance.	750	616	628
(e) Other allowances.	378	242	307
<b>5. Membership of Oireachtas Committees</b>			
(a) Travel expenses.	161	66	85
(b) Other expenses relating to Committees.	428	54	38
<b>6. Membership of European Parliament</b>			
(a) Salaries of members of the European Parliament.	95	48	94
(b) Pensions of former members of the European Parliament.	918	724	686
<b>Gross Expenditure</b>	<b>149,053</b>	<b>126,979</b>	<b>134,353</b>
<b>DEDUCT</b>			
Receipts of the Commission (Note 4.1)	(3,000)	(2,367)	(2,771)
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>146,053</b>	<b>124,612</b>	<b>131,582</b>
		2019 €	2018 €
<b>Surplus for the year</b>		<b>21,440,559</b>	<b>1,331,095</b>
7. Surplus for surrender			
<p>In accordance with the House of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2018, the Commission received a three year funding allocation of €422m for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021. Gross expenditure in 2019 was €126.978m. The unspent allocation for the period 2019 was €21.441m and is carried over.</p> <p>The unspent allocation for the period 2016-2018 was €6m and was surrendered to the Exchequer.</p>			



**Peter Finnegan**

Accounting Officer – Houses of the Oireachtas Commission

23 June 2020

## Notes to the Appropriation Account

### 1. Operating Cost Statement 2019

	Note	€000	2019 €000	2018 €000
Pay			90,223	87,323
Non-Pay			36,756	47,030
<b>Gross expenditure</b>			126,979	134,353
Deduct				
Appropriations-in-aid			(2,367)	(2,771)
<b>Net expenditure</b>			124,612	131,582
Changes in capital assets	2.1			
Purchases cash		(6,425)		
Depreciation		2,648		
<b>Loss on disposals</b>		41	(3,736)	(6,890)
<b>Changes in net current assets</b>				
Increase in closing accruals		4,112		
Decrease in stock	2.3	68	4,180	(4,862)
<b>Direct expenditure</b>			125,056	119,830
<b>Expenditure borne elsewhere</b>				
Net allied services expenditure (cash)	1.1		33,909	30,441
Notional Rents (non-cash)	1.2		5,616	5,423
<b>Net Programme cost</b>			164,581	155,694

### 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.

			2019	2018
			€000	€000
Vote 9	Office of the Revenue Commissioners	e	90	90
Vote 12	Superannuation and Retired Allowances		4,361	4,054
Vote 13	Office of Public Works		13,789	11,608
Central Fund:	Parliamentary Activities Allowances to Leaders		8,508	8,600
	Payments to qualified parties under the Electoral Acts 1992 to 2015		5,964	5,964
	Re-imbursments of Electoral Expenses		1,131	
	Pensions in respect of former Cinn Comhairle (No. 38 of 1938, etc.)		66	125
			<b>33,909</b>	<b>30,441</b>

"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 as at December 31 2019

	Note	2019 €000	2018 €000
<b>Capital Assets</b>	2.1	12,339	8,603
<b>Current Assets</b>			
Net funding due from the Exchequer		–	1,728
Bank and Cash	2.2	2,002	400
Stocks	2.3	228	296
Prepayments*		3,199	5,757
Accrued income		454	577
Other debit balances	2.4	707	715
<b>Total Current Assets</b>		6,590	9,473
<b>Less Current Liabilities</b>			
Accrued expenses	2.9	2,661	1,230
Other credit balances	2.5	2,681	2,843
Net funding due to the Exchequer	2.6	28	–
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>		5,370	4,073
<b>Net Current Assets</b>		1,220	5,400
<b>Net Assets</b>		13,559	14,003
<b>Represented By:</b>			
<b>State Funding Account</b>	2.7	13,599	14,003

\* Included in prepayments figure in 2018 were capital equipment costs amounting to €1.793m, which, while purchased in 2018, were not fully commissioned at year end. This equipment has now been fully commissioned and included in Fixed Assets additions for 2019.



## 2.1 Capital Assets

	IT Equipment €000	Furniture and Fittings €000	Office Equipment €000	Assets under Development €000	Total €000
<b>Gross Assets</b>					
Cost or valuation at 1 January 2019	10,891	2,589	3,668	3,675	20,823
Additions*	801	17	1,321	4,286	6,425
Transfers	3,975	–	–	(3,975)	–
Disposals	(104)	–	(120)	–	(224)
Gross assets at 31 December 2019	15,563	2,606	4,869	3,986	27,024
<b>Accumulated Depreciation:</b>					
Opening balance at 1 January 2019	6,809	2,370	3,041	–	12,220
Depreciation for the year	2,149	39	460	–	2,648
Depreciation on disposals	(102)	–	(81)	–	(183)
Cumulative depreciation at 31 December 2019	8,856	2,409	3,420	–	14,685
<b>Net Assets at 31 December 2019</b>	<b>6,707</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>1,449</b>	<b>3,986</b>	<b>12,339</b>
<b>Net Assets at 31 December 2018</b>	<b>4,082</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>627</b>	<b>3,675</b>	<b>8,603</b>

\* Additions in the year include an amount of €1.167m in respect of printing facilities previously accounted for as Prepayments. At 31 December 2019, the equipment had been installed in Oireachtas premises and was available for use. Staff training on proper utilisation of the equipment was ongoing.

## 2.2 Bank and Cash

	2019 €000	2018 €000
at 31 December		
PMG balances	2,002	400
	2,002	400

### 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 2003-2018* and as itemised in Note 4. The amount held at the end of 2019 is €329,756 and is not included in the account (2018: €243,166).

### 2.3 Stocks

	2019 €000	2018 €000
at 31 December		
Stationery	36	27
IT consumables	163	190
Other	29	79
	228	296

### 2.4 Other Debit Balances

	2019 €000	2018 €000
at 31 December		
Recoupable salaries	7	7
Recoupment of travel schemes	245	261
Other debit items	455	447
	707	715

## 2.5 Other Credit Balances

	2019 €000	2018 €000
at 31 December		
<b>Amounts due to the State</b>		
Income tax	1,049	1,036
Pay Related Social Insurance	577	551
Professional Services Withholding Tax	312	326
Value Added Tax	71	266
Pension Contributions	212	198
Universal Social Charge	205	215
Other Credit Items	15	7
	2,441	2,599
Payroll deductions held in suspense	240	244
	2,681	2,843

## 2.6 Net Exchequer funding due

	Note	2019 €000	2018 €000
at 31 December			
Surplus		21,441	1,331
Exchequer grant undrawn		(19,685)	(2,354)
Net Exchequer funding due		1,756	(1,023)
Balance brought forward at 1 January		(1,728)	(705)
		28	(1,728)
<b>Represented by:</b>			
<b>Debtors</b>			
Bank	2.2	2,002	400
Other Debit balances	2.4	707	715
		2,709	1,115
<b>Creditors</b>			
Due to State	2.5	(2,441)	(2,599)
Other Credit balances	2.5	(240)	(244)
		(2,681)	(2,843)
		28	(1,728)

## 2.7 State Funding Account

	Note	2019 €000	2018 €000
<b>Balance at 1 January</b>		14,003	2,251
Disbursements by the Commission			
Estimate provision	Account*	146,053	
Surplus	Account*	(21,441)	
<b>Net Provision</b>		<b>124,612</b>	<b>131,582</b>
Expenditure (cash) borne elsewhere	Note 1.1	33,909	30,441
Non cash expenditure – notional rent	Note 1.2	5,616	5,423
Net programme cost	Note 1	(164,581)	(155,694)
<b>Balance at 31 December</b>		<b>13,559</b>	<b>14,003</b>

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

## 2.8 Commitments

	2019 €000	2018 €000
at 31 December		
<b>(a) Global commitments</b>		
Procurement subheads	–	253
<b>Grant subheads</b>	–	–
Multi-annual commitments	5,797	7,765

### 2.9 Matured Liabilities

	2019 €000	2018 €000
at 31 December	2,661	1,230

Estimate of mature liabilities not discharged at year-end.

### 2.10 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 €21.441m 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
<b>Administration</b>			
Travel and Subsistence	1(b)	(126)	The underspend relates to lower than anticipated travel, particularly in relation to Committees and interparliamentary activity.
Training and development and incidental expenses	1(c)	(439)	The underspend relates to lower than anticipated expenditure across several areas including HR specialists, recruitment costs and external translation services.
Postal and telecommunications services	1(d)	(687)	The underspend was primarily due to an unrequired provision for cloud hosting services and an annual PABX maintenance fee which wasn't paid until 2020.
Office Premises Expenses	1(f)	(1,282)	The underspend arose due to lower than anticipated costs in relation to OPW service charges, energy costs and accommodation.
Consultancy services and value for money and policy review	1(g)	(1,743)	The underspend arose due to unused contingency for legal costs and lower than anticipated requirement for consultancy services.
Parliamentary printing	1(h)	(401)	The underspend arose due to lower than anticipated demand for printing and graphic design.
Library & Research Services	1(i)	(485)	The underspend primarily relates to the delayed commencement of Library projects including the parliamentary archive and records management systems.
Public relations and communications	1(j)	51	The overspend arose primarily in relation to Dáil centenary events.
<b>Other Services</b>			
Televising of Proceedings of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann and Other Services	2(c)	66	The overspend primarily arose due to <i>Dáil 100</i> TV content and the replacement of the archiving system. These were partially offset by the deferment of a hardware replacement project.
Termination allowances in respect of former members of the Houses of the Oireachtas	2(g)	(2,278)	A provision for election related termination payments was not required.

Description	Sub-Head	(Less)/ more than provided €000	Explanation
Grant in respect of “Ciste Pinsean Thithe an Oireachtais”	2(i)	(3,225)	The underspend primarily arose due to a provision for election related lump sum payments which was not required in 2019.
Pension scheme for secretarial assistants	2(j)	(125)	The underspend primarily arose due to lower than estimated pension payment.
<b>Membership of Dáil Éireann</b>			
Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for members	3(b)	(4,845)	The underspend primarily arose due to a provision for election related lump sum payments as well as lower than anticipated staff costs.
Travel and Accommodation Allowance	3(c)	(429)	The underspend relates to a requirement to make provision for a full drawdown of the Travel and Accommodation Allowance (TAA) which was not claimed.
Public Representation Allowance	3(d)	(288)	The underspend relates to a requirement to make provision for a full drawdown of the Parliamentary Representative Allowance (PRA) which was not claimed.
Other allowances	3(e)	(675)	The underspend relates to a requirement to make a provision for full drawdown of certain allowances which were not claimed, including the Special Secretarial Allowance and the Constituency Office Grant.
<b>Membership of Seanad Éireann</b>			
Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for members	4(b)	(1,134)	The underspend primarily arose due to a provision for election related lump sum payments not required in 2019 as well as lower than anticipated staff costs.
Public Representation Allowance	4(d)	(134)	The underspend relates to a requirement to make provision for a full drawdown of the Parliamentary Representative Allowance (PRA) which was not claimed.
Other allowances	4(e)	(136)	The underspend relates to a requirement to make a provision for full drawdown of certain allowances which were not claimed, including Postal allowance, the Special Secretarial Allowance and the Constituency Office Grant.
<b>Membership of Oireachtas Committees</b>			
Other expenses relating to Committees	5(b)	(374)	The underspend arose due to a lower demand for consultancy than was provided for.
<b>Membership of the European Parliament</b>			
Pensions of former members of the European Parliament	6(b)	(194)	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 2018, 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 2019 financial statements record total receipts of €2,366,802 retained by the Commission and offset against its gross expenditure. Receipts of €5,685 relate to Broadcasting services, receipts of €170,443 relate to Catering and Bar services. The remainder of the receipts are made up of the following categories, receipts of €2,184,202 relate to pension related deductions on public service remuneration, receipts of €6,232 relate to dissolution electoral expenses for the European Parliament elections and the remaining €240 received in 2019 was retained by the Commission and offset against its gross expenditure. Receipts of €2,851 relate to MEP pension contributions and are off-set against Pensions of former members of the European Parliament.

	Estimated €000	2019 Realised €000	2018 Realised €000
1 Sales of services of Broadcasting Unit	–	6	6
2 Net income from catering and bar services (Note 6.9)	–	170	197
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	2,191	2,568
<b>Receipts recognised in Appropriation Account</b>	<b>3,000</b>	<b>2,367</b>	<b>2,771</b>
4 Members' contributions under the European Parliament (Irish Representatives) Pension Scheme, 1979	–	3	7
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>3,000</b>	<b>2,370</b>	<b>2,778</b>

#### Notes

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

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

Overall receipts from the Commission were **€633,198** less than the estimate. Explanation for variances are 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 2019.

## 5. Staffing and Remuneration

### Houses of the Oireachtas Service\*

#### 5.1 Employee Numbers

	2019	2018
<b>Number of staff at year end (full time equivalents)</b>	<b>572</b>	<b>564</b>

#### 5.2 Pay

	2019 €000	2018 €000
Pay	28,050	26,856
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	263	249
Other allowances	249	206
Overtime	1,264	1,186
Shift and roster allowances	465	478
Employer's PRSI	2,450	2,251
Severance Payments	–	–
<b>Total pay*</b>	<b>32,741</b>	<b>31,226</b>

\* The total pay figure is distributed across subheads 1(a) and 2(a)

#### Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members and Parties

	2019	2018
<b>Number of staff at year end (full time equivalents)</b>	<b>454</b>	<b>450</b>
	€000	€000
Pay	18,423	17,791
Redundancy payments	286	119
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	–	–
Overtime and extra attendance	3,249	3,196
Employer's PRSI	2,301	2,203
<b>Total pay**</b>	<b>24,259</b>	<b>23,309</b>

\*\* The total pay figure is distributed across subheads 3(b) and 4(b)

### 5.3 Allowances and Overtime Payments

	Number of recipients	Recipients of €10,000 or more	Highest individual payment 2019 €	Highest individual payment 2018 €
<b>Houses of the Oireachtas Service</b>				
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	68	6	19,317	19,317
Other allowances	97	3	33,574	49,010
Overtime	235	53	29,825	29,641
Shift and roster allowances	73	–	7,945	7,839
Number of individuals who received extra remuneration in more than one category	118	80	36,022	32,497
<b>Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members and Parties</b>				
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	–	–	–	–
Overtime and extra attendance	500	122	23,106	18,998
Number of individuals who received extra remuneration in more than one category	–	–	–	–

### 5.4 Other Remuneration Arrangements

Payments totalling €58,174 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) Act 2012.

The terms of the AHCPs/IMPACT (PCW 1% Restructuring Agreement) were implemented resulting in a total payment of €131,550 in 54 instances.

This account includes expenditure of €136,769 in respect of 2 officers who were serving outside the Commission for all or part of 2019 and whose salaries were paid by the Commission.

### 5.5 Payroll Overpayments

	2019 €	2018 €
Overpayments	61,223	74,535
Number of recipients	20	27
Recovery plans in place	11	10
No recovery plans were transferred to other Departments in the year.		

### 5.6 Severance, Redundancy and Termination Payments

A total of €285,660 was paid in redundancy to 5 political staff members under the Scheme for Secretarial Assistants.

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 go on to be elected or nominated to the Seanad are required to refund any such payments. An outstanding sum of €375 relating to such an arrangement was recouped in 2019.



## 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	2019 Total €000	2018 €000
Claims by:						
employees	3	32	–	–	32	13
members of the public	3	84	–	10	94	534
		116	–	10	126	547

The above figures for 2018 have been restated to correct a misclassification in the subtotals.

The overall total has not changed.

### 6.2 Fraud or Alleged Fraud

	Number of cases	2019	2018
Fraud		–	–
Suspected fraud		–	1

In the 2018 Appropriation Account, the Oireachtas reported a case of alleged fraud, in relation to a salary incremental credit claim over a period of 18 months. This remains under investigation by An Garda Síochána.

### 6.3 Late Payment Interest and Compensation

	2019 €	2018 €
Total of interest and compensation paid	3,910	1,710

## 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 2019

	2019 €	2018 €
Balance at 1 January	24,838	33,807
Grant [subhead 2(e)]	90,000	70,000
Miscellaneous receipts	6,963	191
Uncashed cheque	158	249
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>97,121</b>	<b>70,440</b>
<b>Payments</b>		
Plenary sessions	90,480	66,188
Committees	6,983	11,731
Miscellaneous	1,024	1,490
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>98,487</b>	<b>79,409</b>
<b>Balance as at 31 December</b>	<b>23,472</b>	<b>24,838</b>

## 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 2019

	2019 €	2018 €
Balance at the 1 January	23,905	30,896
Grant [subhead 2(d)]	239,383	217,408
Members Subscriptions	2,019	2,013
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>241,402</b>	<b>219,421</b>
<b>Payments</b>		
Expenses associated with Irish delegations on foreign visits	78,798	67,193
Expenses associated with foreign delegations visiting Ireland	43,635	70,076
Inter Parliamentary Union Conference expenses	88,472	39,515
Other expenses	52,782	49,628
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>263,687</b>	<b>226,412</b>
<b>Balance as at 31 December</b>	<b>1,620</b>	<b>23,905</b>

## 7.3 Accounts of the Catering and Bar Services

## Income and Expenditure Account for year ended 31 December 2019

	2019 €	2018 €
<b>Sales</b>	1,402,468	1,301,711
Cost of sales	(816,955)	(766,519)
<b>Gross Surplus</b>	<b>585,513</b>	<b>535,192</b>
Expenses	(376,830)	(406,968)
<b>Net Surplus</b>	<b>208,683</b>	<b>128,224</b>

## Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2019

	2019 €	2018 €
<b>Fixed assets</b>	12,440	23,760
<b>Current assets</b>		
Stock	42,089	43,778
Debtors	72,645	46,482
VAT and Prepayments	0	30,015
Bank and cash	329,756	243,166
	<b>444,490</b>	<b>363,441</b>
<b>Current liabilities</b>		
Trade creditors	191,358	183,483
VAT	23,552	
	<b>214,910</b>	<b>183,483</b>
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>242,020</b>	<b>203,718</b>
<b>Finance by:</b>		
Cumulative surplus/(Deficit) Retained excluding subhead 2(a)	1,139,593	1,011,368
Surplus/(Deficit) current year excluding subhead 2(a)	208,683	128,224
Cumulative paid to date to Houses of the Oireachtas	(1,106,256)	(935,874)
	<b>242,020</b>	<b>203,718</b>

## Notes to accounts:

- 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 €1,772,782 (2018: €1,676,976)
- 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 2019 was €170,443 (2018: €196,767).

## 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 2019 to 31 December 2019

#### *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 8,191 payments were processed with a total value of €30m. Of those payments 60 incurred penalties and interest under the Act totalling €3,909.55. Thirty 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 944 payments would have incurred prompt payment interest, representing 12% of the total number of commercial payments processed from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2019.



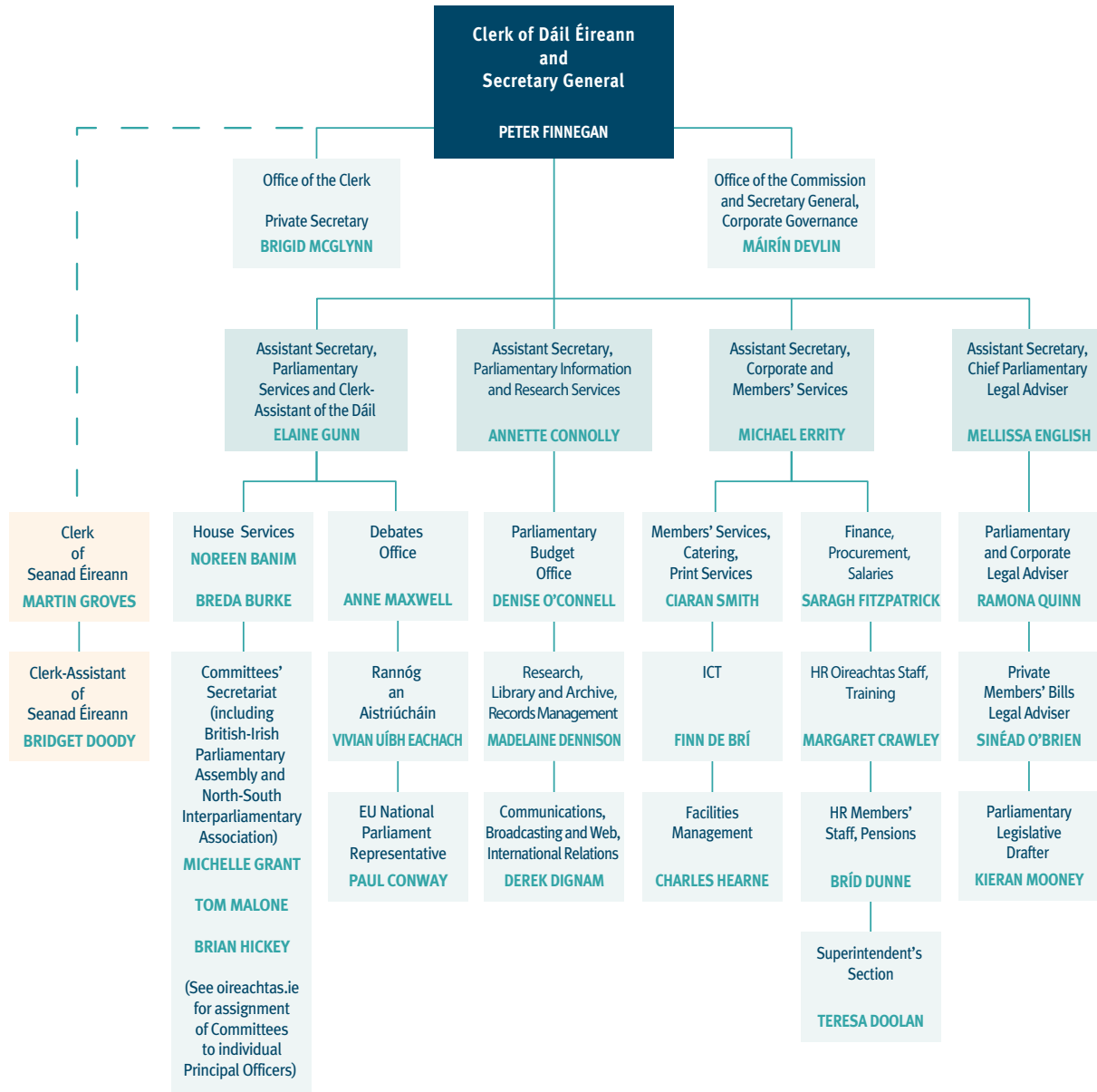
**Michael Errity,**

*Assistant Secretary,  
Corporate and Members' Services*

**6 May, 2020**

# Appendix I:

## Houses of the Oireachtas Organisation Chart





## Appendix II:

### Statement of Resources 2019 (civil service staff)

Grades	Total Numbers in place December 2019 Sanctioned Numbers 529
Secretary General	1
Assistant Secretary	4
Principal Officer	22
Assistant Principal	70
Senior Clerk	61
Administrative Officer	21
Junior Clerk	64
Clerical Officer	80
Advisory Counsel	11
Assistant Parliamentary Counsel Grade II	3
Deputy Editor	3
Assistant Editor	7
Parliamentary Reporter	36
Reporter (Communications/Web)	1
Senior Researcher	11
Researcher	6
Assistant Librarian	7
Aistritheoir Grád 1	5
Aistritheoir Grád 2	7
Aistritheoir Grád 3	7
Usher Grade I	4
Usher Grade II	7
Usher Grade III	42
Usher Grade III (PT)	3
Head/Deputy Head Services Officer	2
Services Officer	15
Services Attendant	4
Parliamentary Porter	3
Telephonist (Relief)	1
Cleaner	7
Specialist, Temporary and Other Staff* (see below)	2
<b>Total Civil Service Staff**</b>	<b>517</b>

\* Education Officer and Senior Auditor

\*\* Numbers have been rounded

## Appendix III:

### Annual Report of the Audit Committee of the Commission 2019

#### 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. Membership of the Committee in 2019

- 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 2019

The Audit Committee met four times during 2019.

The agendas and minutes of the Audit Committee meetings are published on the Oireachtas website [www.oireachtas.ie](http://www.oireachtas.ie). Attendance at meetings in 2019 is set out in the Appendix of this report.

The Committee considered the following Internal Audit Reports in 2019:

##### *(i) Internal Audit on Members' Termination Payments*

The principal aim of this audit was to review and appraise the adequacy, reliability and effectiveness of the management, control and governance processes in relation to Houses of the Oireachtas former Members termination payments and to ensure compliance with statutory and organisational requirements.

##### *(ii) Internal Audit on Mobile Technologies*

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 Mobile Technologies.

##### *(iii) Internal Audit on the Mobile Phone Repayment Scheme for Members*

The overall objective of the audit was to provide assurance that the administration of the Direct Payment Scheme was effective. A core element of the audit work was to examine procedures, practices, systems and records to assess whether the Direct Purchase Scheme's administration operates correctly and efficiently to deliver the required service to Members.

Other Reports considered by the Committee:

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

The Audit Committee considered the 2018 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 a report in July regarding the implementation of internal audit recommendations arising from previous Internal Audit reports.

##### *(iii) Risk Management*

The Committee considered three Risk Materialisation Reports.

##### *(iv) Public Representation Allowance Audit*

The Committee considered the independent auditor's Report on the Public Representation Allowance (PRA) for 2017. This audit is conducted annually by an external auditor. 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 is 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 2018*

The C&AG's Reports for 2018 stated the accounts properly presented the transactions on the account and that no issues arose that needed to be communicated by way of a Management Letter.

*(vi) Internal Audit External Quality Assessment*

This assessment was conducted by the Head of Internal Audit of the Scottish Parliament, who is also accredited by the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors, the international governing body for internal audit. This was an external quality review

of the internal audit service as part of a process of continuous improvement and to determine the extent to which the service complies with the Internal Audit Standards for Government Departments and Offices issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

## 6. Representation on Internal Audit Networks

The Committee noted that the Internal Audit Unit participates in the Heads of Internal Audit Forum (a public service Internal Audit network) and in a group of Heads of Internal Audit of Parliaments and Assemblies in Ireland and the UK.

## 7. Effective Discharge of Responsibilities in 2019

The Committee is satisfied that it has effectively discharged its statutory remit pursuant to section 14A of the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003-2018*.

## Annex:

### Attendances at meetings of the Audit Committee in 2019

Member	Attendance
Mr. Pat McLoughlin (Chair)	4/4
Senator Ned O'Sullivan	0/4
Senator Catherine Ardagh	2/4
Senator Victor Boyhan	3/4
Senator Kieran O'Donnell	2/4
Mr. Cyril Maybury	4/4
Ms. Noreen Fahy	3/4
Mr. Charles Hearne	3/4

## Appendix IV:

### Bills Initiated in the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2019

No.	Bill Title
1	Companies (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Seanad]
2	No Consent, No Sale Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
3	National Anthem Bill 2019 [Seanad][PMB]
4	Public Sector (Plain Language) Bill 2019 [Seanad][PMB]
5	Informal Adoptions (Regularisation) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
6	Property Services (Advertisement of Unfit Lettings) (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Seanad][PMB]
7	Plain Language Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
8	Regulation of Private Security Firms Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
9	European Parliament Elections (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil]
10	Credit Union Restructuring Board (Dissolution) Bill 2019 [Dáil]
11	Healthy Homes Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
12	Civil Registration Bill 2019 [Dáil]
13	Regulated Professions (Health and Social Care) (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil]
14	Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Bill 2019 [Dáil]
15	Road Traffic (Bus and Cycle Lane) (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
16	Retention of Records Bill 2019 [Dáil]
17	Criminal Justice (Public Order) (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Seanad][PMB]
18	Health (Exemption of Charges for Involuntary Psychiatric Patients) (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Seanad][PMB]
19	Land and Conveyancing Law Reform (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Seanad]
20	Civil Liability (Capping of General Damages) Bill 2019 [Seanad][PMB]

No.	Bill Title
21	Regulation of Tenderers Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
22	Credit Union (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
23	Parental Bereavement Leave (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
24	Courts Bill 2019 <i>changed from</i> Courts (Establishment and Constitution) (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil]
25	Public Authorities and Utility Undertakings (Contract Preparation and Award Criteria) Bill 2019 [Seanad][PMB]
26	Prohibition of Bogus Self Employment Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
27	Pensionable Age Task Force Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
28	Gaming and Lotteries (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Seanad]
29	Criminal Justice (Conspiracy to Murder) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
30	Gender Pay Gap Information Bill 2019 [Dáil]
31	Road Traffic (All Terrain Vehicle and Scrambler Motor-cycle)(Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
32	Civil Liability and Courts (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
33	Domestic Violence (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
34	Domestic Violence (No-contact order) (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
35	Electoral (Civil Society Freedom) (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Seanad][PMB]
36	Residential Tenancies (Complaints of Anti-Social Behaviour and Neglect of Dwelling Exteriors) (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
37	Planning and Development (Climate Measures) (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
38	Health (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
39	Community Participation (Disability) (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2019 [Seanad][PMB]

No.	Bill Title
40	Organisation of Working Time (Workers Rights and Bogus Self-Employment) (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil] [PMB]
41	Microbeads (Prohibition) Bill 2019 [Dáil]
42	Investment Limited Partnerships (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil]
43	Redress for Women Resident in Certain Institutions (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Seanad]
44	CervicalCheck Tribunal Bill 2019 [Dáil]
45	Finance (Tax Appeals and Prospectus Regulation) Bill 2019 [Dáil]
46	Criminal Justice (Judicial Discretion) (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Seanad] [PMB]
47	Thirty-ninth Amendment of the Constitution (Right to Housing) Bill 2019 [Dáil] [PMB]
48	Social Housing (Real Social Housing) Bill 2019 [Dáil] [PMB]
49	Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Bill 2019 [Dáil]
50	Firearms and Offensive Weapons (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil] [PMB]
51	Social Welfare Bill 2019 [Seanad]
52	Citizens' Assemblies Bill 2019 [Seanad]
53	Health (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2019 [Dáil] [PMB]
54	Merchant Shipping (Investigation of Marine Casualties) (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil] [PMB]
55	Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil] [PMB]
56	Curragh of Kildare (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil] [PMB]
57	Valuation (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil] [PMB]
58	Taisceadán (Valuable Property Register) Bill 2019 [Dáil] [PMB]
59	Blasphemy (Abolition of Offences and Related Matters) Bill 2019 [Seanad]
60	Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons Bill 2019 [Dáil]
61	Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Bill 2019 [Dáil]
62	Criminal Records (Exchange of Information) Bill 2019 [Dáil]

No.	Bill Title
63	Criminal Justice (Mutual Recognition of Decisions on Supervision Measures) Bill 2019 [Seanad]
64	Broadcasting (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil]
65	Defence Forces (Evidence) Bill 2019 [Dáil]
66	Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil]
67	Education (Student and Parent Charter) Bill 2019 [Seanad]
68	Thirty-ninth Amendment of the Constitution (Presidential Elections) Bill 2019 [Dáil]
69	Planning and Development (Ministerial Power Repeal) Bill 2019 [Dáil] [PMB]
70	Intoxicating Liquor (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil] [PMB]
71	Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Seanad] [PMB]
72	Road Traffic (Amendment) (Use of Electric Scooters) Bill 2019 [Dáil] [PMB]
73	Health (Medical Entitlements in Nursing Homes) (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2019 [Dáil] [PMB]
74	Noise Pollution (Management and Abatement) Bill 2019 [Dáil] [PMB]
75	Parent's Leave and Benefit Bill 2019 [Seanad]
76	Health and Childcare Support (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2019 [Seanad]
77	Industrial Development (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Seanad]
78	Family Law Bill 2019 [Dáil]
79	Equitable Beef Pricing Bill 2019 [Dáil] [PMB]
80	Housing (Housing Assistance Payment Waiting Times) (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Seanad] [PMB]
81	Industrial Relations (Joint Labour Committees) Bill 2019 [Seanad] [PMB]
82	Finance Bill 2019 [Dáil]
83	Harmful Plastics (Prohibition) Bill 2019 [Seanad] [PMB]
84	Housing (Homeless Housing Assistance Payment) (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil] [PMB]
85	Mandatory Beef Price Transparency Bill 2019 [Dáil] [PMB]



No.	Bill Title
86	Planning and Development (Amendment) (First-Time Buyers) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
87	Latent Defects Redress Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
88	Public Health (Electronic Cigarettes and Herbal Cigarettes) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
89	Social Welfare (No. 2) Bill 2019 [Dáil]
90	Broadcasting (Television Licence Fees Recovery) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
91	Health Insurance (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil]
92	Thirty-ninth Amendment of the Constitution (Right to Health) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
93	Migration of Participating Securities Bill 2019 [Dáil]
94	Fiscal Responsibility (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
95	Litter Pollution (Amendment) (Dog Litter Control) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
96	Organisation of Working Time (Domestic Violence Leave) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
97	Misuse of Drugs (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
98	Waste Management (Amendment) (Regulator) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
99	Rent Freeze (Fair Rent) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
100	Patient Safety (Notifiable Patient Safety Incidents) Bill 2019 [Dáil]
101	Insurance (Life Assurance and Life Insurance) (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
102	Appropriation Bill 2019 [Dáil]
103	Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
104	Official Languages (Amendment) Bill 2019 [Dáil]
105	Civil Liability (Schools) Bill 2019 [Seanad][PMB]
106	Broadcasting (Amendment) (Protection of Journalism) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
107	Trade Union Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]
108	Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) (Amendment) (Cross Border Crime Agency) Bill 2019 [Dáil][PMB]

## Appendix V:

### Bills Passed by the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2019

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No.	Bill Title
1	Local Government Bill 2018
2	Hallmarking (Amendment) Bill 2016
3	Personal Injuries Assessment Board (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2018
4	Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) (Amendment) Bill 2018
5	Data Sharing and Governance Bill 2018
6	Criminal Law (Extraterritorial Jurisdiction) Bill 2018
7	European Parliament Elections (Amendment) Bill 2019
8	Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Consequential Provisions) Bill 2019
9	Sea-Fisheries (Amendment) Bill 2017
10	Companies (Amendment) Bill 2019
11	Parental Leave (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]
12	Civil Registration Bill 2019
13	Greyhound Racing Bill 2018
14	Aircraft Noise (Dublin Airport) Regulation Bill 2018
15	Residential Tenancies (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2018
16	Health and Social Care Professionals (Amendment) Bill 2018
17	Health Service Executive (Governance) Bill 2018
	* Thirty-eighth Amendment of the Constitution (Dissolution of Marriage) Bill 2016 ( <i>changed from</i> Thirty-fifth Amendment of the Constitution (Divorce) Bill 2016) [PMB]
18	Copyright and other Intellectual Property Law Provisions Bill 2018
19	National Surplus (Reserve Fund for Exceptional Contingencies) Bill 2018

No.	Bill Title
20	Criminal Justice (Mutual Recognition of Probation Judgments and Decisions) Bill 2018
21	Industrial Relations (Amendment) Bill 2018
22	Land and Conveyancing Law Reform (Amendment) Bill 2019
23	Civil Law (Presumption of Death) Bill 2016 <i>changed from</i> Civil Law (Missing Persons) Bill 2016 [PMB]
24	Local Government Rates and Other Matters Bill 2018 <i>changed from</i> Local Government Rates Bill 2018
25	Coroners (Amendment) Bill 2018
26	Citizens' Assemblies Bill 2019
27	Redress for Women Resident in Certain Institutions (Amendment) Bill 2019
28	Judicial Council Bill 2017
29	Parole Bill 2016 [PMB]
30	Qualifications and Quality Assurance (Education and Training) (Amendment) Bill 2018
31	Criminal Justice (International Co-operation) Bill 2019
32	CervicalCheck Tribunal Bill 2019
33	Courts Bill 2019 <i>changed from</i> Courts (Establishment and Constitution) (Amendment) Bill 2019
34	Parent's Leave and Benefit Bill 2019
35	Health and Childcare Support (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2019
36	Social Welfare Bill 2019
37	Family Law Bill 2019
38	Consumer Protection (Gift Vouchers) Bill 2018
39	Finance (Tax Appeals and Prospectus Regulation) Bill 2019
40	Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons Bill 2019

No.	Bill Title
41	Finance Bill 2019
42	Gaming and Lotteries (Amendment) Bill 2019
43	Blasphemy (Abolition of Offences and Related Matters) Bill 2019
44	Industrial Development (Amendment) Bill 2019
45	Landlord and Tenant (Ground Rents) (Amendment) Bill 2017 [PMB]
46	Housing (Regulation of Approved Housing Bodies) Bill 2019
47	Criminal Records (Exchange of Information) Bill 2019
48	Social Welfare (No. 2) Bill 2019
49	Microbeads (Prohibition) Bill 2019
50	Health Insurance (Amendment) Bill 2019
51	Appropriation Bill 2019
52	Migration of Participating Securities Bill 2019
53	Consumer Insurance Contracts Bill 2017 [PMB]

\* Acts to amend the Constitution are numbered separately and given the prefix C (for Constitution).

## Appendix VI:

### Meetings and Reports of Parliamentary Committees in 2019

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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	31	1
Joint Committee on Business, Enterprise and Innovation	19	7
Joint Committee on Children and Youth Affairs	23	1
Joint Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment	31	1
Joint Committee on Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	16	2
Joint Committee on Education and Skills	17	6
Joint Committee on Employment Affairs and Social Protection	18	1
Joint Committee on European Union Affairs	15	0
Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach	33	3
Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Trade and Defence	19	0
Joint Committee on Health	35	3
Joint Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government	37	10
Joint Committee on Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement	13	1
Joint Committee on Justice and Equality	33	8
Joint Committee on Rural and Community Development	17	2
Joint Committee on Transport, Tourism and Sport	27	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>48</b>

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	3	0
Select Committee on Business, Enterprise and Innovation	5	0
Select Committee on Children and Youth Affairs	3	0
Select Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment	3	0
Select Committee on Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht	1	0
Select Committee on Education and Skills	2	0
Select Committee on Employment Affairs and Social Protection	6	0
Select Committee on European Union Affairs	0	0
Select Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach	14	0
Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Defence	13	1
Select Committee on Health	6	0
Select Committee on Housing, Planning and Local Government	5	0
Select Committee on Justice and Equality	10	0
Select Committee on Rural and Community Development	1	0
Select Committee on Transport, Tourism and Sport	4	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>1</b>

Standing Committees		
Committee	Number of meetings held	Number of reports presented to the Houses
Committee on Budgetary Oversight (Dáil)	27	4
Joint Committee on Irish Language, Gaeltacht and the Islands	15	2
Select Committee on Members' Interests of Dáil Éireann	7	1
Select Committee on Members' Interests of Seanad Éireann	1	0
Committee of Public Accounts (Dáil)	38	2
Joint Committee on Public Petitions	14	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>9</b>

## Special Committees

Committee	Number of meetings held	Number of reports presented to the Houses
Joint Committee on Climate Action	34	2
Select Committee on the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Seanad)	13	0
*Joint Committee on Key Issues Facing the Traveller Community	14	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>3</b>

\* Established on 30 May 2019.

## 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.



## 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 2019 to 31 December 2019.

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 2019*

No protected disclosures were received by the Houses of the Oireachtas Service in the reporting period 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2019.

## Appendix VIII:

### Commission Meetings and Attendance in 2019

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 15 meetings in 2019. The Finance Committee held five meetings in 2019.

Members	Meetings	
	Commission	Finance Committee
Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail, Ceann Comhairle (Chairperson)	13/15	–
Senator Denis O'Donovan, Cathaoirleach of the Seanad (Deputy Chairperson)	7/15	3/5
Mr. Peter Finnegan, Secretary General (Chief Executive)	15/15	–
Senator Paudie Coffey	10/15	3/5
Deputy Marcella Corcoran Kennedy	10/15	–
Senator Gerard P. Craughwell	13/15	3/5
Deputy Timmy Dooley	5/15	4/5
Deputy Martin Heydon	10/15	4/5
Deputy Catherine Murphy	13/15	–
Deputy Louise O'Reilly	11/15	3/5
Senator Ned O'Sullivan	8/15	–

## Appendix IX:

### Glossary of Terms

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Office of 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, for example, the Joint Committees on Transport, Foreign Affairs, etc.

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

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

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

*The Service* – the Houses of the Oireachtas Service is the public service body that provides administrative services to the Houses of the Oireachtas and their Members. It is headed by the Secretary General and Clerk of the Dáil who is responsible for managing the Service on a day-to-day basis and for implementing Commission policies.

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