



Coimisiún Thithe
an Oireachtais
Houses of the
Oireachtas Commission

Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Annual Report 2021

Houses of the Oireachtas

Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2
D02 XR20

www.oireachtas.ie

Tel: +353 (0)1 6183000 or (0)76 1001700

Facebook: www.facebook.com/OireachtasNews

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Introduction by Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach

We are pleased to present the Annual Report of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission for 2021 pursuant to section 6 of the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003-2021* (the Commission Acts).

The report presents an overview of the work of the Commission over the past year in performing its functions, specifically in relation to the provision of services and facilities to support the running of the Houses of the Oireachtas, and providing members of the Houses with the services they need to carry out their work as legislators and representatives of their constituents.

The annual report also presents the third progress report on implementation of the Strategic Plan 2019-2021. The report outlines progress made by the Houses of the Oireachtas Service (the Service) to advance the strategic objectives in the Plan over the last twelve months. The Secretary General presented the progress report to the Commission in accordance with section 16 of the Commission Acts.

The Commission acknowledges the achievements of the Service as outlined in the report. The disruption caused by the pandemic necessitated adaptation of operations to implement COVID-safe procedures on public health advice. Notwithstanding the exceptional circumstances, ensuring the continuity of parliamentary business and the work of members was an important objective during this period.

The Commission approved a new Strategic Plan 2022-2024 in January, drafted following a consultation process which informed the priorities and strategic direction for the next three years. The Plan's overarching vision of *a Parliament working effectively for the People* will guide decisions and focus resources over this period to support the Houses and members as their needs evolve.

Following the easing of public health restrictions, the Dáil and Seanad vacated the Convention Centre Dublin (CCD) and resumed sittings in Leinster House in September 2021. We would like to thank the Board of the CCD for making the CCD available for parliamentary sittings and their staff for their outstanding support, commitment and professionalism.

We are also pleased to welcome the return of visitors in person to Leinster House this year. Each year Leinster House welcomes members of the public and school groups to view the proceedings from the public galleries and to take guided tours of the building. While the House was closed to visitors since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in line with public health guidelines, a process was put in place to safely reopen the House to the public together with a phased reintroduction of guided tours and school group tours.

Communicating the work of the Houses and their committees is of central importance. Oireachtas TV provides live coverage of Dáil, Seanad and committee proceedings and the proceedings are live streamed on the Oireachtas website. Our social media channels proactively communicate the work of the Houses to the public. Our parliamentary education programme continues to support schools and students through online education courses and activities.

We welcome the publication of the report of the *Forum on a Family-Friendly and Inclusive Parliament* published in November. We are grateful to the members of the Forum and its chairperson Ms Mary Upton, former member of Dáil Éireann, for giving their time to undertake this work.

Following broad-based consultation, the Forum presented recommendations to make the Houses of the Oireachtas a more family-friendly workplace and more responsive to the needs and interests of men and women of all ages in its composition, structure, operation and methods of working. The Commission has taken steps towards advancing the Forum's recommendations and will receive regular progress reports on actions taken to address the recommendations which will be reported in our annual report to the Houses next year.

Over the past year Seanad Éireann has also implemented a series of reforms relating to the conduct of Seanad business, including engagement with Irish MEPs on a constituency basis, special debates on matters of particular interest to members of Seanad vocational panels and university constituencies, and debates on reports of Joint Committees are now led in the Seanad by the Committee Chairperson who is a member

of Dáil Éireann. Engagement with the government is ongoing in relation to implementation of relevant recommendations presented in earlier reports on Seanad reform.

As part of the 2021-2023 phase of the *Decade of Centenaries* Programme, in December 2021 the Houses marked the centenary of the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty Debates through a series of events to promote discourse on the significance of the Oireachtas debates 100 years ago.

This year the Houses mark another significant milestone in our history: the first meeting of Seanad Éireann which took place in December 1922. The programme of events launched in February under the theme *Seanad 100 – Minority Voices, Major Change* includes online events, a TV documentary, exhibitions for the public as well as student debates. These events will explore the contribution of Seanad Éireann to Irish public life since 1922.

As we remember the historical events of a century ago, we invite you to view the programme on the website www.oireachtas.ie and to watch the events as they are broadcast on Oireachtas TV and live streamed on the Oireachtas website.

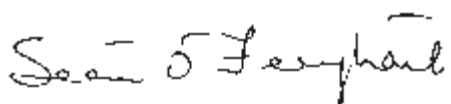
It was our privilege to welcome His Excellency, President Volodymyr Zelensky, President of Ukraine, to address the Houses of the Oireachtas and the Irish people in April this year. In the historic, virtual address to a joint sitting of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann the Houses heard from the President on the plight of Ukraine and its people in this time of crisis. In response, the Houses expressed commitment to humanitarian support for the people of Ukraine, respect for human rights and the pursuit by diplomatic means of lasting peace in Ukraine.

We are grateful to Her Excellency, Larysa Gerasko, ambassador of Ukraine to Ireland, and all those who made this occasion possible.

The Commission's audited financial accounts presented in this report show that the cost of running the Houses in 2021 was €132.5m. With the enactment of the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2021*, the Commission received its three-year budgetary allocation of €462.5m for the three years 2022-2024. The Commission will continue to exercise prudent stewardship of public resources in running the Houses of the Oireachtas over the next three years.

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

We also express gratitude to the Secretary General, the Management Board and to the staff of the Service for their work over the past year.



Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD

Ceann Comhairle



Senator Mark Daly

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 2021 Report on the Implementation of the *Strategic Plan 2019-2021 – A Parliament which Works for the People*. The Plan presented the challenges the Service faced as a 21st-century parliament serving a more complex society.

Providing a high level of service while continuing to protect the members of the parliamentary community during the Covid-19 pandemic was a core objective of the Service in 2021. While the vaccination programme gathered momentum the spread of the virus was still a significant risk. The return of Dáil sittings to Leinster House in September required particular vigilance and considerable work. However, thanks to an enormous collective effort the parliamentary community remained safe.

Throughout the year, the HR Unit, the Facilities Management Team and the Covid-19 Compliance Team continued to provide members, political staff, managers and staff with regular updated guidance, information and instruction on Covid-19 arrangements and responsibilities that were continually evolving. I sincerely thank all the staff of the Service and all our external support workers for their commitment and dedication during 2021 and for the continued support they have shown to each other, to the work of the Oireachtas, and to the parliamentary community in general.

The Commission's outturn was €132.5m for 2021. At the end of 2021, the Commission employed 637 FTE staff and 451 FTE members' and party staff were employed under the Scheme of Secretariat Assistance.

Health and safety was of paramount importance in 2021. In October the Houses of the Oireachtas Service Safety Statement was published on the Plinth. This document highlights the Service's commitment to safety, health and welfare at work and outlines the resources and designated personnel that have been assigned to help deliver on that commitment. The implementation of the Covid-19 Response Plan in 2021 was an essential element of this. Updated Covid-19 Safety Guidelines were circulated by the Health and Safety Committee as the gradual return to the office continued in the last quarter of 2021.

The Digital Transformation Work Plan for 2021 was delivered showing improvements across the organisation with a particular focus on Covid-19 and cyber security. The ICT Security Team took significant strategic steps to strengthen the security landscape for the Oireachtas in 2021, and this work continues. Throughout the year there was ongoing and focused cyber security communication with all in the Leinster House community to raise awareness of the possible cyber risks.

Microsoft (MS) Teams has been widely adopted across the Oireachtas and has played a vital role in remote working. In 2021 nearly 48,000 virtual meetings were held on MS Teams. There were 136,792 Teams calls in 2021, and overall, since MS Teams was introduced in 2020, over 196,000 Teams calls have been made.

Using MS Teams has helped ensure that the business of the Houses could continue safely during the pandemic. Remote working and supporting sittings offsite during the Covid-19 pandemic would

not have been possible without the extensive work carried out under the Digital Transformation Programme since 2018.

Interparliamentary engagement this year continued to be facilitated through virtual engagements, 56 of the 68 PACE Plenary and Committee meetings during 2021 were held virtually. In February the Oireachtas hosted the first full virtual meeting of the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) which was addressed by An Taoiseach. The meeting marked the first plenary for BIPA since the Covid-19 pandemic began and the first since the end of the UK's transition from the EU. The theme of the event was *2021: Challenges and Changes*.

The use of Facebook and Twitter livestreaming of parliamentary debates continues to raise public awareness of the work of the Houses. Overall, there has been a shift to viewing live streams via Facebook or Twitter, or via the Oireachtas app. Oireachtas livestreaming tells a clear story of significant consumption of live Oireachtas proceedings – over 19 million minutes were served to users between April and December 2021. The Service's social media team won four awards at the annual national social media awards in 2021 in the State organisation category for Twitter and Instagram and Best In-House Social Media Team, as well as the Grand Prix – Overall Sockies 2021 Winner. This was the fourth consecutive year that our social media team received Sockies awards.

The Broadcasting Unit with the support of the Service's ICT Unit ensured ongoing coverage of the proceedings of the Houses from two locations up to September and there were over 1,400 hours of live broadcasting of Oireachtas proceedings.

The Oireachtas Education Programme continued to be delivered online throughout the year under restricted circumstances that mirrored the

educational sector generally. In January 2021 the Houses also marked UNESCO International Education Day.

The Houses of the Oireachtas Library and Archives joined the Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) in September, becoming the coalition's newest associate member. The Oireachtas Library has been serving parliamentarians since 1924 by delivering library and information services that support the work of both Houses of the Oireachtas, Committees and individual members.

In June the Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Feargháil TD, launched *Straitéis na Gaeilge, 2021*, the Irish Language Strategy for the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Strategy aims to expand the range of Irish language supports and resources available to members and staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service and help it develop into a functioning bilingual organisation. *Straitéis na Gaeilge, 2021* builds on the success of the original 2018 *Straitéis*. It focuses, in particular, on increasing the use of the Irish language in both the Dáil and the Seanad. The new *Straitéis* also aims to increase the cohort of Irish-speaking staff in the Service.

Over the past twelve months, the Oireachtas continued the delivery of its Digital Transformation Programme. The Oireachtas vision for the Digital Transformation Programme is to provide an open and accessible Oireachtas for all, transformed by intuitive, collaborative and integrated digital solutions – we have made considerable progress in achieving integrated processes and systems. We went live with the Business Committee Report Module in April and with the Committee In-Meeting Module in June. In November we launched a new Dáil Business website, this replaces the printed Dáil Order Paper. The Dáil Business website provides 24/7 access to the sitting schedule and marks a significant milestone in the Oireachtas' Digital

Transformation journey. A Members Portal is in development and will go live in 2022. The Portal, Áis-linn, will act as a single “digital one stop shop” for members to manage and conduct their parliamentary business transactions.

Throughout the year, the HR Unit continued to provide critical services to all staff and managers working remotely and on-site under Covid-19 restrictions. The focus was on ensuring that staff and managers had up-to-date information on remote working policies and other resources to manage evolving issues and to keep the parliamentary community connected. They were supported in this work by the Service’s Health and Wellbeing Group. Keeping connected and maintaining ongoing social and work-related contact was promoted strongly throughout the year. The *Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2023*, approved by the Management Board in December 2020, was launched in March and work on the implementation plan for the Strategy is ongoing.

The HR Unit continued to implement the Service’s *HR People Strategy 2019-2021* in conjunction with the *Learning and Development (L&D) Strategy*. Both have been delivered against the backdrop of a rapidly changing operating environment.

During 2021 the Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) Programme was successfully delivered online. This afforded the OWL trainees the opportunity to develop skills for a blended and hybrid working model. From its inception an important objective of the OWL Programme has been to find meaningful and viable part-time permanent employment for trainees in the wider Civil and Public Service. In December a recruitment competition for graduates of the OWL Programme, supported by the Public Appointments Service took place. The OWL Programme is now considered the first Supported

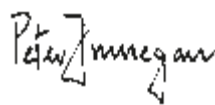
Employment Model in the Civil and Public Service and is recognised by the Comprehensive Employment Strategy Implementation Group as an innovative employment model for people with intellectual disabilities. This programme is a credit to the Houses of the Oireachtas and our staff, and I would like to sincerely thank everyone involved.

I am pleased to report that overall, the Service made significant progress in supporting the work of the Houses, their Committees and members; in developing and using new technologies; in strengthening our communications, and in supporting our parliamentary community during another challenging year.

I am very mindful of the flexibility and effort of all staff. I want to acknowledge and thank them for their outstanding work, dedication and professionalism. They responded to this pandemic with admirable courage and determination and can be justifiably proud of what they achieved.

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

Finally, I wish to thank the members of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission for their support over the past year. Together we look forward to 2022 with ambition and optimism as we address the new challenges facing our National Parliament and society.



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 585 Civil Servants of the State and 52 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 2021*.

There are 451 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

HOUSES OF THE OIREACTHAS COMMISSION

33rd DÁIL/26th Seanad



Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail
Ceann Comhairle (Chairperson)



Senator Mark Daly
Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann (Deputy Chairperson)



Deputy Jennifer
Murnane O'Connor



Senator Seán Kyme



Deputy Joe Carey



Deputy Francis Noel Duffy



Deputy Louise O'Reilly



Senator Ned O'Sullivan



Senator Lynn Ruane



Deputy Seán Sherlock



Mr. Peter Finnegan
Secretary General (Chief Executive of the Commission)

Management Board

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

The 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 2003-2021* 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 €462.5m for the period 2022-2024.

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; and
- 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
- 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](#). The Commission's Finance and Audit Committees meet on a quarterly basis. Further details on the work of the Audit Committee in 2021 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 (2021)

Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl Ceann Comhairle	Chairperson <i>Ex officio</i> member
Senator Mark Daly 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 Joe Carey	Dáil member
Deputy Francis Noel Duffy	Minister's representative
Senator Seán Kyne	Seanad member
Deputy Jennifer Murnane O'Connor	Dáil member
Deputy Louise O'Reilly	Dáil member
Senator Ned O'Sullivan	Seanad member
Senator Lynn Ruane	Seanad member
Deputy Seán Sherlock	Dáil member



Members of the Audit Committee of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission

Pictured left to right: Deputy Francis Noel Duffy, Mr Cyril Maybury (external member), Deputy Mairéad Farrell, Deputy Emer Higgins, Mr Pat McLoughlin (external member and Chair), Ms Noreen Fahy (external member) and Mr Charles Hearne (Staff of the Service). Not pictured: Senator Victor Boyhan.

Overview of the Work of the Commission in 2021

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 on the [website](#). Attendance at meetings in 2021 is set out in **Appendix VIII** of this report.

Given the social distancing requirements during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Commission and its committees are conducting their meetings virtually in order to continue their essential governance functions. In 2021 the Commission held 12 meetings, including one incorporeal meeting. The matters dealt with can be summarised as follows:

Membership of Commission Sub-groups

The Commission made appointments to fill vacancies in the membership of the following sub groups:

- Finance Committee
- Print Users' Council

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 2020
- Commission's three-year budget 2022-2024
- Commission's Statement of Estimates for 2022

Strategy

- Programme of Work for the Leinster House Complex
- ICT Digital Transformation Strategy Implementation
- Communications Strategy Implementation

Policy and Services

- Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members for 33rd Dáil, 26th Seanad
- Digital Transformation Workplan and Budget 2022
- Dignity and Respect Policy for the Parliamentary Workplace: Review of the Policy
- Establishment of a Dignity and Respect Policy Steering Group
- Public Representation Allowance (PRA): Guidelines for Members of the Houses on allowable expenditure under the PRA
- Rollout of electronic version of the Parliamentary Standard Allowance Declaration Form in 2022
- Guidelines for Members of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann, in accordance with section 4(4A) of the Commission Acts

- Report of the Independent Review of the System for Recording Members' Attendance
- Service Level Agreement for the Print Facility
- Professional Development Training for Members of the Houses

Annual Reporting

- Commission Annual Report 2020 to the Houses of the Oireachtas in accordance with section 6 of the Commission Acts
- Audit Committee Annual Report 2020 to the Commission in accordance with section 14A(10) (c) of the Commission Acts
- Secretary General's 2020 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

- Houses of the Oireachtas Service Resource Plan
- Covid-19: Health and Safety in the Parliamentary Workplace

Legal

- Legal Proceedings involving the Houses of the Oireachtas

Business Case Approval

- Digital Parliament Committee Meetings Application
- Digital Order Paper (Dáil Business) Application
- Members' Portal Application
- Technology in the Chambers Contract
- Installation of Hybrid Meeting Room Technology
- Installation of Simultaneous Translation Booths
- Purchase of a Software Licence Agreement and Cloud Services

- Provision of Outside Broadcast Services
- Provision of additional staff resources to support members of Parliamentary Committees

Hosting Interparliamentary Conferences

- Proposal to host Interparliamentary Meetings and Conferences in the period 2022-2024

Accommodation

- Programme of Work for the Leinster House Campus
- Plan for the Resumption of the Parliamentary Sittings in Leinster House
- Protocol for Former Members' Access to Leinster House
- Security Matters relating to the Parliamentary Precinct

Security Matters

- Briefing on Personal Safety and Security for Members of the Houses

Forum on a Family Friendly and Inclusive Parliament

- Report and Recommendations of the *Forum on a Family Friendly and Inclusive Parliament*

Oireachtas Women's Parliamentary Caucus

- Provision of Support to the Oireachtas Women's Parliamentary Caucus

Houses of the Oireachtas Commemorative Programme

- Commemorative Programme for the Houses of the Oireachtas for the 2021-2023 phase of the Decade of Centenaries
- Seanad 100 Commemorative Programme

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.

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.

Our Values

*Impartial | Accountable | Open
Collegiate | Innovative*

Key Parliamentary Activities 2021

Key Parliamentary Activities	2021	2020	2019
Sittings of the Houses			
Dáil sitting days	95	82	102
Seanad sitting days	82	48	93
Dáil sitting hours	943	822	914
Seanad sitting hours	608	324	511
Meetings of Parliamentary Committees			
Committee meetings	1,170	344	623
Committee sitting hours	1,752	597	1,329
Committee witnesses	2,596	792	1,986
Reports presented by Committees	75	9	61
The Legislative Process			
Bills initiated in both Houses	160	78	108
<i>Government Bills</i>	49	35	40
<i>Private Members' Bills</i>	111	43	68
Bills initiated in the Dáil	112	60	80
<i>Government Bills</i>	36	24	28
<i>Private Members' Bills</i>	76	36	52
Bills initiated in the Seanad	48	18	28
<i>Government Bills</i>	13	11	12
<i>Private Members' Bills</i>	35	7	16
Amendments proposed to Bills	4,283	1,620	2,660
Bills passed by both Houses	50	32	54
<i>Government Bills</i>	48	31	48
<i>Private Members' Bills</i>	2	1	6
Legal and Legislative Services			
Legal advices issued	639	603	537
<i>To the Service</i>	494	538	438
<i>To Parliamentary Committees</i>	145	65	99
PMB proposals in receipt of legal advice	56	42	31
PMB proposals in receipt of drafting services	36	32	16
Parliamentary Questions			
PQs Processed	68,297	48,735	57,697
<i>Questions for Written Answer</i>	55,898	37,941	47,197
<i>Questions for Oral Answer</i>	1,690	977	2,018
Covid-19 related Queries	–	3,398	–
Official Debate			
Hours of parliamentary debate	3,303	1,743	2,754
Pages reported and published	37,466	20,948	35,123
Divisions recorded (votes in the Houses)			
Dáil Divisions	154	139	161
Seanad Divisions	76	93	192
Parliamentary Budget Office Publications	68	84	78
Briefings provided to the Committee on Budgetary Oversight	5	3	9
Parliamentary Library and Research Service			
Publications	122	102	103
Customised briefings for Members and other users	1,102	1,225	1,542
Staff of the Service at Year End (Civil Service and State Industrial) (FTEs)	637	596	572
Members' Staff at Year End (FTEs)	451	437	454
Net Expenditure (€000)	132,493	134,065	124,612

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.

In 2021 the spread of Covid-19 was still a significant risk. While the vaccination programme gathered momentum the Service's main objective was to provide a high level of service while protecting the members of the parliamentary community. The level of risk increased with the return to Leinster House of Dáil sittings from the Convention Centre in September 2021 and required increased vigilance and effort by all. Good progress was made by everyone in dealing with, and responding to, the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to a huge collective effort the parliamentary community remained safe.

The Service's rapid transition to a blended working model, necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic, was only possible due to investments in our Digital Transformation Programme under previous strategic plans. During 2021 there was ongoing and focused cyber security communication with all in the Leinster House community. The ICT Security Team took significant strategic steps to strengthen the security landscape for the Service, and this work continues. Digital transformation will continue to enhance the technical landscape of the Oireachtas.

The Strategic Plan 2019-2021 presented the challenges the Service faced as a 21st century parliament serving a more complex society. The Plan highlighted the sense of the dual and interdependent relationship between a healthy political system and a healthy civil society by its vision 'A Parliament which works for the People'. In 2021 the Service made significant progress in achieving the 14 goals as set out under the four key strategies of its Strategic Plan 2019-2021:

- 1. An Effective Parliament*
- 2. An Open and Engaged Parliament*
- 3. A Digital Parliament*
- 4. A Well-Supported Parliamentary Community.*

This report outlines the progress achieved, against a background of significant organisational change and living with Covid-19, as we move into our eighth strategic plan for the Houses of the Oireachtas Service.

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 2021

Procedural Services are responsible for the running of the Houses supporting the following:

- Dáil Éireann sat for 95 days (943 hours).
- During 2021, Dáil Éireann met 55 times in the Convention Centre Dublin (CCD) ensuring compliance with social distancing during the Covid-19 pandemic for occasions on which it was necessary for all members of Dáil Éireann to be present together and voting.
- The Dáil Business Committee held 39 meetings.
- There was ongoing adjustment and review of the Dáil sitting schedule by the Dáil Business Committee.
- In September 2021 there was a return to Leinster House of Dáil sittings from the CCD.
- 154 Dáil divisions were recorded.
- 297 Topical Issues were selected for debate in the Dáil.
- 68,297 Parliamentary Questions were processed.
- Seanad Éireann sat for 82 days (608 hours).
- During 2021 Seanad Éireann met 10 times in the CCD.
- 76 Seanad divisions were recorded.
- 354 Commencement matters were tabled for debate in the Seanad – Up to four commencement matters are chosen for debate by the Cathaoirleach on each sitting day.
- 160 Bills were initiated in the Houses – 31% were Government Bills and 69% were Private Members Bills (PMBs).
- 48 Government Bills were passed during 2021. Two PMBs were passed during 2021.
- The Debates Office published 37,466 pages of the Official Report of the proceedings of the Dáil, Seanad and Parliamentary Committees, six Dáil Bound Volumes and two Seanad Bound Volumes.
- Overall, Parliamentary Committees held 1,170 meetings (over 1,752 hours).
- 2,596 witnesses attended Committee meetings.
- 75 Committee reports were presented.

Irish language services: Rannóg an Aistriúcháin (the Service's Translation Section) provided simultaneous translation services during 943 hours of Dáil debate, 608 hours of Seanad debate, and to Committee meetings when requested. It also provided the official translation of material in respect of 135 Dáil and 92 Seanad Order Papers (including Supplementary Order Papers).

Dedicated legal advisory services: 639 parliamentary and corporate legal advices were issued by the Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers (OPLA). 145 of these advices took the form of legal briefings delivered to Parliamentary Committees.

Strategy Outcome 1: An Effective Parliament (continued)

Our Goals

Our Key Activities and Achievements 2021

THE OPLA provided legal advisory services for 56 PMB proposals and legislative drafting services for 36 PMB proposals.

Specialist research services: The Parliamentary Information and Research Services Divisions provided the following services: The Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) produced 68 publications, consisting of 30 briefing papers and research notes, 36 data visualisation presentations and infographics, 2 dashboards and calculator modelling tools. It prepared five briefings for the Dáil Budgetary Oversight Committee and provided on-demand costing services for members.

The Oireachtas Library and Parliamentary Research Service (PRS) delivered 1,000+ information and research briefings in response to requests from members and Parliamentary Committees. The PRS produced a range of member-focused topical publications and infographics including a series of Covid-19 research briefings.

The Parliamentary Research Service (PRS) published 61 Bill Trackers and 42 Bills Digests on Government Bills. The PRS also completed detailed scrutiny of five PMBs and 17 Pre-Legislative Scrutiny outputs of general schemes of Government Bills for Committees.

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 2021

The Broadcasting Unit has continued to ensure ongoing coverage of the proceedings of the Houses. This has evolved and changed as the pandemic response has changed.

Oireachtas TV broadcasts major events and 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 events and historical talks. The documentary *The Seven Ages of Noël Browne*, produced by Yellow Asylum Films and directed by filmmaker Alan Gilsenan was broadcast during 2021. This documentary is a portrayal of the life, achievements and controversies of one of Ireland's most iconic parliamentarians, Dr. Noël Browne.

Some of the highlights of the Oireachtas TV Debates series broadcast included topics such as:

- The second budget of the 33rd Dáil – Budget 2022;
- Climate change, the Climate Act 2021; and
- The return to non-essential travel across the EU and the introduction of the EU Digital Covid Certificate.

There were:

- 1,435 hours of live broadcast of parliamentary proceedings, up from 982 hours in 2020; and
- 859 hours of Oireachtas original TV content broadcast.

There were:

- 1,874 visitors to Leinster House down from over 13,000 in 2020 and almost 100,000 in 2019. These visitors were attending meetings. The Houses suspended public tours in March 2020 due to Covid-19.

There were:

- 1.2 million visits to the website with 4.5 million website page views.

619 Press releases were issued in 2021.

The Oireachtas Service's social media team won four awards at the annual national social media awards in 2021 in the State Organisation category. The awards were in the following areas: Twitter, Instagram, Best In-House Social Media Team; and the Grand Prix – Overall Sockies 2021 Winner. This was the fourth consecutive year that the social media team received awards in the Sockies.

The Oireachtas Education Programme continued to be delivered online throughout the year under restricted circumstances that mirrored the educational sector generally.

- **Parliamentary Education Workshops:** For the school year 2020/2021 senior cycle politics and society students were invited to take part in two virtual experiences from their own classrooms. From September to December 2021 there were 90 virtual workshops delivered to students around the country.

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

Our Goals

Our Key Activities and Achievements 2021

- **Transition Year (TY) Student Work Experience Programme:** The Houses of the Oireachtas hosted 50 transition year students for virtual work experience with one week in April and another week in November. Students from schools around the country, including the Aran Islands, participated. The first week was delivered in English and the second in Irish.
- In August 2021 the first Department of Education and Skills approved **summer course for primary school teachers** was delivered. The goal was to promote the work of the Houses of the Oireachtas amongst primary school teachers of 5th and 6th class pupils.
- As part of the **Treaty Debates Programme**, marking the Centenary of the Treaty Debates in Dáil Éireann, a suite of resources and worksheets were produced to help second level students explore the Debates. A nationwide essay competition was also undertaken.

In June 2021, the Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Feargháil TD, launched *Straitéis na Gaeilge, 2021*, the Irish Language Strategy for the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Straitéis na Gaeilge, 2021 builds on the success of the 2018 *Straitéis*. It focuses, in particular, on increasing the use of the Irish language in both the Dáil and the Seanad. The new *Straitéis* also aims to increase the cohort of Irish-speaking staff in the Service.

Members' interparliamentary activities were facilitated mainly through virtual engagements.

There were:

- 68 PACE Plenary and Committee Meetings in 2021; and
- 15 meetings of the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE.

The **Seanad Special Select Committee on the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union** published its *Final Report on the Impacts of Brexit* in December 2021. The report made 62 recommendations across a range of areas examined with stakeholders in Ireland, Northern Ireland, the UK, the EU and the United States.

The **Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence** published a report in March 2021 entitled *Report on the Distribution of COVID-19 Vaccines to Developing Countries*. The report makes a series of recommendations, including a call on government to formally endorse the World Health Organisation's Covid-Technology Access Pool (C-Tap) initiative, to help achieve equitable, global access to Covid-19 vaccines.

In February 2021 the Oireachtas hosted the first full virtual meeting of the **British Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA)** which was addressed by the Taoiseach. The meeting marked the first plenary for BIPA since the Covid-19 pandemic began and the first since the end of the UK's transition from the EU.

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

Our Goals

Our Key Activities and Achievements 2021

The **Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO)** continued to develop relationships with international networks of Independent Fiscal Institution (IFIs) and other Parliamentary Budget Offices. During 2021, PBO staff presented at six virtual events for international parliamentarians and parliamentary staff.

The PBO also regularly engaged with Government Departments and agencies to access data and information underpinning budgetary analysis and publications, including policy costings.

The **Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers (OPLA)** continued to develop its interparliamentary relationships during 2021. The OPLA made two contributions to the *International Journal of Parliamentary Studies*.

In March 2021 the **Oireachtas Library** joined the *JSTOR Open Community Collections Initiative* (an electronic archive of leading journals across many academic disciplines), becoming the first organisation from the Republic of Ireland to take part in this international project.

The **Parliamentary Research Service (PRS)** is a host organisation under the **SFI Public Service Fellowship Programme**. During 2021, six SFI Fellows from across different disciplines were seconded to the PRS for three months under the Programme and produced expert research briefings for members.

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 2021

The **Digital Transformation Work Plan for 2021** was delivered, showing significant ICT improvements across the organisation. The TDT Strategic Committee, with the support of the Management Board, maintained high-level oversight of the 2021 *Digital Transformation Work Plan*, with a particular focus on Covid-19 and cyber security.

Microsoft Teams has been widely adopted across the Oireachtas and has played a vital role in enabling and supporting remote working.

Seven MS Teams summer training sessions were held between May and August 2021 as a result of users expressing an interest in increasing their knowledge on a number of Teams features.

In 2021 there were:

- 47,913 MS Teams virtual meetings, this compares to 21,121 virtual meetings in the 10 months from March to December 2020
- 136,792 MS Teams calls
- 1,744,600 MS Teams chat messages
- 505 private committee meetings of which 492 had a virtual element.

The **ICT Unit** also provided a series of online training modules and resources, with a particular emphasis on cyber-security and awareness to equip staff to communicate and work safely and effectively online.

The development and delivery of the Oireachtas Digital Transformation Programme continued during 2021 as follows:

- In April 2021 the **Business Committee Report Module** went live on the Oireachtas Procedural System.
- In June 2021 the **Committee In-Meeting Module** went live, this module enhances how events are captured during a Committee meeting.
- In November 2021 the Houses of the Oireachtas launched a new **Dáil Business website**. This replaces the printed Dáil Order Paper and marks a significant milestone in the Oireachtas' Digital Transformation journey.

During 2021 **The Records Management Unit** successfully rolled out the **BTS eDocs system** to 500+ users across the Service. eDocs will be the foundation for good records governance in the Service.

In March 2021, the **Parliamentary Budget Office** published a new web page of guidance and analysis relevant to scrutinising the Estimates for Public Scrutiny. The Scrutiny of Estimates page brings together all the PBO's information and analysis on the Estimates for Public Services and how Dáil members scrutinise them.

Further, in the second part of the year, the PBO launched a new series of interactive online dashboards and calculator modelling tools.

In October 2021, the **Oireachtas Library** launched a new **Documents Laid portal** that facilitates the laying of documents in the Houses of the Oireachtas by Government Departments and agencies.

Overall, the ICT Helpdesk provided support for 23,709 calls in 2021 for members and their staff, and for 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 2021

At the end of 2021, the total number of staff (Civil Servants, State Industrial, Printers and Office Holders' staff) employed by the Service was 637 Full Time Equivalents (FTEs).

There were 451 FTE political staff employed by members of the Houses.

Throughout 2021, the **HR Unit, the Facilities Management Team and the Covid-19 Compliance Team** continued to provide members, political staff, managers and staff with regular updated guidance, information and instruction on Covid-19 arrangements and responsibilities that were continually evolving.

On the 19 and 20 July Staff Information Sessions were held on MS Teams to present the results of the HR Staff Survey *Working during the Covid-19 Pandemic*. The sessions were chaired by senior management.

Updated **Covid-19 Safety Guidelines** were circulated by the Health and Safety Committee as the gradual return to the office continued in the last quarter of 2021.

In October 2021 the **Houses of the Oireachtas Service Safety Statement** was published on the Plinth. The implementation of the Covid-19 Response Plan in 2021 was an essential element of this.

The HR Unit continued to implement the Service's **HR People Strategy 2019-2021**. Progress has been made in developing the Service's strategic HR capability, recruiting and retaining high-performing staff, developing our leaders and managers, and promoting a culture of ongoing learning and engagement.

The *Learning and Development (L&D) Strategy 2019-2021* was delivered in conjunction with the HR People Strategy. The Strategy was delivered against the backdrop of a rapidly changing operating environment.

There were 772 attendances at 128 courses delivered virtually during 2021.

Thirty-seven Service staff pursued courses under the *Refund/Advance of Fees Scheme* in 2021.

The *Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2023*, approved by the Management Board in December 2020, was launched on 11 March 2021. The strategic objectives and Implementation Plan under the Strategy are in line with the Civil Service Health and Wellbeing Framework, launched in September 2021.

During 2021 the Service's **Health and Wellbeing Group** provided advice, online seminars and information to staff on maintaining their health and wellbeing. Events included an update on the Irish Sign Language Strategy and webinars on the Psychology of Resilience and Bullying and Cyberbullying.

Strategy Outcome 4: A Well-Supported Parliamentary Community (continued)

Our Goals

Our Key Activities and Achievements 2021

A review of the Commission's **Dignity and Respect Statement of Principles and Policy (2019)** was completed in 2021 and an Action Plan of next steps was approved. The implementation of the policy is supported by the **Workplace Support Programme**.

The **Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group**, a cross representation of staff from across the Service, met on a quarterly basis during 2021.

Throughout 2021, the Service has continued to fulfil its commitments outlined in the *Irish Sign Language (ISL) Strategy 2019-2021*.

With the support of the ISL team, the Service provided a virtual placement opportunity for an undergraduate ISL interpreter student from the Centre for Deaf Studies (CDS), Trinity College Dublin.

During 2021 the **Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) Programme** took place online. A dedicated OWL webpage on the Oireachtas website was developed and in March 2021 a video to promote the OWL Programme was produced by two OWL Graduates, the Houses of the Oireachtas Service and the Public Appointments Service.

In November 2021 the Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghaíl, TD received the Report of the *Forum on a Family-Friendly and Inclusive Parliament*. The report made 51 recommendations. A Steering Group was established to assess the recommendations of the Forum some of which will be considered in the development of the **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022**.

The following governance meetings were held:

- 11 Oireachtas Commission meetings
- Five Finance Committee meetings
- Five Audit Committee meetings
- 28 Management Board governance meetings
- 24 Management Board de-brief meetings
- 41 Management Board Strategic Committee meetings
- 10 Principal Officer Network meetings.

The Finance Unit processed 5,115 invoices in 2021 for goods and services.

29 public procurement processes were undertaken.

The **Oireachtas Contracts Committee (OCC)** met on 14 occasions in 2021 and considered 23 submissions.

The **Records Management Unit** coordinated the Service's response to 125 FOI requests, and 3 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 2021, 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.

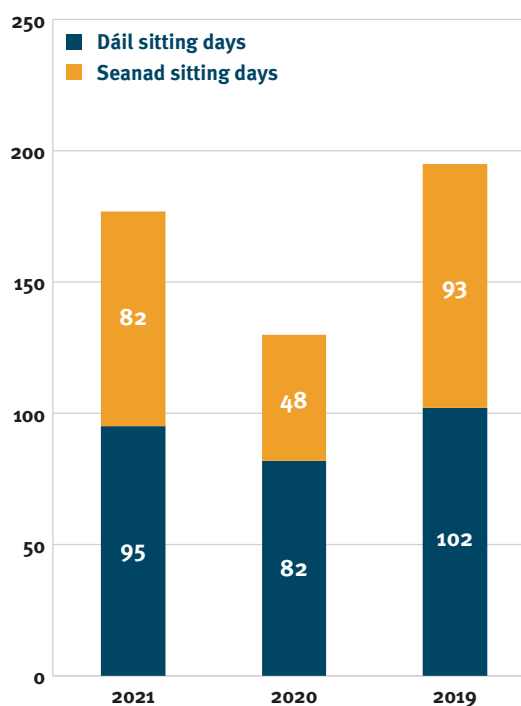
The Service's main objective in 2021 was to provide a high level of service while protecting the members of the parliamentary community during the Covid-19 pandemic; while the vaccination programme gathered momentum the spread of the virus was still a significant risk.

Good progress was made by the parliamentary community in dealing with, and responding to, the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to a huge collective effort the parliamentary community remained safe.

The Service supported Dáil Éireann on each of its 95 sitting days and Seanad Éireann on each of its 82 sitting days in challenging circumstances.

During 2021, Dáil Éireann met 55 times in the Convention Centre Dublin (CCD) and Seanad Éireann met 10 times in the CCD. The level of risk increased with the return to Leinster House of Dáil sittings from the Convention Centre in September 2021 and required increased vigilance and effort by all.

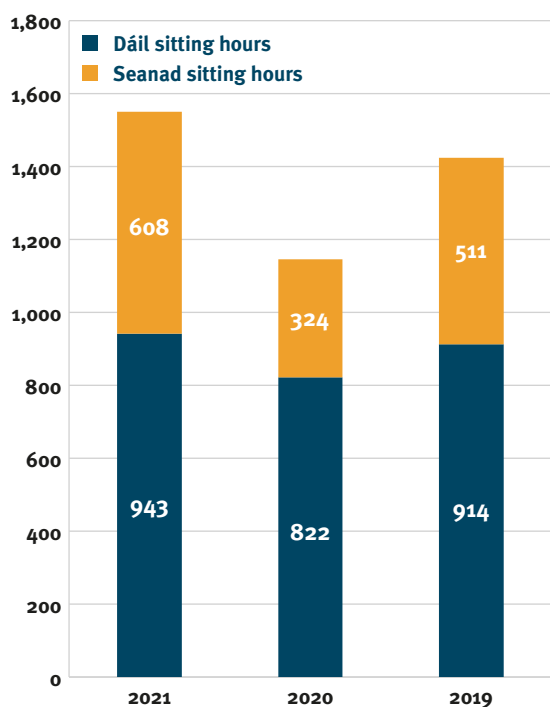
Figure 1: Sitting Days of the Houses



Dáil sittings resume in Leinster House, 15 September 2021.

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

Figure 2: Sitting Hours of the Houses



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, the sittings of the House. They also support the work of Dáil Standing Committees.

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

The **Journal Office** provides a range of procedural support services to the Dáil. In 2021, it produced 135 Dáil Order Papers, including Supplementary Order Papers, and recorded 154 Dáil divisions (votes in the House).

The Journal Office also provided support to the **Dáil Committee on Parliamentary Privileges and Oversight**, which held five meetings in 2021, and the **Dáil Business Committee**, which held 39 meetings in 2021.

Figure 3: Bills Initiated in Both Houses and Bills Passed

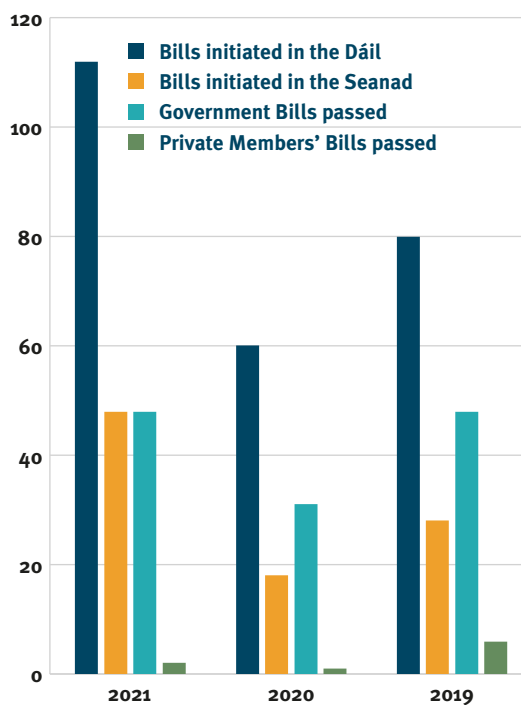


Table 1: Meetings of Dáil Standing Committees

	2021	2020	2019
Dáil Business Committee	39	51	44
Committee on Parliamentary Privileges and Oversight ¹	5	6	8
Committee on Standing Orders and Dáil Reform	12	8	5
Committee of Selection	5	3	3

¹ The name of the Committee on Procedure (Dáil Éireann) was changed to Committee on Parliamentary Privileges and Oversight (Dáil Éireann) in the committee record on 12 January 2021.

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

The **Bills Office** supports the legislative process in both Houses 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.

A total of 160 Bills were initiated in both Houses, 111 of which were PMBs. **Appendix IV** lists Bills initiated in the Houses and **Appendix V** lists Bills passed.

In 2021, the Houses passed 50 Bills (48 Government Bills and 2 Private Members' Bills).

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 Bills are examined by the Bills Office prior to publication and 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.

The **Questions Office** processed 68,297 Parliamentary Questions (PQs), of which 1,690 were for oral answer. There were 5,610 pages of Question Papers published in 2021.

The Clerk and Clerk-Assistant of the Seanad and the **Seanad Office** support the sittings and business of Seanad Éireann, its Committees, its Office Holders, and members by providing procedural advice and assisting them in preparing for, and presiding over, the sittings of the House. The Seanad Office also supports the Clerk in discharging their duties as *ex officio* Returning Officer for Seanad elections.

The Seanad sat for 82 sitting days (608 hours) in 2021 and produced 92 Order Papers including Supplementary Order Papers.



Senators Maria Byrne and Gerry Horkan elected to fill casual vacancies in the membership of Seanad Éireann.

Table 2: Parliamentary Questions (PQs)	2021	2020	2019
PQs processed ¹	68,297	48,735	57,697
Questions for Written Answer	55,898	37,941	47,197
Questions for Oral Answer	1,690	977	2,018
'Covid-19-related Queries' processed	–	3,398	–

¹ The number of PQs processed includes Questions for written answer, Questions for oral answer, PQs withdrawn, and PQs disallowed.

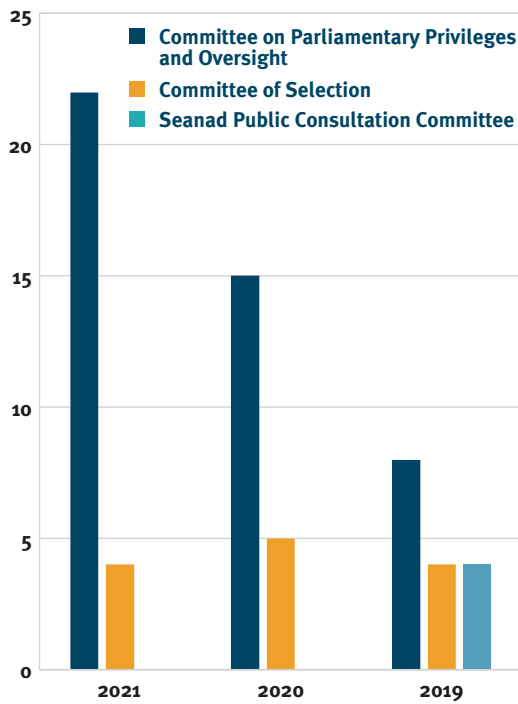
Goal 1: Provide Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann with the support and advice necessary to assist them in conducting their business effectively

Of the 160 Bills initiated in the Houses in 2021, 48 were initiated in the Seanad; 13 were Government Bills and 35 were Private Members' Bills.

The Seanad Office supported 22 meetings of the Seanad Committee on Parliamentary Privileges and Oversight¹, up from 15 meetings in 2020, and four meetings of the Seanad Committee of Selection.

By-elections took place in April 2021 to fill two vacancies in the membership of the Seanad.

Figure 4: Meetings of Seanad Committees



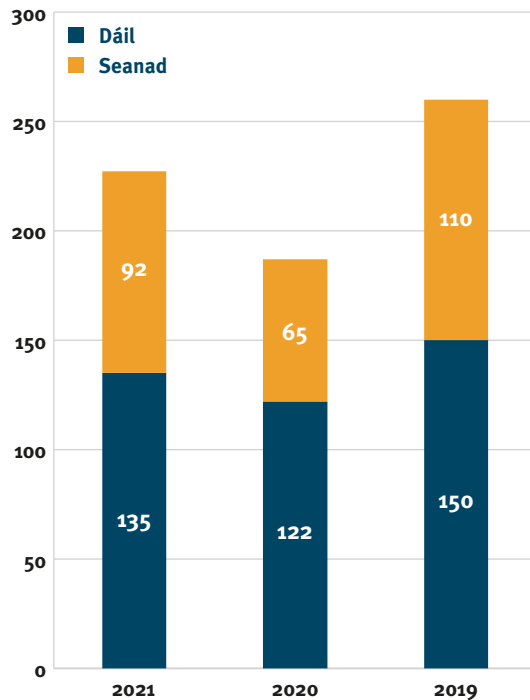
The **Editor of Debates Office** reports and publishes the proceedings of the Dáil, Seanad, and Joint and Select Committees in the floor language (Irish or English) within set deadlines.

In 2021, the Debates Office reported 3,303 hours of Dáil, Seanad, and Committee debate. This

amounted to 37,466 pages of Official Report of proceedings in addition to 68,297 Parliamentary Questions. The Office published these debates to the website in HTML, PDF and XML formats. Bound volumes of the debates are still printed and deposited with the copyright libraries.

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 943 hours of Dáil debate, 608 hours of Seanad debate, and to Committee meetings when requested. It also provided the official translation in respect of 227 Dáil and Seanad Order Papers (including Supplementary Order Papers).

Figure 5: Bilingual Order Papers



¹ The name of the Committee on Procedure and Privileges (Seanad Éireann) was changed to Committee on Parliamentary Privileges and Oversight (Seanad Éireann) in the committee record on 14 January 2021.

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 and Short and Long Titles of Bills and provides translations of Statutory Instruments on request for Government Departments. A five-year plan *Rannóg 2024* for publishing official translations of Acts of the Oireachtas in a timely manner and clearing historic arrears by 2024 is being implemented. A Rannóg an Aistriúcháin page is now available on the Houses of the Oireachtas website and includes regular updates on publications of official translations. The Rannóg 2024 Strategic Committee of the Management Board met 11 times during 2021.

Table 3: Translation Services	2021	2020	2019
Simultaneous translation provided on sitting days for the parliamentary proceedings	177	130	195
Bilingual Order Papers produced ¹	227	187	260
<i>Dáil</i>	135	122	150
<i>Seanad</i>	92	65	110
Bilingual Titles of Bills ²	160	78	108
<i>Government Bills</i>	49	35	40
<i>Private Members' Bills</i>	111	43	68

1 Includes supplementary Order Papers.

2 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

Parliamentary Committees are established to conduct oversight of the work of a Government Department or to examine a particular policy area in depth, according to the Orders of Reference given to them by the Dáil and Seanad. Committees invite and 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' Secretariat** teams of Clerks, Policy Advisers and administrative staff provided support to 25 Parliamentary Committees in 2021.

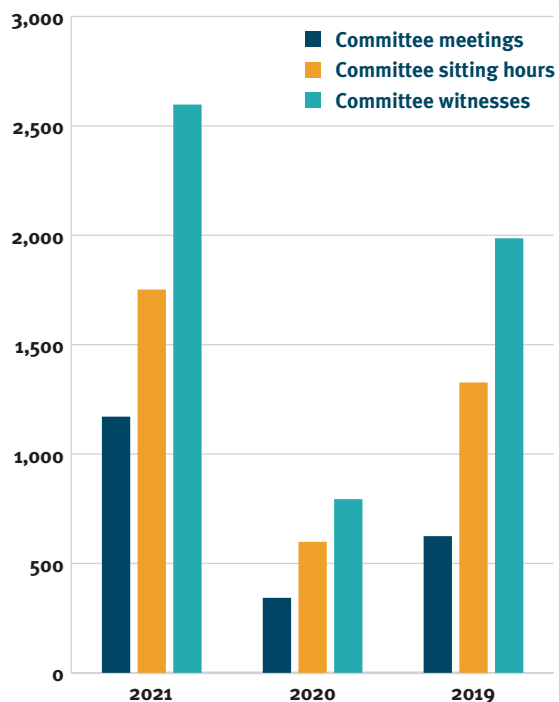
Appendix VI lists the Committees for the 33rd Dáil and 26th Seanad.

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

The **Committees' Press Officers** work to increase media coverage of the Parliamentary Committees by promoting and providing information such as press releases to national and local media. They respond to media queries, monitor media coverage

of committee work and assist in organising events, report launches and press briefings on behalf of Committees.

Figure 6: Parliamentary Committees



In 2021, the Committees' Secretariat supported 1,170 parliamentary Committee meetings over 1,752 sitting hours at which 2,596 witnesses, including key stakeholders and independent experts across a range of public policy areas, contributed.

Of the 1,170 Committee meetings held there were:

- 665 public meetings
- 505 private meetings
 - 492 private meetings had a virtual element
 - 13 private meetings were Committee Room attendance only, with no virtual element.

Overall, Committees presented 75 reports in 2021, setting out findings and recommendations in their respective policy areas.

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

- The **Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science** published a report in January 2021 entitled *The Impact of COVID-19 on Primary and Secondary Education* that included 10 key recommendations for immediate consideration and implementation.
- The **Committee on Budgetary Oversight** published its *Final Report on the framework for parliamentary engagement throughout the course of the budgetary cycle*, in February 2021. The report is the culmination of work undertaken by the Committee in response to an Order of the Dáil from 28 July 2020, which instructed the Committee to consider the overall framework for parliamentary engagement throughout the course of the budgetary cycle.
- The **Joint Committee on Agriculture and the Marine** published a report in March 2021 on *Issues impacting the Forestry Sector in Ireland*, identifying key issues and recommendations which spanned the following areas: the Mackinnon Report, the Programme for Government, Licensing, Ash Dieback, Legacy issues, and planning for the future.
- The **Committee on Budgetary Oversight** published its *Pre-Stability Programme Update Report 2021* in April. It marks the first time the Committee has engaged on the Stability Programme Update (SPU).
- The **Joint Committee on Health** published a report in April 2021 entitled *Report on addressing Vitamin D deficiency as a public health measure in Ireland*. The Committee heard evidence that Vitamin D deficiency is prevalent across the population and the report recommends that public health measures are

established to address that deficiency.

The Committee's report makes four recommendations.

- The **Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action** published a report in June 2021 entitled *Report on Reducing Emissions in the Transport Sector by 51% by 2030*, the first of a series of sector analyses on how Ireland will meet its target of a 51% reduction in emissions by 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050. This is in line with the *Climate Action and Low-Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2020*.



The Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action publishes its Report on 'Reducing Emissions in the Transport Sector by 51% by 2030', June 2021.

- The **Justice Committee** published a report in June 2021 on *Victim's Testimony in Cases of Rape and Sexual Assault*. The report found that the criminal justice processes and the services available for victims of sexual assault should adopt a more victim-centred approach and support victims throughout the entire process; and in doing so, more victims would feel encouraged to come forward to report such crimes.
- The **Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands** published a report in June 2021 entitled *Report on the Examination of Bogus Self-Employment*. The Joint Committee made

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

The **Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers (OPLA)** provides independent legal services to the Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach, members of the Houses, the Parliamentary Committees and the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission. The OPLA is comprised of four teams: The Parliamentary Services Legal Advisory team, the Corporate Legal Advisory team, the Private Members' Bills Legal Advisory team and the Parliamentary Legislative Drafting team.

The OPLA's Step-by-Step Guide for members outlines the services the OPLA provides to support them in their legislative work. The OPLA also assists members and Committees in scrutinising government policy through the provision of legal advice regarding government Bills.

One hundred and eleven PMBs were initiated in both Houses in 2021. Eight PMBs drafted by the OPLA were introduced in the Houses in 2021. Two PMBs were passed by the Houses in 2021.

Table 4: OPLA PMB Services	2021	2020
PMB proposals in receipt of legal advisory services	56	42
PMBs assigned to the legislative drafting service	36	32
PMB Pre-Committee Stage Scrutiny	2	–

The OPLA issued 639 parliamentary and corporate legal advices in 2021, including 145 legal advices and briefings to Committees. The number of

parliamentary Committee requests more than doubled in 2021 compared to 2020 (65) due to increased parliamentary Committee activity.

The **Parliamentary Budget Office (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 provided five briefings to the Committee on Budgetary Oversight in 2021. The **Committee on Budgetary Oversight** published its *Final Report on the framework for parliamentary engagement throughout the course of the budgetary cycle* in February 2021. The report proposed 18 actions to strengthen the framework for effective budgetary scrutiny.

The functions of the PBO, as set out in the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2021, 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 2021, the PBO produced 68 publications (briefings, commentaries, information notes, infographics and other publications). The PBO also introduced new data visualisation presentations to bring information to members in an accessible manner. Thirty-two data visualisation presentations were produced in 2021 and are regularly revised to provide up-to-date data and information to members.

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



'Pre-Budget 2022 PBO Commentary', published by the Parliamentary Budget Office on 15 September 2021.

The PBO published its Pre-Budget 2022 Commentary. The report produced for members of the Oireachtas, highlighted economic and fiscal areas of interest and concern in advance of Budget Day on 12 October 2021. The Report also included analysis on the various macroeconomic and fiscal topics, including labour market scarring, Ireland's dual economy and spending on Covid-19 related measures in 2021. This was followed up with a timely Preliminary PBO Review of Budget 2022 (on Budget night) and a more in-depth Post-Budget 2022 Commentary. The PBO provided an in-person members consultation stand during budget week.

In October 2021 the PBO published its Debt Sustainability Analysis Calculator and its user guide. This interactive (data visualisation) tool was produced for members of the Oireachtas to allow analysis of the sustainability of Ireland's public debt. It aims to support members in exploring the fiscal implications of different budgetary policies. The calculator builds on previous internal PBO models and publications.

The PBO also carried out some work on costing analysis, including a small but complex number of requests for new policies. It produced ready reckoners ahead of the Budget to inform on

projected Exchequer costs and yields of proposed policy changes. There has been capacity building in the PBO by acquiring a microsimulation model from the ESRI, in-house development of a public debt model, and other analytical tools for forecasting.

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

Table 5: Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO)

	2021	2020	2019
Publications	68	84	78
<i>Economic and Fiscal Commentaries</i>	4	3	5
<i>Briefing Papers</i>	6	7	13
<i>Information Notes</i>	20	49	43
<i>Infographics</i>	4	9	16
<i>Other</i>	2	1	1
<i>Original data visualisation presentations</i>	32	15	–
Updates to existing data visualisation Presentations	3	13	–
Briefings provided to the Dáil Budget Oversight Committee	5	3	9
Presentations at external Events (Speakers)	6	7	6

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

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

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).

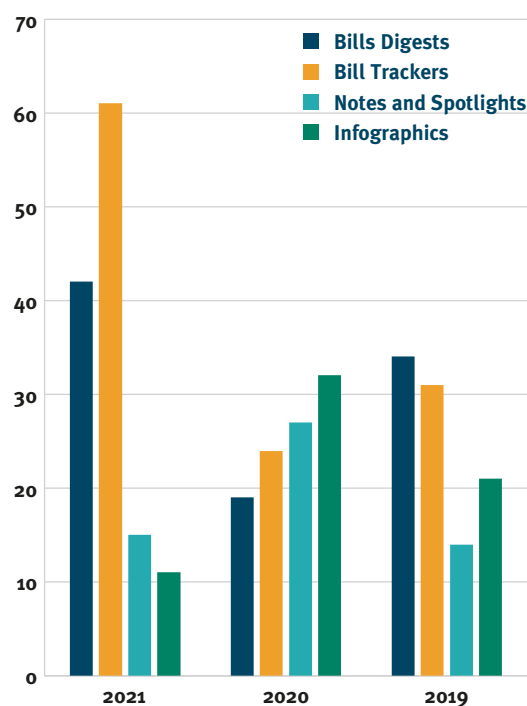
Both the Oireachtas Library and Parliamentary Research Service delivered member-focussed services including:

- Customised research, analysis, enquiry and reference services.
- Customised policy research for Private Members' Bills.
- Information skills training for political staff on conducting research on 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.

During 2021, the L&RS produced 42 Bills Digests and 60 Bills Tracker pages on Government Bills. The L&RS supported detailed scrutiny of five PMBs and pre-legislative scrutiny of 17 general schemes of government Bills for the Parliamentary Committees. It provided 278 customised research briefings and 908 information briefings for members and other users. The L&RS internal website provides access to all research and online subject resources to support parliamentary scrutiny and oversight.

The Oireachtas Library manages the procedures relating to the laying of documents before the Houses. During 2021, 2,128 documents were laid before the Houses and made available electronically to members and to the public.

Figure 7: Parliamentary Library Research Service Research Publications



In October 2021 the **Oireachtas Library** launched a new **Documents Laid portal** that facilitates the laying of documents in the Houses of the Oireachtas by Government Departments and agencies. New features include:

- A search for documents laid before one or both Houses and laid by a particular Department or Agency.
- Essential information about each document, including the corporate author, laying body and, for statutory documents, the legislation under which the document was laid as well as whether there is a motion attached to a document.

More than 94,000 documents have been laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas since the foundation of the State in 1922.

STRATEGY OUTCOME 2: An Open and Engaged Parliament

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

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STRATEGY OUTCOME 2: GOAL 1

Develop greater public engagement with the Houses of the Oireachtas

Numerous events took place (some virtually) throughout 2021. These events helped develop greater engagement with and raise awareness of the work of the Houses of the Oireachtas.

- On International Women's Day 2021, the Leas-Cheann Comhairle, Deputy Catherine Connolly, gave a video address. Deputy Connolly is the first female office holder in Dáil Éireann.
- In March 2021 the **Oireachtas Friends of Science and Technology** hosted an online talk on DNA sequencing, Covid-19 mutations and the Irish role in sequencing the Coronavirus.

Later in October 2021 it hosted an online talk on Creating our Future. Creating Our Future aims to give everyone in Ireland an opportunity to give ideas on how to make our country better for all. The Oireachtas Friends of Science and Technology is a cross-party group of TDs and Senators who aim to help the Houses of the Oireachtas engage with scientific research.



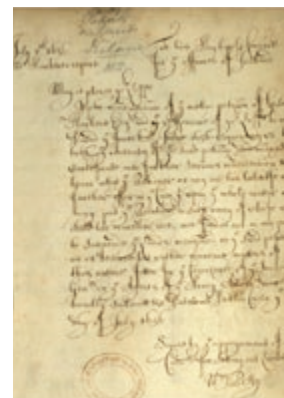
Meeting of Oireachtas Friends of Science and Technology.



Video address by the Leas-Cheann Comhairle, Catherine Connolly TD, on International Women's Day 2021.

- In June 2021 the Oireachtas Library's newly digitised collection of *The United Irishman* (the newspaper published by Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa in New York in the late 19th century) was featured at the American Conference for Irish Studies. A presentation was made to the conference with a special focus on *The United Irishman*. The newspaper is part of the library's Dublin Castle collection.
- In September 2021 the Houses of the Oireachtas Library and Archives joined the Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC), becoming the coalition's newest associate member. The Oireachtas Library has been serving parliamentarians since 1924 by delivering library and information services that support the work of both Houses of the Oireachtas, Committees and individual members.

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



The United Irishman newspaper, part of the Oireachtas Library's Dublin Castle Collection.

- The DPC is an international charitable foundation which supports digital preservation, helping its members around the world to deliver resilient long-term access to digital content and services through community engagement, targeted advocacy work, training and workforce development, capacity building, good practice and standards, and through good management and governance. Its vision is a secure digital legacy.
- In September 2021 the Oireachtas marked International Day of Sign Languages by publishing an ISL summary translation of the Irish Sign Language Act 2017. The Act, which commenced on 23 December 2020, recognises ISL as a native language of the State.
- In November 2021 the Library and Research Service (L&RS) marked Science Week by hosting a webinar on Ireland's first fully green batteries. The virtual seminar discussed how researchers in Ireland have found new ways to recycle waste battery products into novel materials for new batteries. The virtual seminar was held in partnership with Science Foundation Ireland (SFI).



A virtual webinar hosted by the L&RS in partnership with Science Foundation Ireland to mark Science Week 2021.

Approximately 100,000 people have visited Leinster House annually between 2017 and 2019. In March 2020 the Houses suspended public tours and restricted visitor access to Leinster House in compliance with Covid-19 health and safety measures.

These restrictions continued in 2021. The Houses welcomed 13,302 visitors to Leinster House during 2020, (including 6,503 visitors on Oireachtas tours in the period January to March). From April 2020 non-essential access was suspended. There were 1,874 visitors to Leinster House in 2021, for the purpose of attending meetings.

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

Table 6: Oireachtas Website¹

	2021	2020	2019
Visits to the Oireachtas website	1,231,016	2,298,617	2,338,948
Website page views	4,576,635	6,611,405	7,044,427

¹ In October 2020 changes to cookie consent on Oireachtas.ie in order to implement GDPR requirements resulted in a decrease in page views and visits to the Website for Q4 of 2020 and the 12 months of 2021.



Bilingual virtual tours of Leinster House were organised as part of Culture Night 2021.

The Twitter and Facebook accounts saw an increase in followers in 2021. The Commission’s Communications Strategy prioritises new media, including **social media** networks. The use of Facebook and Twitter livestreaming of parliamentary debates continues to raise public awareness of the work of the Houses. The Service’s social media team won four awards at the annual national social media awards in 2021 in the following State Organisation categories: Twitter; Instagram; Best In-House Social Media Team; and Grand Prix – Overall Sockies 2021 Winner. This was the fourth consecutive year that the social media team received Sockies awards.

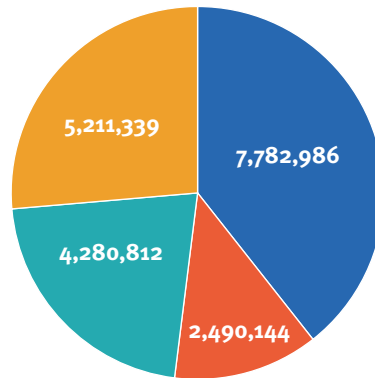
The **Oireachtas.ie** website contributes to greater engagement, access to parliamentary information, transparency and openness in relation to the business of the Houses. There were 1.2 million visits to the website in 2021. It is worth noting that people’s viewing behaviours have changed – there has been a shift to viewing live streams via Facebook or Twitter, or via the Oireachtas app.

Oireachtas livestreaming tells a clear story of significant consumption of live Oireachtas proceedings – over 19 million minutes were served to users between April and December 2021.



Sockies Awards won by the Service’s social media team in 2021.

Figure 8: Oireachtas Live Streaming (minutes served to viewers), April-December 2021



- Dáil Éireann
- Seanad Éireann
- Oireachtas Committees
- Oireachtas TV

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

Oireachtas TV features both live and replay content in addition to content developed by the Service or provided by broadcast partners. The Channel relays the business of the Houses to over 1.1 million homes across Ireland. It is available throughout Ireland on the following channels:

- Saorview Channel 22
- Virgin Media Channel 207
- Sky Channel 517
- eir Vision Channel 504
- Vodafone Channels 201, 207 (Dáil Éireann) and 208 (Seanad Éireann)

Oireachtas TV broadcasts major events and, since March 2016, 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 events and historical talks.

The Oireachtas TV Documentaries broadcast during 2021 included:

- *State of Flux – Part One*. In December 1921 and January 1922, Dáil Éireann debated the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the Dáil voted to ratify the Treaty by a small margin. In part one of a two-part drama documentary, *State of Flux*, actors delved into the lives of three of the key figures from the period (De Valera, Collins, MacSwiney) to create a dramatic re-enactment of the most important discussion in the history of Irish politics. In part two of *State of Flux*, the actors continued researching their roles as leading figures from the time, leading up to a dramatic re-enactment of key passages of the Debates at the Mansion House. This was broadcast in December 2021.
- *The Seven Ages of Noël Browne*, produced by Yellow Asylum Films and directed by acclaimed filmmaker Alan Gilsenan, this documentary is a portrayal of the life, achievements and controversies of one of Ireland's most iconic parliamentarians, Dr. Noël Browne.
- *House of Art*. This documentary explores the portraits in the State Art Collection at Leinster House, presented by artist and then president of the Royal Hibernian Academy, Mr. Mick O'Dea. O'Dea also presented a unique insight into his painting of the portrait of President Michael D. Higgins which hangs in Leinster House.

The *Oireachtas TV* Debates series broadcast during 2021 included:

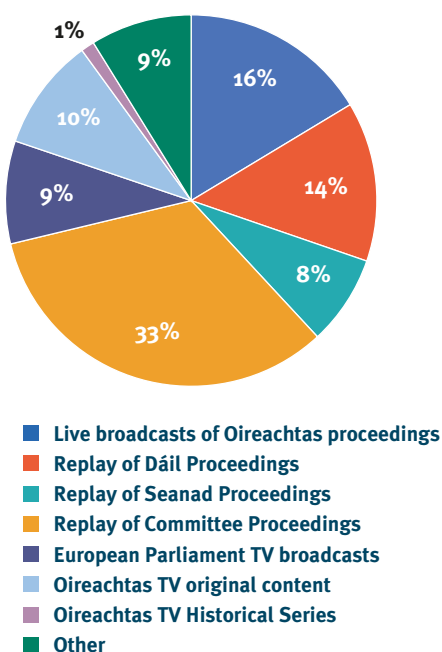
- The second budget of the 33rd Dáil – Budget 2022. Special interviews took place with the Ceann Comhairle, the Minister for Finance and the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.
- Unionism and the Northern Ireland Protocol.
- The historic introduction of carbon budgets in Ireland and the launch of the Climate Action Plan 2021.
- The international response to climate change and the EU Green Deal and the Irish response to the Climate Act 2021.
- Special reports on housing and inflation and the rising cost of living.
- The return to non-essential travel across all EU member states and the introduction of the EU Digital Covid Certificate.
- The Citizens' Assembly report on Gender Equality and their recommendations to promote gender equality in Ireland.

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

There is a constitutional imperative that the sittings of each House of the Oireachtas shall be held in public and it was essential therefore that the proceedings of the Houses continued to be broadcast during the pandemic. The Broadcasting Unit with the support of Service’s ICT Unit ensured ongoing coverage of the proceedings of the Houses and plans evolved and changed as the pandemic response changed. There were over 1,400 hours of live broadcasting of Oireachtas proceedings in 2021. Replay of Committee proceedings made up over 60% of total Oireachtas TV Replay in 2021.

In 2021 and for the six years previously, the Oireachtas Broadcasting Unit exceeded the targets set by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland (BAI) for the provision of subtitled and Irish Sign Language (ISL) content. This was supported by two ISL interpreters recruited under the Service’s **Irish Sign Language Strategy 2019-2021**.

Figure 9: Content of Oireachtas TV, 2021



In January 2021 the Houses marked UNESCO International Education Day. The Library and Research Service displayed the seminal 1965 report on Investment in Education which identified the need for major change and investment so that children could attend second level education in Ireland. This led eventually to the introduction in 1966 by Donogh O’Malley of free education.

The **Oireachtas Education Programme** continued to be delivered online throughout the year under restricted circumstances that mirrored the educational sector generally. 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.

While the target audience is second level students, more recently the programme has developed a number of initiatives for primary level students.

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

- The **Parliamentary Education Workshops** which support Junior Cycle, Transition Year and Leaving Certificate students studying Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) and Politics and Society continued online in 2021. From September to December 2021 there were 90 virtual workshops delivered to students around the country.

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



Members join a call with students from Loreto Secondary School, Balbriggan as part of an online Parliamentary Education Workshop.

Senior cycle Politics and Society students were invited to take part in two virtual experiences from their own classrooms:

- A **virtual tour of Leinster House** and a look at the live debates in the Dáil, Seanad and Committees. Students were then invited to participate in a workshop on parliamentary politics with time to discuss topics of their choice and ask questions (a 90-minute session approximately).
- A **Ceann go Ceann video conference** where students and teachers have the chance to speak directly to the Ceann Comhairle and ask questions about Irish politics and the Oireachtas (a 40-minute session approximately).
- **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.

In August 2021 the first Department of Education and Skills approved summer course for primary school teachers was delivered. The goal was to promote the work of the Houses of the Oireachtas amongst primary school teachers of 5th and 6th class pupils.

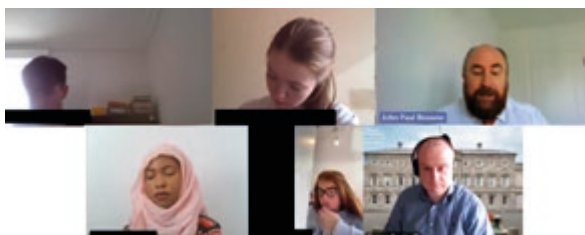
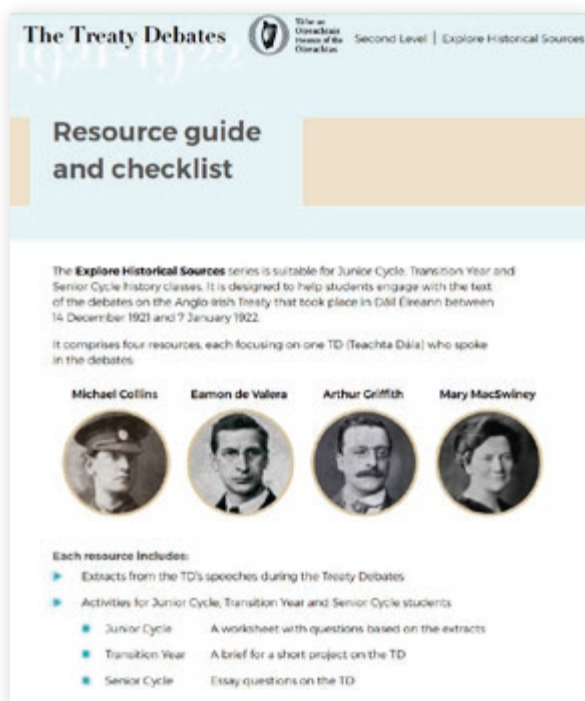


Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghaíl, TD takes part in a video call with students from Eureka Secondary School in Kells as part of the Ceann Go Ceann Parliamentary Education Programme.

- **Film Animations**, with the support of the BAI, were produced for senior cycle history students to illustrate the work of the Oireachtas since the foundation of the State.
- In 2021 as part of the Treaty Debates programme marking the Centenary of the Treaty Debates in Dáil Éireann, a suite of resources and worksheets were produced to help second level students explore the Debates. A nationwide essay competition was also undertaken.
- In 2021, the **Transition Year (TY) Student Work Experience Programme** was delivered online. The Houses of the Oireachtas hosted 50 transition year students for virtual work experience for one week in April and one week in November. Students from schools around the country, including the Aran Islands, participated. The first week was delivered in English and the second in Irish. The students learned about the Irish parliamentary system and about the types of work the Houses of the Oireachtas Service does to support the Dáil, Seanad and Committees. They met staff from the Human

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

Resources Section, The Press Office, the Library and Research Service (L&RS) and the Office of the Parliamentary Legal Advisers (OPLA). The OPLA provided information sessions on studying Law and career paths for Solicitors and Barristers.



Students participating virtually in the Houses of the Oireachtas Transition Year Programme.

As part of the Oireachtas openness and engagement initiative, the Service facilitates the **Oireachtas Student Placement Programme** for third level students. This is an educational programme where students have an opportunity to learn and apply that learning in working directly

with members of the Houses on work that is relevant to their studies. The student receives accreditation for the completion of the placement towards their final assessment in their course of study. The Service works closely with several institutions including the Institute of Public Administration (IPA), Technological University Dublin (TUD), University College Cork (UCC), National University of Ireland Galway (NUIG) and University of Limerick (UL) to facilitate student placements. In response to Covid-19, all placements for the 2020/21 academic year operated remotely with 31 students participating in the programme.

In June 2021 the Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghaíl, TD, launched **Straitéis na Gaeilge, 2021**, the Irish Language Strategy for the Houses of the Oireachtas. The Strategy aims to expand the range of Irish language supports and resources available to members and staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service and help it develop into a functioning bilingual organisation.

Straitéis na Gaeilge, 2021 builds on the success of the 2018 Straitéis. It focuses, in particular, on increasing the use of the Irish language in both the Dáil and the Seanad. The new Straitéis also aims to increase the cohort of Irish-speaking staff in the Service.

The first Straitéis na Gaeilge was launched in 2018 as part of the **Bliain na Gaeilge** initiative. It facilitated and encouraged the use of Irish by members and staff by providing Irish language business supports including Bills glossaries and the Irish language library, **Taisce na Leabhar**.

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

Straitéis na Gaeilge, 2021

Ár bhFís

Timpeallacht fháilteach a chruthú ina mbíonn deis ag daoine an Ghaeilge a úsáid.

Ár nAidhm

Tá sé i gceist againn forbairt de réir a chéile chun gurb eagraíocht dhátheangach fheidhmiúil sinn - eagraíocht ina n-éascófar go gníomhach do Chomhaltaí Thithe an Oireachtais agus don phobal an Ghaeilge a úsáid ina ngnó laethúil.

Ár gCuspóirí

I dteannta ár ngealltanas faoinár Scéim Teanga, tá sé i gceist na cuspóirí straitéiseacha seo a leanas a úsáid chun ár bpríomhaidhm a chur ar aghaidh agus chun deiseanna a thabhairt do chách an Ghaeilge a úsáid agus taitneamh a bhaint aisti, gan beann ar an inniúlacht atá acu inti.

Our Vision

To create a welcoming environment in which the use of the Irish language is enabled.

Our Aim

We aim to progressively develop into a functioning bilingual organisation, in which Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas and the public will be actively facilitated in using the Irish language in their day-to-day business.

Our Objectives

Together with our commitments under our Language Scheme, the following strategic objectives are intended to advance our key aim and to provide opportunities to all to use and enjoy the Irish language, regardless of their level of competency in it.

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 support members in the ongoing development of Interparliamentary relations.

Since March 2020 members' inter-parliamentary activities (including visits by distinguished visitors, visits by Committee delegations and engagement with interparliamentary assemblies, networks and associations) have been facilitated mainly through virtual engagements. There has been an overall increase in meetings of parliamentary delegations.



His Excellency, President Volodymyr Zelensky, President of Ukraine addressed a joint sitting of both Houses of the Oireachtas via video link from Kyiv, 6 April 2022.



Her Excellency, Larysa Gerasko, ambassador of Ukraine to Ireland with Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghail, TD, at Leinster House following President Zelensky's address, 6 April 2022.

European Parliamentary Week brings together parliamentarians from EU member states, candidate countries and observer countries to discuss economic, budgetary, environmental and social matters.

In February 2021 European Parliamentary Week took place by video conference. Discussions were dominated by the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on EU economies and its recovery. Parliamentarians debated the preparations of national recovery and resilience plans as well as investing in climate, social and economic priorities.

Parliamentary Friendship Groups give the members of the Houses opportunities to engage with legislators from other countries and enhance relations with other parliaments. Covid-19 impacted these visits in 2021.

During 2021, the Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach held the following bilateral parliamentary meetings:

- The Ceann Comhairle held an online meeting with his Chinese counterpart, the Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Thirteen National People's Congress, His Excellency Mr Li Zhanshu, who was joined by a number of high-ranking political figures and officials within the NPC structure. The Ceann Comhairle was joined by the Chairs of the Agriculture, Arts and Foreign Affairs Committees, and by the Sinn Féin spokesman on education matters. Issues discussed included strengthening bilateral relations, the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic, increased trade, notably Irish agricultural exports to China, and continued success of Irish culture in China. Noting Ireland's current membership of the UN Security Council, the Ceann Comhairle urged closer, practical, bilateral cooperation.

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

- On 23 October 2021, Congresswoman Mary Gay Scanlon, Democrat representative from Pennsylvania, met with Oireachtas members. Due to Covid restrictions, the meetings were held outside Leinster House under rules in place at that time. Congresswoman Mary Gay Scanlon met with Senator Fiona O'Loughlin, Chair of the Oireachtas Women's Caucus, and the Cathaoirleach, Senator Mark Daly. Bilateral relations, including in trade, education and tourism were discussed, as well as ways to strengthen the friendship group engagement between the two countries.
- On 27 October 2021, the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, His Excellency Dr Frank-Walter Steinmeier, held a meeting with the Ceann Comhairle in Leinster House on the occasion of his State visit to Ireland. Also in attendance were senior members of Oireachtas management, and the Irish and German Ambassadors. A range of issues were discussed, notably the UK's withdrawal from the EU and implications for both Germany and Ireland. In this regard, the Ceann Comhairle acknowledged and expressed his warm gratitude to Germany for its support to Ireland during and after the Brexit process. The Ceann Comhairle also provided the Federal President with an overview of recent developments on the political question of Irish unity, noting recent border polls on a possible future referendum on this matter.



Deputé Alexandre Holroyd and Senator Hélène Conway-Mouret of the France-Ireland Parliamentary Friendship Group were welcomed to Leinster House by Chair of the group Richard Bruton TD and other members.



Ms. Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Belarussian Opposition Leader, was welcomed by Cathaoirleach Senator Mark Daly, and Senator Regina Doherty.



The Cathaoirleach, Senator Mark Daly, launches Seanad100 Programme – Minority Voices, Major Changes, to commemorate and celebrate the centenary of Seanad Éireann.

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

Table 7: International and Interparliamentary Functions	2021	2020	2019
Outgoing Parliamentary Delegations¹			
IPU General Assemblies and related Meetings	5	10	6
PACE Plenary and Committee Meetings	68	58	38
<i>Virtual meetings</i>	56	56	–
<i>Meetings in person</i>	12	2	38
Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE	15	13	8
Speaker-led delegations and bilateral meetings	1	–	10
Incoming Parliamentary Delegations			
Speaker-led Delegations	–	1	4
Bilateral meetings	1	1	16
Friendship Groups			
Incoming Parliamentary Friendship Groups	5	1	9
Outgoing Parliamentary Friendship Groups	–	–	3

¹ Outgoing Delegations include speaker-led delegations by the Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach.



The **Seanad Special Select Committee on the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union** published its Interim Report on the Impacts of Brexit in July 2021. The report was a result of engagement with stakeholders over 20 separate hearings between December 2020 and June 2021. The report covers 6 key themes and includes 53 recommendations and conclusions from the evidence presented to the Committee. This was followed by the final *Report on the Impacts of Brexit* in December 2021. The final report made 62 recommendations across a range of areas

examined by Senators with stakeholders in Ireland, Northern Ireland, the UK, the EU and the United States.

The recommendations cover:

- Trade flows and customs
- Infrastructure at Ireland's ports
- The Rules of Origin
- The Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland
- Citizens' Rights in Northern Ireland Post Brexit
- Democratic deficit in Northern Ireland
- Mutual Recognition of Qualifications
- Education and Research
- Cross-Border Healthcare
- Data Flows
- Future Relations Between Ireland and the UK and the EU and the UK; and
- Dispute resolution.

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



Virtual meeting of the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) hosted by the Houses of the Oireachtas, February 2021.

The **Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence** published a report in July entitled *Report on Demolitions and Displacements in the occupied Palestinian Territory*. The 104-page report follows a series of meetings held by the Committee into reports of displacements and demolitions in the occupied Palestinian territory.

This Joint Committee also published a report in March 2021 entitled *Report on the Distribution of COVID-19 Vaccines to Developing Countries*. The report makes a series of recommendations – including a call on government to formally endorse the World Health Organisation’s Covid-Technology Access Pool (C-Tap) initiative to help achieve equitable, global access to Covid-19 vaccines.

In February 2021 the Oireachtas hosted the first full virtual meeting of the **British Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA)** which was addressed by the Taoiseach. The meeting marked the first plenary for BIPA since the Covid-19 pandemic began and the first since the end of the UK’s transition from the EU. The theme of the event was *2021: Challenges and Changes*. Established in 1990, BIPA’s membership includes representatives from the UK Parliament, the Houses of the Oireachtas,

the Scottish Parliament, the Northern Ireland Assembly, Senedd Cymru, the Welsh Parliament, the High Court of Tynwald (Isle of Man) and the States of Guernsey and Jersey.

The **Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO)** continued to develop relationships with international networks of Independent Fiscal Institution (IFIs) and other Parliamentary Budget Offices, while developing further interaction with bodies such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and EU institutions. During 2021, PBO staff presented at six virtual events for international parliamentarians and parliamentary staff:

- Inter Pares (Parliaments in Partnership): Financial Scrutiny Workshop with the Parliament of Trinidad and Tobago
- Inter Pares (Parliaments in Partnership): Bhutan Women Parliamentary Caucus (BWPC) Workshop for Parliamentarians on Gender Scrutiny of Legislation, Policy and Budget with the Parliament of Bhutan
- Evidence provided at the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Finance
- European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD) – How to strengthen parliamentary control over the budget process
- European Parliament Seminar: Exchange of views with Parliamentary Budget Offices and the OECD
- OECD knowledge sharing workshop on Parliamentary Budget Office’s: Ukraine Parliament

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

The **Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers (OPLA)** also continued to develop its interparliamentary relationships during 2021. The OPLA made two contributions to the International Journal of Parliamentary Studies on:

- Parliaments and Political Conflicts Before the Court – an Irish Case Study: *The role of the Irish courts in determining conflicts between Parliament and individuals*; and
- *The Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers in the Houses of the Oireachtas – History, Functions and Recent Key Parliamentary Legal Issues.*

The OPLA also made a contribution to the Routledge Handbook of Parliamentary Administrations: *Parliamentary Administration in Ireland.*

In March 2021 the **Oireachtas Library** joined the *JSTOR Open Community Collections Initiative* (an electronic archive of leading journals across many academic disciplines), becoming the first organisation from the Republic of Ireland to take part in this international project.

JSTOR is a digital library providing free and subscription access to research articles, journals, books and primary sources. The Open Community Collections Initiative is a new collaborative project between JSTOR and libraries, archives and museums. More than 11,000 items from the Oireachtas Library's digital historical collections are publicly available via JSTOR, including the Dublin Castle Collection, the former reference library of the Chief Secretary's Office at Dublin Castle. The collections contain a wide variety of pamphlets, periodicals, cartoons, maps, books and original manuscripts dating from the late 16th to the early 20th century. The collections have already been accessed by people in more than 80 countries who have viewed and downloaded more than 1,500 items.



Goal 3: Enhance engagement with Government Departments

STRATEGY OUTCOME 2: GOAL 3

Enhance engagement with Government Departments

During 2021, 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.
- Government Departments on the passage of legislation through the Houses, the processing of parliamentary questions, and the daily business of the Dáil and Seanad.
- Government Departments and public bodies on information for Parliamentary Committees and attendance at Committee meetings.
- The Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) engages with the Department of Finance, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and with other government department and bodies in relation to information on public finances. This provides the PBO with important insights into spending patterns for its own analysis and to better inform members of the Houses. Access to data from Government Departments is also essential to underpin robust budgetary analysis and costings work.
- Five workshops were held in January, July and September with 91 attendees across eight Government Departments. The workshops ranged from assistance with publishing legislation, pre-legislative scrutiny, pre-Committee Stage scrutiny, submitting amendments and processing of Bills through to enactment, to appearances before Committees and obtaining briefing papers.
- Staff of the Bills Office contributed, as subject matter experts, to the development of training packages on the legislative process via OneLearning.
- A briefing session was run for 180 Administrative Officers on the legislative process, as part of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform's Administrative Officer Graduate Development Programme.

A mix of formal training interventions and “just in time” training and support by all procedural sections with Government Departments also took place during 2021.

A strategic objective of the **Parliamentary Research Service** is increasing its engagement with the wider academic community. The L&RS continues to develop links specifically with the science research community through seminars, secondments and outreach activities. It has developed strategic partnerships with the **Science Foundation Ireland (SFI)** and the **Royal Irish Academy**.

- The L&RS is a host organisation under the **SFI Public Service Fellowship Programme**. The Fellowship provides an opportunity for *Researchers in Residence* to see how the practical workings of the Houses of the Oireachtas operates and ways in which they can be more effective in communicating their research to members of the Oireachtas. The Fellowship provides the L&RS and members the opportunity to find out about emerging

Goal 3: Enhance engagement with Government Departments

research in science and technology and the implications, impact and opportunities that science creates.

- During 2021, six SFI Fellows from across different disciplines were seconded to the L&RS for three months under the Programme. The research areas included in the Programme reflect the themes chosen by the Parliamentary Research Service for its topical research programme 2019-2021 as set out in the **Parliamentary Research Service Strategic Plan.**

The **L&RS** participates in parliamentary research networks such as the *Inter-Parliamentary Research and Information Network (IPRIN)*, the *International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA)*, *Research Services for Parliaments Section (IFLAPARL)*, the *European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD)* and the *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)*.

The **Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO)** further developed links with government departments by establishing a process to receive additional information on a monthly basis on departmental spending with a selected number of departments. This provides the PBO with important insights into spending patterns during the Covid-19 pandemic for its own analysis and to better inform members of the Houses. There have also been specific papers that have leveraged departmental or agencies' data and contributed to relationship-building with line departments. This also includes engagement with some line departments, such as Social Protection, to access data for policy costing.

STRATEGY OUTCOME 3: A Digital Parliament

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

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

During 2021, the Oireachtas continued the delivery of its Digital Transformation Programme – *Enabling Democracy – Work that Matters*. This programme 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 staff of the business units to meet evolving parliamentary challenges and corporate business needs. The Programme is led by the Management Board and its Technology and Digital Transformation (TDT) Strategic Committee, which met 15 times in 2021. The delivery is supported by the Oireachtas Digital Network, a Change Management Team, and the ICT Service Desk and Support Teams.

Digital Transformation is enhancing the technical landscape of the Oireachtas. The Transformation programme focuses on meeting the needs and expectations of members and staff by providing them with the latest technologies and tools to do their work. It also focuses strongly on providing the citizen with greater access and opportunities to engage with the work of the Oireachtas 365 days a year.

The **Digital Transformation Work Plan for 2021** was delivered, showing significant improvements across the organisation. The TDT Strategic Committee, with the support of the Management Board, maintained high-level oversight of the 2021 Digital Transformation Work Plan, with a particular focus on Covid-19 and cyber security. The ICT Security Team took significant strategic steps to strengthen the security landscape for the Oireachtas in 2021, and this work continues. During the past year there was ongoing and focused cyber security communication with all in the Leinster House community to raise awareness of the possible cyber risks.

Remote working and supporting sittings offsite during the Covid-19 pandemic would not have been possible without the commencement of the Digital Transformation Work Plan in 2018.

The Digital Transformation Change Management Team conducts regular surveys to gain insights from staff on the impact of digital transformation on their work.

In June the results of the fifth Digital Transformation Survey were published on the Plinth (the survey was conducted in April 2021). The results of this survey were compared with the first Digital Transformation Survey conducted in December 2018.



Three key insights from this Survey are shown above.

- The Oireachtas is a 'Digital' Place to Work.**
The survey showed an increase of 29% (from 36% to 65%) of those who agree the Oireachtas is a 'digital' place to work.
- I believe the Oireachtas Digital Transformation will positively impact my day-to-day job.**
The survey showed an increase of 22% (from 62% to 84%) of those who believe the Oireachtas Digital Transformation will positively impact their day-to-day job.
- I have the right tools and technologies (email, wi-fi, mobile devices, document sharing and device mobility) to do my job effectively.**
The survey showed an increase of 48% (from 33% to 81%) of those who agree that they have the right tools and technologies to do their job effectively.

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

An Integrated Digital Parliament is a key goal of the Houses of the Oireachtas Strategic Plan 2019-2021.

The phased development and delivery of the **Digital Parliament Programme** continued throughout 2021. The objective of this programme, which is overseen by the Digital Parliament Programme Board, is to digitise existing processes and ways of working collaboratively, as well as providing modern tools to support members and staff when carrying out their work. As the transformation progresses, the programme will set the foundations for future functionality and provision of further services to members, staff and citizens.

In January 2021 the Digital Parliament Research Team (established following the dissolution of the 32nd Dáil in January 2020) presented the results of Phase 2 of the Digital Parliament Research Project. The objective of the research team was to research the development of technologies and innovation in parliaments across the world with a view to providing an evidence base which could inform the digital transformation project moving forward. A further objective of the research was to learn from the successes and failures of other digital transformation projects carried out in other parliaments. Phase 2 of this research focused on organisational structure and knowledge management processes. This research will continue to inform Digital Transformation in the Houses of the Oireachtas.

Go-Live of the **Business Committee Report Module** took place in April 2021. This Module gives Business Committee staff the ability to create and circulate Business Committee Reports, Rapporteur's Reports and Order of Business Reports supporting Dáil business. The module:

- has the ability to include items on the Business Committee Report from other Digital Parliament modules
- ensures all reports produced by the Business Committee are stored centrally and accessible to the relevant business users
- provides accurate and up to date Dáil business information to members
- offers a significant time reduction in end-to-end process of drafting and circulating Business Committee Reports, Order of Business Document and Rapporteur Speaking Notes.

In June 2021 the **Committee In-Meeting Module** went live on the Oireachtas Procedural System. This module enhances how events are captured during a Committee meeting. Moving away from paper processes, it provides a means for staff of the Committee Secretariat to electronically record Committee attendance, create divisions and capture sitting data in order to support the procedural process.

In November 2021 the Houses of the Oireachtas launched a new Dáil Business website, this replaces the printed Dáil Order Paper.

The Dáil Business website provides 24/7 access to the sitting schedule. One can search for items of business, pin them and share them on social media. The Dáil Business website can be accessed on all devices and can generate a printable PDF.

Goal 1: Transform the technology used by the Houses and Committees

Information for the current sitting week is available on the website, including:

- The schedule of business
- Bills scheduled for consideration and those that have progressed to Seanad Éireann
- Motions scheduled for discussion
- Money messages from the Government relating to proposed expenditure in Bills and Estimates.

The Dáil Business website marks a significant milestone in the Oireachtas' Digital Transformation journey.

The Oireachtas vision for the Digital Transformation Programme is to provide an open and accessible Oireachtas for all, transformed by intuitive, collaborative and integrated digital solutions.

Áis-linn, which is a portal to provide services to members, is in development and will go live in 2022. The portal development is a multi-phased delivery with new features and services being added throughout the phases. The Portal has been designed to be consistent with all existing procedural system modules. Áis-linn will act as a single “digital one stop shop” for members to manage and conduct their parliamentary business transactions.

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 overarching objective, Enabling Democracy. This objective is at the centre of the strategy and is supported across all seven elements of the programme. The **Informing the Citizen** element of the Digital Transformation Programme focuses on improving transparency and public access to the work of the Houses of the Oireachtas.

As the work progresses, the **Informing the Citizen** programme is encompassing a number of projects to help raise awareness of and engagement with the Houses.

The **Oireachtas.ie** website is a vital, public-facing tool for the organisation that serves up content to over 40,000 users per week. It is a tool that evolves with users and their requirements. The website contributes to easier access to parliamentary information and transparency and openness in the business of the Houses. The functionality, layout and presentation of content on the website are continually enhanced. The Oireachtas.ie **Maintenance and Enhancement** project includes the planning and implementation of ongoing improvements to the website so that it continues to support users' requirements and improve communications. In 2021 there were further accessibility improvements and additional layout and styling options for how the web team present content. The ongoing management and

enhancement of the website is an important business process that requires continuous investment and focus.

There has also been a shift generally to viewing Oireachtas proceedings via Facebook or Twitter, or via the Oireachtas app. The Oireachtas Twitter and Facebook accounts have seen an increase in followers in 2021. **Oireachtas livestreaming** tells a clear story of significant consumption of live Oireachtas proceedings – over 19 million minutes were served to users between April and December 2021. The advances made in terms of live streaming is a significant positive step – live consumption of Oireachtas proceedings is very visible.

The publications of the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) are available on the Oireachtas.ie website, including its Expenditure Analysis Series of publications. Members of the Houses, staff and the public are invited to receive automatic notifications of the latest PBO publications.

In March 2021 the PBO published a new web page of guidance and analysis relevant to scrutinising the Estimates for Public Scrutiny. The Scrutiny of Estimates page brings together all the PBO's information and analysis on the Estimates for Public Services and how Dáil members scrutinise them. This includes:

- notes on the Revised Estimates which Dáil Select Committees can expect to scrutinise
- infographics on the role of the Oireachtas in the scrutiny of Estimates, and
- focused information on performance budgeting

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

The Revised Estimates Volume for the Public Service is published by Government in mid-December each year. It provides more detail on the financial allocations that were announced in the Budget along with performance targets and other information.

The PBO has enhanced its data visualisation output and provided information and analysis through various tools and technologies (Flourish, Tableau). This highlights the effort by the PBO to make

technical material more accessible to members, Oireachtas staff, and the public to improve the transparency of budget information.

The **Informing the Citizen** element of the Digital Transformation Programme aims to facilitate easier public access to the work of the Houses of the Oireachtas and allow complete recording and categorisation of all Parliamentary activities.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

The Digital Transformation Programme will facilitate an open, accessible and efficient Oireachtas.



**TECHNOLOGY
IN THE CHAMBER**



**INFORMING
THE DEBATE**



**DIGITAL
PARLIAMENT**



**DATA ANALYTICS
& INTEGRATION**



**INFORMING
THE CITIZEN**



**CORPORATE
ORGANISATION**

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

Microsoft (MS) Teams was introduced to the organisation in March 2020 at an accelerated pace to support staff working from home. It has been widely adopted across the Oireachtas and has played a vital role in enabling and supporting remote working. Seven MS Teams summer training sessions were held between May and August 2021 to increase overall user confidence. These sessions were held as a result of the first MS Teams survey conducted in 2020 where users expressed interest in increasing their knowledge on a number of Teams features. The resulting confidence in users' ability has shown an increased use of features with the second survey, in September 2021, finding that file collaboration has increased by 29%, and that the use of applications in Teams is 73% higher than at the time of the first survey.

- In 2021 nearly 48,000 virtual meetings were held on MS Teams, this compares to 21,121 virtual meetings in the 10 months from March to December 2020.
- There were 136,792 Teams calls in 2021, and overall, since MS Teams was introduced over 196,000 Teams calls have been made.
- There were over 1.7 million chat messages in 2021.

Using MS Teams has helped ensure that the business of the Houses could continue safely during the pandemic. It also ensured that the sittings of the Houses could be held in two locations – offsite at the CCD and on-site in Leinster House. The **MS Teams Mobile App** was also provided to all users.

The **ICT Service Desks** continue to support the day-to-day ICT operations and the roll out of digital transformation applications. Overall, the ICT Helpdesk provided support for 23,709 calls in 2021, up from 22,819 calls in 2020. This increase can be attributed to changing work patterns for staff due to Covid-19, the move to homeworking and a consequential increase in the requirement for IT support.

The Oireachtas Digital Strategy, in line with the Public Service ICT Strategy, 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 Office of Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) Build to Share (BTS) applications programme.

Table 8: ICT Helpdesk Support

	2021	2020	2019
Support provided for calls from staff of the Service	13,105	9,655	8,711
Support provided for calls from members and their staff	10,604	13,164	11,217
Total support provided for calls	23,709	22,819	19,928

Goal 3: Modernise our Technical Infrastructure

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service availed of the initiative in 2019 when it adopted the **BTS eFOI system** which has streamlined the management of FOI requests by the Records Management Unit and FOI decision makers.

In 2020, the Oireachtas adopted the **BTS eRisk system** which went live in March 2020 with the support of the OGCIO. This was rolled out across the Houses of the Oireachtas Service and streamlines the risk management process.

During 2021, following a pilot project at the end of 2020, the **BTS eDocs system** was successfully rolled out across the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The system is a document and records management system that enables the Service to manage its records effectively.

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

The continuing challenge for the Service during 2021 was keeping the parliamentary community safe from the impacts of the Covid-19 virus while ensuring that the business of the Houses and their Committees could continue. Health and safety measures continued to impact on how the Service did its work.

The **HR Unit** continued throughout 2021 to provide critical services to all staff and managers working remotely and on-site under Covid-19 restrictions. HR focused on ensuring that staff and managers had up-to-date information on remote working policies and other resources to manage evolving issues and to keep the parliamentary community connected while staff adjusted to different work patterns and situations. The aim was to promote a safe and healthy working environment. During this time HR continued to work on plans for the **Blended Working Policy** in line with central policies in this area. The ICT Unit also provided a series of online training modules and resources, with a particular emphasis on cyber-security and awareness to equip staff to communicate and work safely and effectively online. The Civil Service Employee Assistance Service **Information Guide on Mental Health and Wellbeing in the Workplace**, aimed at promoting positive mental health and

wellbeing in the workplace was circulated by the HR Unit in July and the Government's plan for the final phase of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic was circulated in August – **Reframing the Challenge: Continuing Recovery and Connections.**

In tandem, the HR Unit continued to implement the Service's **HR People Strategy 2019-2021**. The People Strategy sets out actions to ensure staff have the resources, knowledge, skills and supports they need to provide parliamentary services to the highest standard. The Strategy is aligned with the Houses of the Oireachtas Strategic Plan, the Civil Service Renewal Plan and the Civil Service People Strategy. After three years, progress has been made in developing the Service's strategic HR capability, recruiting and retaining high-performing staff, developing our leaders and managers, and promoting a culture of ongoing learning and employee engagement. The next strategic plan period will focus on supporting the implementation of change, including the Digital Transformation programme, and continuing our efforts to become a more diverse and inclusive organisation.

The **Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2023**, approved by the Management Board in December 2020, was launched on 11 March 2021. The launch event included a workshop on Wellbeing in the Workplace by the Health and Safety Authority. The Health and Wellbeing Group actively support the HR Unit in developing initiatives to support staff wellbeing and throughout 2021 work on the implementation plan for the Strategy has been

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

ongoing. The strategic objectives and implementation plan are in line with the Civil Service Health and Wellbeing Framework, launched in September 2021.



The Service's **Health and Wellbeing Group**, which was set up in 2019 with the aim of bringing together staff to contribute to a Health and Wellbeing Initiative, also provided advice, online seminars and information to staff on maintaining their health and wellbeing during 2021 and the pandemic period. Events in 2021 included an update on the Irish Sign Language Strategy and webinars on the Psychology of Resilience and Bullying and Cyberbullying.

The monthly newsletter developed by the **Equality Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Team** issued monthly from September 2020 to keep staff connected during Covid-19. A new interactive online newsletter was developed in November 2021 with an expanded focus and is now issued as a quarterly edition.

Keeping connected and maintaining ongoing social and work-related contact was promoted strongly throughout the year. The Clerk of the Dáil and Secretary General sent a weekly message to all staff of the Service as well as video messages of support from the Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach. These messages gave updates on what was happening each week in the Houses, the Committees and on the ongoing arrangements that were continually evolving in the Houses regarding the Covid-19 pandemic response.

At the end of 2021, the total number of staff (Civil Servants, State Industrial, Printers and Office Holders' staff) employed by the Service was 636.6 FTEs – the total number of persons was 655. During 2021, 88 staff joined the Service and 41 staff left through external promotions, career breaks and retirements. Thirty-four Service staff were promoted either through internal or external competitions during 2021.

Filling vacancies and recruitment for new posts during 2021 was challenging. Workforce planning focused on recruitment to fill critical posts through internal and external competitions. In 2021, HR Unit conducted 5 internal competitions, 16 external competitions and 39 internal mobility staff moves. The external competitions were primarily for the filling of posts requiring specialist expertise such as Irish Language Interpreters, Economists and Legal Research and Advisory Counsel posts.

The **Learning and Development (L&D) Strategy 2019-2021** has been delivered in conjunction with the HR People Strategy. The strategy has been delivered against the backdrop of a rapidly changing operating environment. The Service faces increasing challenges in providing the services required to support a 21st century

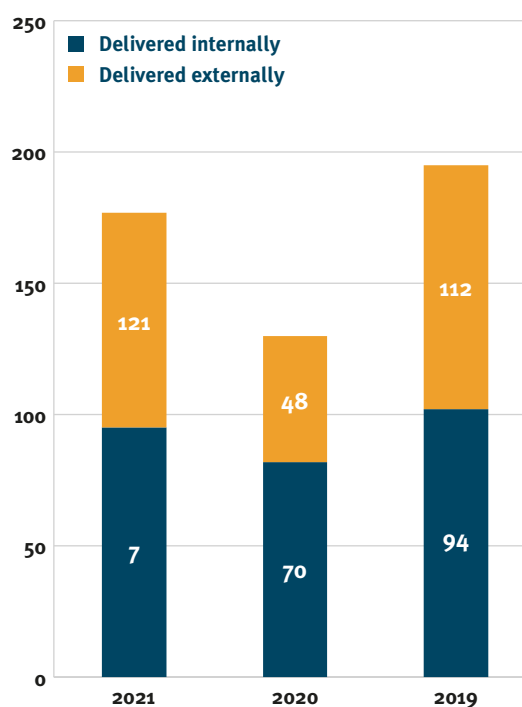
Goal 1: Develop a Parliamentary Community that is valued, engaged, and supported

Parliament, and the parliamentary model has changed radically in recent years. Dáil reform and organisational change have had a significant impact on structure, strategic management, operations and work practices in the Oireachtas Service. The Service has recruited a large number of new staff in recent years. The key challenge is to capture the knowledge and expertise of existing staff and ensure new staff members are properly equipped to deliver efficiently in key areas. This is the cornerstone of succession planning policies.

The Strategy has also supported the development of competencies through programmes such as Leadership Coaching, Mentoring and High-Performance Teams that are focused on performance improvement. The ultimate aim, highlighted in the strategy, is that everyone who works in the Oireachtas Service is given the opportunity to develop their full potential and attain the skills to ensure the Service remains a high-performing organisation.

Learning and development activities moved online in 2020 due to Covid-19 restrictions. There were 772 attendances at 128 courses delivered virtually during 2021 compared with 1,017 attendances at 118 courses in 2020. The Service also promotes and supports the central Refund/Advance of Fees Scheme. Thirty-seven Service staff pursued courses under the scheme in 2021. The Service continued to avail of the **OneLearning** facility (Learning and Development for the Irish Civil Service). OneLearning prepared online learning modules on remote working, the wellbeing of staff and on cyber-security. These modules were available to all Service staff.

Figure 10: Staff Training and Development



Members' HR provides members of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann with a range of HR services in respect of their staff to support their parliamentary work. Members and parties are the employers of these staff and have obligations to them as employers. The Unit 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 in relation to issues affecting political staff. At the end of 2021, there was 451 FTE members' and party staff employed under the *Scheme of Secretariat Assistance* and Members' HR processed 155 new hires in the twelve months of 2021.

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

Members' HR Services, through its **Pensions Unit**, also provides services for the administration of members' pensions under the *Ciste Pinsean Scheme* and under the *Single Public Sector Pension Scheme*. There were 329 former members on the Ciste Pinsean payroll at the end of December 2021. Additionally, the Pensions Unit provides pension services for the staff of the Service. Eighteen pensions were processed in 2021.

The **Members' Services One Stop Shop** provides members 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. The Public Representation Allowance (PRA) forms part of the Parliamentary Standard Allowance (PSA) system of parliamentary expenses for members. An independent audit is carried out annually on payments claimed under the scheme and the results of the audit presented to the Management Board and to the Commission's Audit Committee.

The Oireachtas Printing Facility provides a printing service for members of both Houses and qualifying parties. A Service Level Agreement (SLA) is in place in relation to the provision of printing facilities. The Print Users' Council oversees the operation of the SLA and makes recommendations, as appropriate, to the Commission on the print facility. The Printing Facility completed 1,119 print orders in 2021 which was down on previous years.

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

The Service's main objective in 2021 was to provide a high level of service while protecting the members of the parliamentary community during the Covid-19 pandemic; and while the vaccination programme gathered momentum the spread of the virus was still a significant risk. In this regard the Houses of the Oireachtas Service's **Covid-19 Response Plan** provided assurance that the advice of the HSE and the Department of Health in relation to the pandemic was taken seriously. The **Covid-19 Compliance Team** with the full support of the Commission and Management Board communicated on best practice with all in the Leinster House community and supported risk assessments of the parliamentary workplace.

Throughout 2021, the **HR Unit, the Facilities Management Team and the Covid-19 Compliance Team** continued to provide members, political staff, Service managers and staff with regular updated guidance, information and instruction on Covid-19 arrangements and responsibilities that were continually evolving. The **Communications Unit** updated the Service's Intranet, *the Plinth*, on a regular basis with HR Office Notices on Covid-19 matters, and with updates from the HSE. The Service continued to follow central advice on preparing for and dealing with any Covid-19 cases which may have arisen in the parliamentary complex. All measures and precautions advised

by the Government, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) and National Public Health Emergency Team (NPHE) were put in place to protect the welfare of the parliamentary community.

Key measures put in place from January 2021 included:

- The Introduction of a new **voluntary Covid-19 Code of Conduct** and updated Face Mask policy by the Secretary General, the Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach.
- The ongoing review of the weekly schedule with the Dáil Business Committee while maintaining level 5 restrictions in the first quarter of 2021.
- Notification from the Training Unit on the requirement to complete **Covid-19 Induction Training** for everyone working on-site in the Leinster House complex or the CCD.
- An invitation to staff of the Service to complete an online home-working risk assessment questionnaire including the option of booking a one-to-one video consultation with a specialist Ergonomics Assessor.
- **Protocols on the use of catering facilities** were circulated by Members' Services.
- At the Business Committee meeting on 25 November, it was agreed that the Houses of the Oireachtas Service would make Covid-19 rapid antigen tests available to members of the parliamentary community upon request.

On the 19 and 20 July Staff Information Sessions were held on Teams to present the results of the survey *Working during the Covid-19 Pandemic*. The sessions were chaired by senior management.

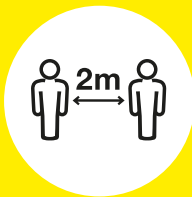
Goal 2: Provide a secure and safe physical environment that meets the needs of the Parliamentary Community

COVID-19 Compliance Team



Seirbhís Thithe an Oireachtais
Houses of the Oireachtas Service

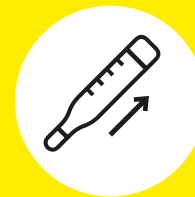
Maintain physical distance of a minimum of two metres.



Always wear a face mask except when in a room alone, eating or contributing to debates.



Know the symptoms of COVID-19 and monitor your own wellbeing.



Practice respiratory etiquette.



Work from home and only come onsite when necessary to the sitting of the houses.



Ensure that your desk and shared space is clear and can be easily cleaned and disinfected.



Everyone in the parliamentary community should:

- Follow all **return to workplace procedures** before coming onsite including completing the **return to workplace form**;
- Adhere to the **COVID-19 Code of Conduct**;
- Please continue to report any confirmed cases or close contacts among members of the parliamentary community to the COVID-19 Compliance Team;
- Save energy / reduce carbon footprint. As many people are absent from the office for longer periods, the potential for waste if electrical devices are left turned on is increased. Please ensure that all electrical equipment is properly turned off, preferably at the wall / floor socket;
- Keep a contact log of close contact with other people, and
- Listen to ongoing **HSE** & Government advice.

Email: fmuc19@oireachtas.ie Call: 01-618 4398

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

The **Health and Safety Committee** is a forum at which Safety Representatives can consult with management and make representations on issues of health, safety and welfare in the workplace. The Covid-19 Compliance Manager is a member of the Committee. The Committee's membership was expanded to include representation of the full parliamentary community. Updated **Covid-19 Safety Guidelines** were circulated by the Health and Safety Committee as the gradual return to the office continued in the last quarter of 2021.

In October 2021 the **Houses of the Oireachtas Service Safety Statement** was published on the Plinth. This document highlights the Service's commitment to safety, health and welfare at work and outlines the resources and designated personnel that have been assigned to help deliver on that commitment. The Safety Statement also provides guidance on working safely and the procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency. The implementation of the Covid-19 Response Plan in 2021 was an essential element of this.

Good progress was made by the parliamentary community in dealing with, and responding to, the Covid-19 pandemic. Due to a huge collective effort the parliamentary community remained safe. The level of risk increased with the return to Leinster House of Dáil sittings from the Convention Centre in September 2021 and required increased vigilance and effort by all.

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) Public Sector

Energy Efficiency Reform Strategy. The Oireachtas participates in the OPW's *Optimising Power at Work Scheme*, and the Facilities Management Team works closely with the OPW to implement energy management, waste management and sustainability actions. 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 2021 on the Public Sector, reported that the Houses of the Oireachtas Service Energy Consumption (Primary) was 10.9 GWh for 2020, which represented a 41.3% saving since baseline, down from 12.3 GWh for 2019.

Energy efficiency actions in 2021 included:

- Building management system maintenance and adjustments.
- The continuation of the LED Lighting Project. With OPW assistance, progress was made in replacing and upgrading lighting in the Leinster House complex with LED energy efficient replacements.
- A review of heating and ventilation systems.

The SEAI Annual Report demonstrates that Ireland's public sector is leading the way towards energy efficiency improvement. Good progress has been made with a collective 34% energy efficiency improvement achieved by the public sector in the last 11 years, exceeding the target set for 2020. The next decade will require a concerted effort by all in the parliamentary community to meet our targets and overcome the climate crisis. The Programme for Government sets out an ambitious vision for the public sector to achieve 50% energy

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

efficiency improvement and 51% CO₂ reduction by 2030. Looking ahead there will be an emphasis on developing a cost-effective programme for the public sector, supported by the OPW.

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service plans to implement a number of sustainability actions in 2022 with a continued focus on energy management practices. Improved performance will be achieved by:

- Developing a Sustainability Strategy
- Developing a Climate Action Road map for the parliamentary community
- The appointment of a Climate and Sustainability Champion from the Management Board team
- Establishing a *Green Team*
- Incorporating climate action and sustainability training into learning and development initiatives for staff, including staff workshops.



Rewilding at Leinster House.

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 Commission's **Dignity and Respect Statement of Principles and Policy (2019)** 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. In November 2020, the Commission agreed to a review of the operation of the Dignity and Respect Policy. The review was completed in 2021 and the Commission approved an Action Plan of next steps and follow up actions arising from the review.

The Commission also approved the establishment of a **Dignity and Respect Policy Steering Group**, on a pilot basis for a period of one year initially, to oversee the ongoing operation of the Dignity and Respect Policy. The role of the Steering Group is to encourage greater ownership of the policy and act as a champion for Dignity and Respect in the parliamentary workplace. The implementation of the policy is supported by the **Workplace Support Programme** that includes the provision of mediation services and a dignity and respect helpline.

Under the requirements of the *Children First Act 2015*, the Houses of the Oireachtas has a **Child Safeguarding Statement** in place, supported by a **Child Safeguarding Implementation Plan**. 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 wellbeing of children in the parliamentary complex. The Statement also includes the contacts and procedures for reporting concerns. In November 2021 a review of the Child Safeguarding Statement commenced and will be completed in 2022.

The Child Safeguarding Implementation Plan sets out the key requirements of the Act that includes the Garda vetting of members, political staff or staff seeking to provide services to children. During 2021 two Deputy Designated Liaison Persons completed training and were appointed to support the work of the Designated Liaison Person in the Oireachtas Service.

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service continues to work towards meeting its obligations under the public sector duty, section 42 of the *Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014* and is cognisant of its obligations under key national inclusion strategies. The **Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group**, a cross representation of staff from across the Service, met on a quarterly basis during 2021. The role of the group is to improve diversity and inclusion, across the nine equality grounds under the Equal Status Acts, in the Houses of the Oireachtas and to develop and monitor educational and engagement opportunities to increase access to the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The Oireachtas Service is working on a **Diversity and Inclusion Strategy** for the parliamentary community with consultation commencing in 2022. As part of the development of the strategy, HR and the Training and Development Unit will review training in areas such as intercultural awareness, anti-racism training, unconscious bias training and intersectionality training.

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

In February 2021 a **Covid-19 Working from Home Policy** was circulated by the HR Unit to all staff. Correspondence was also issued from the Covid-19 Compliance Team on returning to the Oireachtas campus, Covid-19 Induction Training was a requirement for everyone returning on-site to the Leinster House Complex or the CCD.

Throughout 2021, the Oireachtas Service has continued to fulfil its commitments outlined in the **Irish Sign Language (ISL) Strategy 2019-2021**. The Service's ISL interpreters provide ISL interpretation of weekly Dáil proceedings, committee meetings and continue to support the Oireachtas Broadcasting Unit and other in-house events. The Oireachtas website continues to progress its provision of ISL translation of web content including events such as the Dáil and Seanad centenaries. In 2021 ISL interpretive services were also provided for a guided tour of Leinster House.

With the support of the ISL team, the Service provided a virtual placement opportunity for an undergraduate ISL interpreter student from the Centre for Deaf Studies (CDS), Trinity College Dublin. This placement opportunity involved collaborative work on a project that researched and produced a new glossary of ISL parliamentary terminology, it will be available on the Oireachtas website in 2022.

During 2021 the **Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) Programme** took place online. This was very successful, and it afforded the OWL trainees the opportunity to develop skills for a blended and hybrid working model. The trainees continued the education element of the Programme with the City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETb).



A dedicated OWL webpage on the Oireachtas website was developed and in March 2021 a video to promote the OWL Programme was produced by two OWL Graduates, the Houses of the Oireachtas Service and the Public Appointments Service. The objective was to raise awareness of the OWL Programme across Government Departments. In addition the programme partners developed a HR Managers Toolkit. These resources are available on the Oireachtas website.

From the outset, the outcome of the OWL Programme was to find meaningful and viable part-time permanent employment for trainees in the wider Civil and Public Service. In December 2021 a recruitment competition for graduates of the OWL Programme, supported by the Public Appointments Service, took place. The OWL Programme is now considered the first **Supported Employment Model** in the Civil and Public Service and is recognised by the **Comprehensive Employment Strategy Implementation Group** as an innovative employment model for people with intellectual disabilities.

In November 2021 the Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghaíl, TD received the **Report of the Forum on a Family-Friendly and Inclusive Parliament**. The Forum was established in March 2021 to generate practical and achievable recommendations that could make the Houses of the Oireachtas a more inclusive, family friendly and gender sensitive

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

workplace. Chaired by former TD, Dr Mary Upton, the Forum had 15 members and included TDs, Senators, Oireachtas staff, political staff and outside experts.



Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghaíl, TD, receives the report of the Forum on a Family-Friendly and Inclusive Parliament from the Chairperson Dr Mary Upton and members of the Forum.

The report made 51 recommendations, some of the areas which it highlighted for prioritisation included:

- A Referendum to amend Article 15 of the Constitution to permit proxy voting and remote participation in some Dáil and Seanad business, as this would allow members to take an equivalent to maternity, paternity and sick leave and it would also enable the Houses of the Oireachtas and Committees to reorganise the sitting weeks.

- The need to improve the gender balance and diversity on Oireachtas Committees in terms of membership, chairing Committees and in terms of the people giving evidence to the Committees. Given the detailed scrutiny work done by Committees, the importance of different perspectives, including gender perspectives, were highlighted for consideration; and
- The need to track changes in the diversity of the parliamentary community through appropriate collection and reporting of data on the diversity of the membership of the Houses of the Oireachtas and the civil service staff.

The Ceann Comhairle welcomed the practical recommendations. Receiving the report, the Ceann Comhairle said: *“The presentation of this report is a milestone in the development of our National Parliament as a more inclusive, diverse and family friendly workplace”*. The Report of the *Forum on a Friendly-Friendly and Inclusive Parliament* is available on the Oireachtas website. A Steering Group has been established to assess the recommendations of the Forum some of which will be considered in the development of the **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2022**.

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*.

The Commission's investment in new technologies enabled the Service to maintain delivery of its key services during the pandemic period by moving many its processes online and by remote working.

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-focused, accessible and inclusive, underpinned by the organisational values: *impartial, accountable, open, collegiate, innovative*, and the values set out in the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour. A Customer Service page is available on the website that includes information on how to contact the Service's Customer Service Officer.

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. Staff of the Service are provided with the **Staff Handbook** that provides 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 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. It provides access to topical news, information about upcoming events, a corporate directory, information about business supports, latest media releases, and displays content directly from the Oireachtas Twitter Feed. A Covid-19 area was added to the Plinth in 2020 for easy access to all HR Office Notices, messages and information regarding Covid-19 arrangements.

The website also contributes to greater engagement, access to parliamentary information, transparency and openness in relation to the business of the Houses. There were 1.2 million visits to the Oireachtas website in 2021.

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

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 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. There were 73 governance meetings held in 2021.

The Commission held eleven meetings in 2021.

Following the 2020 elections to both Houses of the Oireachtas, the new Commission held its first meeting on 29 July 2020 at the Convention Centre Dublin due to Covid-19 restrictions. Subsequent meetings were held virtually on MS Teams. 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 of the Service.

The Commission presented its Annual Report for 2020, including its audited annual accounts, to the Houses of the Oireachtas by the statutory deadline of 30 June 2021 in accordance with section 6(4) of the Commission Acts. The Commission also presented an annual statement of estimates for 2022 to the Dáil for noting by way of motion in accordance with section 13 of the Commission Acts. In 2021 The Commission agreed that the Houses of the Oireachtas would mark the 2021-2023 phase of the Decade of Centenaries through a programme of commemorative events in the Houses. An overview of the Commission's work programme in 2021 is set out in [page 15](#) of this report.

Table 9: Governance of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service Meetings

	2021	2020	2019
Commission	11	11	15
Management Board	28	19	20
Management Board de-brief	24	72	–
Finance Committee of the Commission	5	3	5
Audit Committee	5	3	4
Risk Management (incl. eRisk)	26	58	5

Goal 5: Ensure high standards of corporate governance

The Commission's **Finance Committee** held five virtual meetings in 2021. The Committee considered quarterly financial and performance reports and the draft statement of estimate for 2022 and made recommendations on these to the Commission.

The Service's **Management Board** met 28 times during 2021. In addition 24 Management Board de-brief meetings were held (formerly named Management Board Covid-19 Committee meetings).

The Management Board is assisted in its work by its five **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 Committee chair at its monthly meetings and considers written reports on a quarterly basis.

The following are the Strategic Committees of the Management Board:

- Governance, Performance and Accountability (GPA)
- Openness, Public Engagement, and Campus Development (OPED)
- People and Organisation (P&O)
- Technology and Digital Transformation (TDT)
- Rannóg 2024 Steering Committee

The Board's Strategic Committees held 41 meetings during 2021.

The **PO Network** comprises staff at Principal Officer Grade or equivalent within the Houses of the Oireachtas Service and its purpose is to:

- provide peer support and enhance communications, co-ordination and knowledge-sharing at senior management level across the Service;
- facilitate and develop a shared understanding of strategic priorities, communications, operational and policy issues within the Houses of the Oireachtas Service;
- provide a forum for the discussion, development, dissemination and review of corporate initiatives and policies; and
- act as a 'new developments group' that can provide an overview, and where required oversight, of key actions/initiatives that are being considered within the Service.

The PO Network met ten times in 2021 to discuss a range of issues including:

- resilience building
- stress management
- Covid-19 and the return of staff to the workplace
- Financial and HR matters, and
- strategic planning.

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, management of the customer service function, 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 Internal Audit (HIA).

Goal 5: Ensure high standards of corporate governance

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.

The overall goal of the 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 Risk Management Framework and Strategy was completed in 2020. In 2021 there was a review of the Strategic Plan 2019-2021 by the Management Board with a particular focus on the identification of key priorities for the final year of the Plan, while considering key risks and opportunities arising. Linked to this the Management Board reviewed the organisation's corporate risks.

Every effort was made by the Chief Risk Officer (CRO) and the Risk Office to promote a risk aware culture and to continue to support users in the reporting of their risks on the **eRisk system**. Significant progress was made in 2021. The CRO and Risk Office staff also participated in the OGCIO eRisk Working Group meetings to discuss new system developments, and Governance Forum meetings on risk management.

In addition to the work of the Risk Office it is important to note that the Commission, the Management Board, the Health and Safety Committee and the Audit Committee all continue to have oversight and manage the impact and risks of the Organisation and particularly those associated with the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021.

The Audit Committee met five times during 2021.

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

The functions of the Committee include to:

- advise the Secretary General on financial matters relating to their functions;
- advise the Commission on matters of corporate governance relating to its functions and report to the Commission in writing at least once a year on its activities in the previous year;
- consider reports on the implementation of internal audit report recommendations twice yearly, and review the work of the Internal Audit function; and
- consider risk materialisation reports.

Its Annual Report for 2021 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

Goal 5: Ensure high standards of corporate governance

appropriate. The Head of Internal Audit reports directly to the Secretary General. The Secretary General and the Audit Committee agreed the Internal Audit Programme. The Programme reflects the Service's greater dependency on new technologies to conduct its business effectively during the pandemic period. 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 **Finance Unit** led by the Chief Financial Officer (CFO), provides financial advice, information and analysis to the Secretary General, Management Board, Commission and line sections. The Commission's outturn for 2021 was €132.5m which was managed by effective budget monitoring and reporting. The Finance Unit processed 5,115 invoices for goods and services in 2021. Significant work was also undertaken to ensure the efficient payment of salaries, pensions and invoices during the pandemic period.

The audited accounts of the Commission for 2021 are presented at [page 81](#) of this report.

The **Procurement Unit** continued to provide support to business units in the procurement of goods and services and ongoing contract management. During 2021, the Service conducted 29 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 staff engaged in procurement processes and contract management. The Procurement Unit held an average of 30 meetings each month with contract managers across the Service and provided advice to business areas when requested.

The **Oireachtas Contracts Committee (OCC)** reviews contracts above specified values where it is proposed for exceptional reasons not to have a competitive procurement 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 on 14 occasions in 2021 and considered 23 submissions.

The Service has a **Performance Evaluation Framework** in place that is aligned to the Strategic Plan for 2019-2021. The Management Board considered one post project benefits realisation reports conducted under the Service's **Efficiency Evaluation Programme** during 2021. Quarterly reports on Parliamentary and Service Activities are also submitted to the Management Board.

Table 10: Records Management Unit

	2021	2020	2019
FOI requests received	125	200	272
<i>Non-Personal</i>	121	197	261
<i>Personal</i>	4	2	10
<i>Mixed</i>	–	1	1

Goal 5: Ensure high standards of corporate governance

The **Library and Research Service** has a corporate information governance role with responsibility for freedom of information, data protection and records management which is overseen by its **Records Management Unit**.

The Service operates a centralised co-ordination and decentralised decision-making model for FOI requests. In 2021, 125 **FOI requests** were received and 153 were managed over the course of the year (the FOI requests managed in a year are not necessarily received in the same year). The overall number of FOI requests received in 2021 was down compared to the two previous years. The Training Unit and the Records Management Unit (RMU) continued to provide ongoing training to FOI decision-makers and to users of the eFOI system.

The **Records Management Unit (RMU)** submits quarterly reports to the Management Board on Data Protection that provide information on Subject Access Requests (SARs); on data breaches; on the operation of the Services' data protection processes and on Data Protection developments in Ireland and Europe. During 2021, the RMU managed three Data Protection Subject Access Requests (SARS).

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

80

The Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2018 provided funding of €422m to meet the costs associated with running the Houses of the Oireachtas for the three-year period 2019-2021. The table below summaries the gross expenditure for this period, totalling €398m. The unspent allocation for the period 2019-21 was €24.23m and is not carried over.

Category	2019 Outturn €000	2020 Outturn €000	2021 Outturn €000	2019-2021 Outturn €000
Dáil Éireann	44,477	47,590	46,372	138,439
Seanad Éireann	9,113	8,687	9,413	27,213
Oireachtas Committees	120	9	31	160
European Parliament	772	732	739	2,243
Pensions and Redundancy	13,152	18,065	16,274	47,491
Administration – pay & pensions	32,606	34,051	36,389	103,046
Administration – non-pay	26,739	26,759	25,679	79,177
TOTAL	126,979	135,893	134,897	397,769

In accordance with the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2021, the Commission has received a new three-year allocation of €462m for the period 2022-2024 with the Estimate provision of €160,726 for 2022.

Houses of the Oireachtas Commission

Accounts of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission for the Period from 1 January to 31 December 2021

(kept in accordance with the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2021*)

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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 2021 for the salaries and expenses of the Commission, including certain grants, and for certain expenses in connection with the European Parliament.

The expenditure outturn is compared with the statement of estimates, prepared and published by the Commission in accordance with the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2021 (“the Acts”), of the amount of monies required by the Commission in respect of ongoing expenditure for the year ended 31 December 2021.

There was a surplus for the year of €19,031,254. There had been a substantial impact on activity by the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic. There was also a provision for a General Election in the period which was not required.

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 €14,958,872 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.

The Statement of Accounting Policies and Principles and notes 1 to 7 form part of the account.

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 Circulars 1 and 9 of 2022, have been applied in the preparation of the account 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.

- There is an appropriate budgeting system with an annual budget which is kept under review by senior management;
- There are regular reviews by senior management of periodic and annual financial reports which indicate financial performance against forecasts;
- A risk management system operates within the Service;
- There are systems aimed at ensuring the security of the ICT systems;
- There are appropriate capital investment control guidelines and formal project management disciplines;
- The Service ensures that there is an appropriate focus on good practice in purchasing and that procedures are in place to ensure compliance with all relevant guidelines, with the exception of 4 contracts to the value of €407,360, details of which are set out below.

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 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 by 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 Board 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 me, the Management Board, and the Audit Committee.

Non-compliance with procurement rules

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

The Service complied with the guidelines with the exception of four contracts (in excess of €25,000), totalling €407,360 (ex. VAT), details of which are set out below:

- Two contracts with a value of €339,566.94 were in relation to the use of a short-term contract to continue services until a procurement process could be completed;

- One contract with a value of €40,874 was an extension of services not included in an existing contract which was proposed for exceptional reasons;
- One contract with a value of €26,919 was an extension of an expired contract to allow for the provision of goods which could not be procured due to COVID-19 restrictions.

All of the above contracts have since been regularised through appropriate procurement processes where necessary, with one procurement ongoing into 2022. The Service has provided details of non-competitive contracts in the annual return in respect of Circular 40/2002 to the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform.

Risk and Control Framework

The Service has a risk management strategy in place which ensures risk management activities contribute to the achievements of the Service's objectives and is aligned to the Service's corporate governance framework.

The Chief Risk Officer (CRO) has responsibility for the oversight of risk management at strategic and operational level, promoting a risk aware culture across the Service and reporting on risk management performance at least quarterly to the Governance Performance and Accountability Strategic Committee (GPA), Management Board and Audit Committee.

An eRisk system is in place to support this strategy, which identifies the key risks facing the Service and these have been evaluated and graded according to their significance. The outcome of these assessments is used to plan and allocate resources to ensure risks are managed to an acceptable level.

Ongoing Monitoring and Review

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

Review of Effectiveness

I confirm that the Houses of the Oireachtas Service has procedures to monitor the effectiveness of its risk management and control procedures. The 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 the 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 6.2 to the 2018 Appropriation Account was investigated by An Garda Síochána, and following a full investigation the matter was closed in 2021. A review of the Service’s financial control measures in this area at the time of reporting of the incident has led to a further strengthening of its controls.

Oireachtas Catering and Bar Services

The emergency measures taken in line with public health guidance as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the closure and partial closure of the catering and bar services within Leinster House. This has had a significant impact on the finances of the catering and bar service.

The catering and bar services continue to manage this impact, through its management structure – Restaurant Manager, Service staff and bookkeeper, with access to the Finance Officer and Chief Financial Officer. Accounts of the Oireachtas Catering and Bar Services are presented to the Management Board, Finance Committee and Commission on a quarterly basis.

An external audit was carried out in 2021 of the 2020 Account, 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 2021.

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 Account on an annual basis.

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.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the work of the British-Irish Parliamentary assembly was paused during 2021, resulting in nil revenue drawdown.

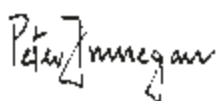
Covid-19 Control Issues

Assessments of the impact of Covid-19 were carried out and the results are as follows:

Changes have been made to key controls in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic with key mitigants put in place with ongoing planning and oversight continuing by Senior management. Examples include:

- Business Continuity Planning team meet, and review and update plan;
- Incident Management Team Group has been established and chaired at Assistant Secretary Level;
- Essential on-site services determined, Principal Officers identified services and staff required to attend with ongoing weekly review and management;
- Temporary home working policy in place and aligned to central Government recommendations;
- COVID-19 Response Plan implemented as a live document;
- COVID-19 Compliance team were established;
- The Health and Safety Committee has been considerably expanded and is now chaired by the Head of HR. As well as including representatives of staff of the Service (as in the past) the Committee now includes representatives of the Members, Political staff, contractors, and the media, representing all groups who comprise the parliamentary community;
- External expert support procured from Fire Engineers and Safety Consultants and a medical expert, to advise on how best to implement protocols on the premises to the health and safety committee;
- The ability to work remotely was already in place, with the service extended to more staff in response to the COVID pandemic. Access is provided via a virtual private network using two factor authentications. Remote access to the network is provided to the same standard as onsite access to the network. Ushers and service officers remained on site working throughout the lockdown; there were no changes to the physical access to the buildings on the Leinster House campus;

- Financial expenditure controls – there has been an increase in expenditure due to the impact of Covid-19 (for the provision of ICT equipment to support home working arrangements, Convention Centre, PPE supplies, extended maintenance and cleaning services, access to Health and Safety experts, staff overtime etc.) and this has been monitored closely by the CFO in consultation with all Business Managers and reported to the Management Board on a monthly basis. Provision for costs anticipated to carry into 2022 have been provided in the Estimate 2022;
- Authorisation limits and rules did not change. The means of providing that authorisation and approval were adjusted to reflect a move to remote working. Verifications at transaction level continued, with the process and associated controls moved to a remote basis, but otherwise unchanged.



Peter Finnegan

Accounting Officer

Houses of the Oireachtas Commission

21 June 2022

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 2021.

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 is, where possible, 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;
- assets that cost less than €1,000 acquired from 1 January 2004 to 31 December 2020;
- assets that cost less than €10,000 acquired since 1 January 2021;
- 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 2003-2021, 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 2.10).

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 2.12).

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 distinguishes between the reason for the variation in the amount spent, and the funding implications e.g., under/overspend, 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.

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.

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.

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.

Comparative Figures

Some changes have been made to the presentation of items in the financial statements and the comparative figures have been reclassified where necessary on a basis consistent with the current year presentation.

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 2021, 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 2021, 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.

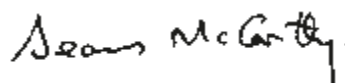
I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

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

24 June 2022

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 annual 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.

I 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.

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 identified in the course of audit 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

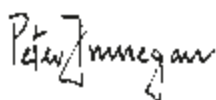
My audit is conducted by reference to the special considerations which attach to State bodies in relation to their management and operation. I report if I identify material matters relating to the manner in which public business has been conducted.

Houses of the Oireachtas Commission – Appropriation Account 2021

	2021 Estimate provision €000	2021 Outturn €000	2020 Outturn €000
1 Administration			
(a) Salaries, wages and allowances in respect of staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service	38,422	34,574	32,295
(b) Travel and subsistence	280	69	88
(c) Training and development and incidental expenses	1,394	1,155	1,076
(d) Postal and telecommunications services	733	277	835
(e) Office equipment and external IT services	15,251	14,785	15,452
(f) Office premises expenses	4,035	2,886	3,158
(g) Consultancy services and value for money and policy review	3,010	281	286
(h) Parliamentary printing	728	400	437
(i) Library and research services	1,126	964	874
(j) Public relations and communications	232	22	101
(k) Single Public Service Pension Scheme for members of staff of the Commission	72	–	1
2 Other Services			
(a) Payment in respect of catering and bar staff	2,264	1,815	1,756
(b) Expenses of delegates to other parliamentary assemblies	521	64	36
(c) Televising of proceedings of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann and other services	4,573	4,698	4,331
(d) Grant in respect of inter-parliamentary activities	260	78	69
(e) Grant to British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly	100	–	–
(f) North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association	12	–	–
(g) Termination allowances to or in respect of former Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas	2,420	134	3,022
(h) Grant to Irish Parliamentary (former Members) Society	15	–	15
(i) Grant in Respect of “Ciste Pinsean Thithe an Oireachtais”	13,575	14,959	13,788
(j) Pension scheme for secretarial assistants	1,133	1,156	1,239
(k) Single Public Service Pension Scheme for Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas	70	25	16
3 Membership of Dáil Éireann			
(a) Salaries of Members (including Office Holders and Chairpersons of Committees)	16,155	16,442	15,408
(b) Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for non-office holding members	26,577	21,937	24,545
(c) Travel and Accommodation Allowance	3,318	2,867	2,848
(d) Public Representation Allowance	3,200	2,881	2,816
(e) Other allowances	2,845	2,245	1,973

	2021 Estimate provision €000	2021 Outturn €000	2020 Outturn €000
4 Membership of Seanad Éireann			
(a) Salaries of Members (including Office Holders and Chairpersons of Committees)	4,361	4,353	3,918
(b) Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for non-office holding members	4,161	2,856	2,967
(c) Travel and Accommodation Allowance	1,202	1,047	998
(d) Public Representation Allowance	750	629	563
(e) Other allowances	429	528	241
5 Membership of Oireachtas Committees			
(a) Travel expenses	110	25	–
(b) Other expenses relating to Committees	277	6	9
6 Membership of European Parliament			
(a) Salaries of members of the European Parliament	–	–	–
(b) Pensions of former members of the European Parliament	913	739	732
Gross Expenditure	154,524	134,897	135,893
DEDUCT			
Receipts of the Commission (Note 4.1)	(3,000)	(2,404)	(1,826)
Net Expenditure	151,524	132,493	134,067

	2021 €	2020 €
7 Surplus		
Surplus	€19,031,254	€14,836,303
<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 €126.979m, in 2020 was €135.893m and in 2021 it was €134.897m; a total of €398m. The unspent allocation for the period 2019-21 was €24.23m and is not carried over. In accordance with the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2021, the Commission has received a new three year allocation of €462m for the period 2022-24</p>		



Peter Finnegan

Accounting Officer – Houses of the Oireachtas Commission

21 June 2022

Notes to the Appropriation Account

Note 1 Operating Cost Statement 2021

	Note	€000	2021 €000	2020 €000
Pay			98,990	99,687
Non pay			35,907	36,206
Gross expenditure			134,897	135,893
Deduct				
Appropriations-in-aid			(2,404)	(1,826)
Net expenditure			132,493	134,067
Changes in capital assets	2.1			
Purchases cash		(2,212)		
Depreciation		3,838		
Disposals cash		2		
Loss on disposals		4	1,632	(2,439)
Changes in net current assets				
Increase in closing accruals		(244)		
Decrease in stock	2.3	14	(230)	(466)
Direct expenditure			133,895	131,162
Expenditure borne elsewhere				
Net allied services expenditure (cash)	1.1		27,157	27,020
Notional rents (non-cash)	1.2		5,616	5,616
Net programme cost			166,668	163,798

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.

		2021 €000	2020 €000
Vote 9	Office of the Revenue Commissioners	75	90
Vote 12	Superannuation and Retired Allowances	5,970	4,900
Vote 13	Office of Public Works	4,734	6,404
Vote 43	Office of the Chief Information Officer	91	–
Central Fund:	Parliamentary Activities Allowances to Leaders	8,509	8,452
	Payments to qualified parties under the Electoral Acts 1992 to 2015	5,837	5,879
	Re-imbursments of Electoral Expenses	1,701	1,057
	Pensions in respect of former Cinn Comhairle (No. 38 of 1938, etc.)	240	238
		27,157	27,020

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.

Note 2 Statement of Financial Position as at 31 December 2021

	Note	2021 €000	2020 €000
Capital assets	2.1	13,242	14,875
Current assets			
Bank and cash	2.2	618	94
Stocks	2.3	206	220
Prepayments	2.4	3,327	2,727
Other debit balances	2.5	646	550
Accrued Income	2.6	442	749
Net funding due from the Exchequer	2.8	1,870	2,071
Total current assets		7,109	6,411
Less current liabilities			
Accrued expenses	2.11	2,057	2,009
Other credit balances	2.7	3,134	2,715
Total current liabilities		5,191	4,724
Net current assets		1,918	1,687
Net assets		15,160	16,562
Represented by:			
State funding account	2.9	15,160	16,562

2.1 Capital assets

	Equipment €000	Furniture and fittings €000	Office equipment €000	Assets under development €000	Total €000
Gross assets					
Cost or valuation at 1 January 2021	20,636	2,556	5,032	4,710	32,934
Additions	–	–	15	2,197	2,212
Transfers	4,567	–	–	(4,567)	–
Disposals	(157)	(32)	(122)	–	(311)
Adjustments*	–	65	4	–	69
Cost or valuation at 31 December 2021	25,046	2,589	4,929	2,340	34,904
Accumulated depreciation					
Opening balance at 1 January 2021	11,872	2,363	3,872	–	18,107
Depreciation for the year	3,343	50	445	–	3,838
Depreciation on disposals	(153)	(32)	(120)	–	(305)
Adjustments*	–	21	1	–	22
Cumulative depreciation at 31 December 2021	15,062	2,402	4,198	–	21,662
Net assets at 31 December 2021	9,984	187	731	2,340	13,242
Net assets at 31 December 2020	8,764	237	1,163	4,710	14,874

* Adjustments refer to errors and omissions in the 2020 fixed asset register, corrected with an increase of €69,000, and consequent adjustment to the depreciation calculation.

2.2 Bank and cash

at 31 December	2021 €000	2020 €000
PMG Account	–	–
Commercial bank accounts	610	81
Credit card	8	13
	618	94

Other Commercial Bank Accounts

The commercial bank accounts referred to above relate to appropriation account funds. In addition, the Oireachtas holds two further 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 2003-2021 and as itemised in Note 4. The amount held at the end of 2021 is €191,718 and is not included in the account (2020: €197,612).

2.3 Stocks

at 31 December	2021 €000	2020 €000
Stationery	23	36
IT consumables	144	145
Other	39	39
	206	220

2.4 Prepayments

	2021 €000	2020 €000
Software support	2,339	2,260
Broadcasting & Communications	618	146
Library & Research	271	228
Administration	81	71
Estate management	3	–
Other Prepayments	15	22
	3,327	2,727

2.5 Other debit balances

at 31 December	2021 €000	2020 €000
Recoupable salaries	–	7
Recoupable travel schemes	1	7
Recoupable travel pass scheme expenditure	46	44
Other debit suspense items	599	492
	646	550

2.6 Accruals

at 31 December	2021 €000	2020 €000
IT services and support	43	44
Specific programme accruals	3	–
Administration expenses	396	286
Other Accruals	–	419
	442	749

2.7 Other credit balances

at 31 December	2021 €000	2020 €000
Amounts due to the State		
Income Tax	1,302	1,146
Pay Related Social Insurance	723	602
Professional Services Withholding Tax	171	126
Value Added Tax	61	31
Pension contributions	263	242
Local Property Tax	6	5
Universal Social Charge	247	221
	2,773	2,373
Payroll deductions held in suspense	226	254
Other credit suspense items	135	88
	3,134	2,715

2.8 Net Exchequer funding

at 31 December	Notes	2021 €000	2020 €000
Surplus		19,031	14,836
Exchequer grant undrawn		(18,830)	(16,935)
Net Exchequer funding due		201	(2,099)
Balance brought forward at 1 January		(2,071)	28
Net Exchequer funding		(1,870)	(2,071)
Represented by:			
Debtors			
Bank and cash	2.2	618	94
Debit balances: suspense	2.5	646	550
		1,264	644
Creditors			
Due to State	2.7	(2,773)	(2,373)
Credit balances: suspense	2.7	(361)	(342)
		(3,134)	(2,715)
		(1,870)	(2,071)

2.9 State funding account

	Note	€000	2021 €000	2020 €000
Balance at 1 January			16,562	13,657
Disbursement by the Commission				
Estimate provision	Account*	151,524		
Surplus	Account*	(19,031)		
Net provision			132,493	134,067
Expenditure (cash) borne elsewhere	1.1		27,157	27,020
Non cash expenditure – notional rent	1.2		5,616	5,616
Net programme cost	1		166,668	(163,798)
Balance at 31 December			15,160	16,562

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

2.10 Commitments

at 31 December	2021 €000	2020 €000
(a) Global commitments		
Procurement subheads	–	–
Grant subheads	–	–
Multi-annual commitments	6,373	9,949
Closing balance	6,373	9,949

2.11 Matured liabilities

at 31 December	2021 €000	2020 €000
Estimate of matured liabilities not discharged at year end	2,057	2,009

2.12 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.

Note 3 Analysis of administration expenditure

The final gross outturn in relation to the Commission was €19.6m less than the Statement of Estimate.

Significant variations

The following note presents an analysis of the administration expenditure of the Service and outlines the reasons for significant variations (+/-25% and €100,000).

1(b) Travel and subsistence

Estimate provision: €0.28m, outturn: €0.069m

The underspend of €0.211m on expenditure on travel and subsistence was due to lower than anticipated travel activity resulting from the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the full year.

1(d) Postal and telecommunications services

Estimate provision: €0.732m, outturn: €0.277m

The underspend of €0.455m on expenditure on postal and telecommunications services was primarily due to an annual PBX maintenance fee which wasn't paid until 2022.

1(f) Office premises expenses

Estimate provision: €4m, outturn: €2.9m

The underspend of €1.1m on expenditure on office premises expenses was due to lower than anticipated costs in relation to OPW service charges and energy costs, in part related to reduced activity and staff presence due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

1(g) Consultancy services and value for money and policy review

Estimate provision: €3m, outturn: €0.281m

The underspend of €2.7m on expenditure arose due to unused contingency for legal costs and lower than anticipated requirement for consultancy services.

1(h) Parliamentary printing

Estimate provision: €0.728m, outturn: €0.4m

The underspend of €0.327m on expenditure on parliamentary printing arose due to lower than anticipated demand for printing and graphic design.

1(j) Public relations and communications

Estimate provision: €0.232m, outturn: €0.022m

The underspend of €0.21m on expenditure arose due to the fact that most of the expenditure forecast was for public engagement activities which did not occur due to the continuance of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions.

2(a) Payment in respect of catering and bar staff

Estimate provision: €2.26m, outturn: €1.81m

The underspend of €0.449m resulted from continued emergency measures taken in line with public health guidance which necessitated reduced provision of catering and bar services within Leinster House.

2(b) Expenses of delegates to other parliamentary assemblies

Estimate provision: €0.521m, outturn: €0.064m

The underspend of €0.457m was due to a reduction in travel undertaken because of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

2(d) Grant in respect of inter-parliamentary activities

Estimate provision: €0.26m, outturn: €0.078m

The underspend of €0.182m was due to a reduction in travel undertaken because of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

2(e) Grant to British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly

Estimate provision: €0.1m, outturn: €0m

There was no spend under this subhead because of a pause in Assembly work in 2021 due to COVID-19.

2(g) Termination allowances in respect of former members of the Houses of the Oireachtas

Estimate provision: €2.4m, outturn: €0.134m

The underspend of €2.3m occurred because a provision for election related termination payments was not required.

2(i) Grant in respect of “Ciste Pinsean Thithe an Oireachtais”

Estimate provision: €13.6m, outturn: €15m

Timing of pension drawdown meant that payments budgeted for 2020 occurred in 2021 which caused an overspend of €1.4m in the year.

3(b) Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for members

Estimate provision: €26.6m, outturn: €21.9m

A provision for election related lump sum payments was not required, which caused an underspend of €4.6m.

3(c) Travel and Accommodation Allowance

Estimate provision: €3.3m, outturn: €2.9m

The underspend of €0.452m arose due to reduced expenditure as a result of Members opting to take reduced amounts of TAA due to COVID-19 restrictions.

3(d) Public Representation Allowance

Estimate provision: €3.2m, outturn: €2.9m

The underspend of €0.32m relates to a requirement to make a provision for full drawdown of Parliamentary Representative Allowance (PRA), which was not claimed.

3(e) Other allowances

Estimate provision: €2.8m, outturn: €2.2m

The underspend of €0.6m relates to a requirement to make a provision for full drawdown of allowances, some of which were not claimed.

4(b) Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for members

Estimate provision: €4.2m, outturn: €2.9m

A provision for election related lump sum payments was not required, which caused an underspend of €1.3m.

4(c) Travel and Accommodation Allowance

Estimate provision: €1.2m, outturn: €1m

The underspend of €0.155m arose due to reduced expenditure as a result of Members opting to take reduced amounts of TAA due to COVID-19 restrictions.

4(d) Public Representation Allowance

Estimate provision: €0.75m, outturn: €0.63m

The underspend of €0.121m relates to a requirement to make a provision for full drawdown of Parliamentary Representative Allowance (PRA), which was not claimed.

5(b) Other expenses relating to Committees

Estimate provision: €0.278m, outturn: €0.006m

The underspend of €0.27m was related to reduced Committee activity due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

6(b) Pensions of former members of the European Parliament

Estimate provision: €0.913m, outturn: €0.739m

The underspend of €0.174m related to a provision for a number of pensioners that was not required.

Note 4 Receipts

4.1 Receipts of the Commission

In accordance with the provisions of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2021, 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 2021 financial statements record total receipts of €2,404,134 retained by the Commission and offset against its gross expenditure. The remainder of the receipts primarily comprised receipts of €1,982,969 relating to pension related deductions on public service remuneration and a receipt of €420,000 relating to a legal settlement.

	Estimated €000	2021 Realised €000	2020 Realised €000
1 Sales of services of Broadcasting Unit	–	–	2
2 Net income from catering and bar services (Note 7.3)	–	–	–
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	2,404	1,824
Receipts recognised in Appropriation Account	3,000	2,404	1,826
4 Members contributions under the European Parliament (Irish Representatives) Pension Scheme, 1979	–	–	–
Total Receipts	3,000	2,404	1,826

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. Since the elections of 2019, there have been no contributions made under the 1979 scheme.

Significant variations

Overall, receipts by the Commission were €595,886 less than the estimate.

Explanations for variances are set out below:

- 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).

Estimate provision: €3m, realised: €2.4m.

The variance arose due to lower than estimated receipts, particularly the Additional Superannuation Contribution in 2021. This overprovision was partially offset by the receipt of €420,000 in respect of a legal settlement received in the year.

Note 5 Staffing and Remuneration

5.1 Employee Numbers

	2021	2020
Number of staff at year end (full time equivalents)		
Houses of the Oireachtas Service	637	596
Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members and Parties	451	437
Total	1,088	1,033

5.2 Pay – Houses of the Oireachtas Service

	2021 €000	2020 €000
Pay	31,797	29,722
Higher, special or additional duties allowance	192	204
Other allowances	255	222
Overtime	908	805
Shift and roster allowances	484	465
Employer's PRSI	2,917	2,616
Severance Payments	–	–
Total pay^a	36,553	34,034

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

5.2 Pay – Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members and Parties

	2021 €000	2020 €000
Pay	19,115	17,478
Redundancy payments ^b	93	5,543
Higher, special or additional duties allowance	–	–
Overtime and extra attendance	3,316	2,425
Employer's PRSI	2,386	2,179
Total pay^c	24,910	27,625

b See Note 5.6 Severance/Redundancy.

c 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 2021 €	Highest Individual payment 2020 €
Houses of the Oireachtas Service				
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	39	5	21,699	19,620
Other allowances	95	1	65,178	64,890
Overtime	176	15	32,853	26,592
Shift and roster allowances	69	–	8,373	8,076
Number of individuals who received extra remuneration in more than one category	176	77	39,771	32,668
Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members and Parties				
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	–	–	–	–
Overtime and extra attendance	508	137	14,523	13,693
Number of individuals who received extra remuneration in more than one category	–	–	–	–

5.4 Other remuneration arrangements

Payments totalling €66,962 were paid to retired civil servants whose services were employed on various interview boards specialist parliamentary and governance tasks. The payments made were consistent with the principles of the *Public Service (Single Scheme and other Provisions) Acts 2012*.

The terms of the AHCPs/IMPACT (PCW 1% Restructuring Agreement) were implemented resulting in a total payment of €128,585 in 55 instances.

This account includes expenditure of €142,900 in respect of officers who were serving outside the Commission for all of 2021 and whose salary was paid by the Commission. This expenditure has been recouped by the Commission.

5.5 Payroll overpayments

	2021 €	2020 €
Overpayments	37,158	61,870
Number of recipients	13	21
Recovery Plans in place	4	8

No recovery plans were transferred to other Departments in the year.

5.6 Severance, Redundancy and Termination Payments

A total of €97,816 was paid out in 2021 in respect of pension lump sums, severance payments and statutory redundancy to 5 staff employed under the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance. Of this €18,756 related to statutory redundancy payments, €37,764 related to pension lump sums and €41,296 related to Voluntary Early Redundancy/severance packages. The total amount of severance and redundancy repaid under the Scheme in 2021 was €5,037 resulting in a net spend of €92,779.

A total of €134,009 was paid out in 2021 in respect of pension lump sums and severance payments to 11 former members of the Houses of the Oireachtas. Of this €16,352 related to pension lump sums and €117,657 related to Voluntary Early Retirement/severance packages.

The Oireachtas had no staff receiving severance payments and enhancement to their pension arrangements in 2021.

5.7 Salary of Accounting Officer

As at 31st December 2021 the Accounting Officers current salary is at the grade of Clerk of the Dáil, with an annual gross salary of €192,474 (as at 31st December 2020, €190,568).

Note 6 Miscellaneous

6.1 Compensation and legal costs

6.1(A) Payments/Costs paid by the Service

	Service own legal costs paid	Compensation paid by the Service	Legal Costs paid by the Service to other parties involved	Other Costs paid by the Service to other parties involved	2021 Total	2020 Total
	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000
Claims by Employees	60	58	–	11	129	–
Claims by Members of the public	13	–	–	18	31	25
Total Expenditure	73	58	–	29	160	25

6.1(B) Cumulative Costs Completed Cases – Costs paid by the Service

	Number of Cases	Service own legal costs paid (including SCA*)	Compensation paid by the Service	Legal costs paid by the Service to other parties involved	Other costs paid by the Service to other parties involved	2021 Total
		€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000
Claims by Employees	4	24	58	–	–	82
Claims by Members of the public	4	332	–	–	8	340
Total Expenditure	8	356	58	–	8	422

* SCA refers to the State Claims Agency.

6.2 Fraud and suspected fraud

	Number of cases	2021 €000	2020 €000
Fraud	–	–	–
Suspected Fraud	–	–	–

In the 2018 Appropriation Account, the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission reported a case of alleged fraud, in relation to a salary incremental credit claim over a period of 18 months. This was investigated by An Garda Síochána, and following a full investigation the matter was closed in 2021 with a nil value.

6.3 Late Payment Interest and Compensation

	2021 €	2020 €
Total of interest and compensation paid	13,458	12,062

Note 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 2021

	2021 €	2020 €
Balance at 1 January	21,414	23,472
Grant [subhead 2(e)]	–	–
Refunds	–	–
Miscellaneous	233	–
Total Receipts	233	–
Payments		
Plenary sessions	6,471	1,127
Committees	1,595	115
Miscellaneous	601	816
Total Payments	8,667	2,058
Balance as at 31 December	12,980	21,414

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 2021

	2021 €	2020 €
Balance at 1 January	10,349	1,620
Grant [subhead 2(d)]	77,589	68,792
Members Subscriptions	1,194	349
Total Receipts	78,783	69,141
Payments		
Expenses associated with Irish delegations on foreign visits	7,794	–
Expenses associated with foreign delegations visiting Ireland	–	90
Inter Parliamentary Union Conference expenses	14,138	3,615
Other expenses	55,857	56,707
Total Payments	77,789	60,412
Balance as at 31 December	11,343	10,349

7.3 Accounts of the Catering and Bar Services

Income and Expenditure Account for year ended 31st December 2021

	2021 €	2020 €
Sales	402,692	424,513
Cost of sales	(286,302)	(325,356)
Gross Surplus	116,390	99,157
Expenses	(125,571)	(122,780)
Net Surplus/Deficit	(9,181)	(23,623)

Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2021

	2021 €	2020 €
Fixed assets	–	4,640
Current assets		
Stock	24,075	24,522
Debtors	16,322	6,639
VAT and Prepayments	20,185	7,089
Bank and cash	191,718	197,612
	252,300	235,862
Current liabilities		
Trade creditors	62,074	41,095
VAT	–	–
	62,074	41,095
Total net assets	190,226	199,407
Financed by:		
Cumulative surplus/(Deficit) Retained excluding subhead 2(a)	1,305,792	1,329,415
Surplus/(Deficit) current year excluding subhead 2(a)	(9,181)	(23,623)
Cumulative paid to date to Houses of the Oireachtas	(1,106,385)	(1,106,385)
	190,226	199,407

Notes to accounts:

- (i) Payroll costs of the staff of the Catering and Bar are borne directly by the Commission and are reflected at subhead 2(a) of the Appropriation Account amounting to €1,814,847 (2020 €1,755,875)
- (ii) An amount is remitted from the catering and bar accounts to the Commission on an annual basis and recorded as a receipt in the Commission's accounts (Note 4.1). The amount is calculated based on the retention of a bank balance in the account equivalent to an average of two months payments to suppliers. The amount remitted in 2021 was Nil (2020 €Nil) due to the reduced provision of catering and bar services due to the Covid 19 crisis and the significant impact this had on its finances.

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 2021 to 31 December 2021

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.

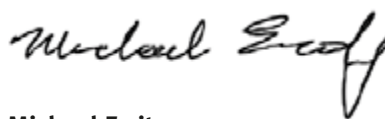
Instructions have been issued by the Finance Unit to all staff processing payments to ensure that the provisions of the legislation are complied with. While the procedures are designed to ensure compliance with the Act, they can only provide reasonable and not absolute assurance against material non-compliance 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 5,454 payments were processed with a total value of €29.2m. Of those payments 164 incurred penalties and interest under the Act totalling €13,458. 104 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 949 payments would have incurred prompt payment interest, representing 17% of the total number of commercial payments processed from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021.



Michael Errity

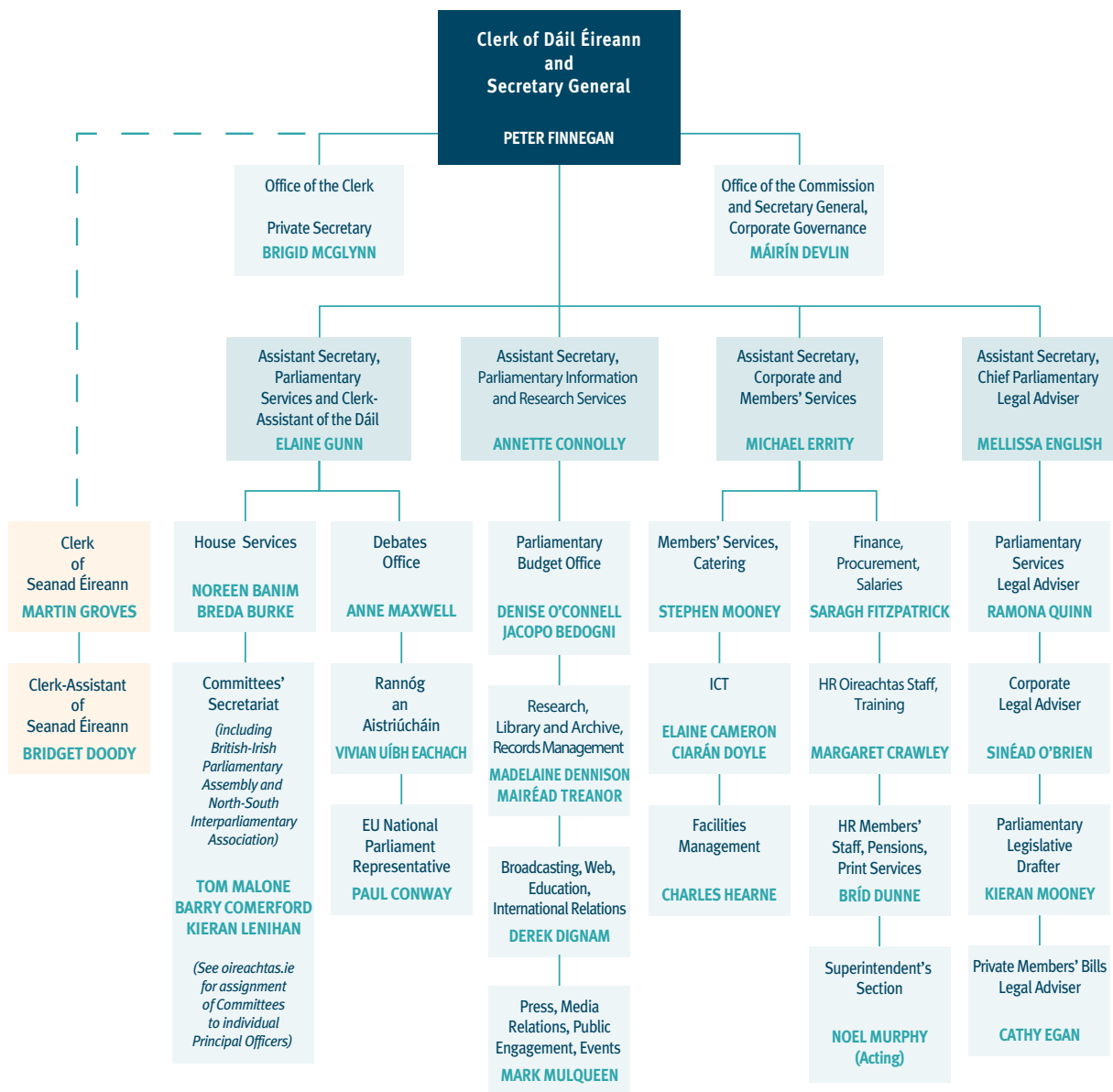
Assistant Secretary

Corporate and Members' Services

11 May 2022

Appendix I

Houses of the Oireachtas Service Organisation Chart



Appendix II

Statement of Resources 2021 (civil service staff)

Grades	Total Numbers in place December 2021 Sanctioned Numbers 675
Secretary General	1
Assistant Secretary	4
Principal Officer	30
Assistant Principal	72
Senior Clerk	70
Administrative Officer	31
Junior Clerk	64
Clerical Officer	98
Advisory Counsel	15
Assistant Parliamentary Counsel Grade II	3
Deputy Editor	3
Assistant Editor	7
Parliamentary Reporter	38
Reporter (Communications/Web)	1
Senior Researcher	16
Researcher	7
Assistant Librarian	5
Aistritheoir Grád 1	5
Aistritheoir Grád 2	8
Aistritheoir Grád 3	7
Usher Grade I	4
Usher Grade II	8
Usher Grade III	48
Head/Deputy Head Services Officer	1
Services Officer	19
Services Attendant	1
Parliamentary Porter	3
Telephonist (Relief)	1
Cleaner	9
Specialist, Temporary and Other Staff*	6
Total Civil Service Staff**	585

* Archivist, FOI Officer, Senior Auditor, Senior sign language and Junior sign language Interpreter and Third Secretary.

** Numbers are rounded.

Appendix III

Annual Report of the Audit Committee² Houses of the Oireachtas Commission 2021

Chair of the Audit Committee's Statement

As Chair of the Audit Committee for the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (the Commission), I am pleased to present the Audit Committee's Annual Report for 2021. The Committee reports annually to the Commission and the report is included in the Commission's Annual Report that is laid before the Houses of the Oireachtas and is published bilingually on the Oireachtas website.

This Audit Committee Annual Report covers the period to 31 December 2021.

Audit Committee

The Audit Committee was established in 2010 on a statutory basis under section 14A of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2013 to 2021.

The process for the appointment of the membership of the Audit Committee and its role are set out in the Commission Acts. The Committee advises the Secretary General/Accounting Officer on financial matters relating to his functions. The Committee also advises the Commission on matters of corporate governance relating to its functions.

During 2021, the Audit Committee continued to meet virtually via Microsoft Teams and five such meetings were held.

The ongoing public health emergency due to the Covid-19 pandemic ensured that 2021 was another challenging year for the Houses of the Oireachtas, with remote working, virtual meetings, and off-site sittings continuing. Despite the challenges posed by this new operating environment, the Houses of the Oireachtas continued in its work to maintain effective internal controls and manage risk.

Internal Audit

The Internal Audit Unit continued to support the Audit Committee during 2021. The internal audit function has further developed under the new in-house arrangements and provided the Audit Committee with high quality reports on a range of matters during the year.

Risk Management

Risk Management is at the forefront of the considerations of the Audit Committee. The Chief Risk Officer (CRO) and her team made further progress towards broadening a risk aware culture in the Houses of the Oireachtas Service. This has been achieved by providing appropriate training to staff and through the co-ordination of action and reporting on risk management performance.

² Submitted to the Accounting Officer and the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission in accordance with the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Audit Committee Charter.

Looking ahead to 2022

The Audit Committee will continue, during 2022, to provide advice to the Commission and to the Secretary General on matters relating to their respective functions.

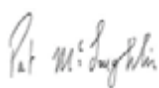
While public health restrictions associated with the Covid-19 pandemic will likely ease in 2022, remote and blended working arrangements will remain a feature of operations within the parliamentary community. The Audit Committee will continue to review the effectiveness of controls in this context.

Progress on identifying, assessing and managing risks and uncertainties will continue to be an important part of the Audit Committee's focus in 2022. In particular, the Committee will continue to monitor cyber security risks and the approaches being taken by the Houses of the Oireachtas to protect against cyber threats.

The Committee will continue to oversee the internal audit workplan for 2022 and review external auditor reports to give assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of internal control systems.

Acknowledgements

On behalf of the Audit Committee, I would like to thank the Commission, Secretary General, Management Board and staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service for their continued engagement and support.



Pat McLoughlin

Chair of the Audit Committee

22 February 2022

Annual Report of the Audit Committee of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission 2021

1. Establishment and Membership of the Audit Committee

The Audit Committee was placed on a statutory footing in 2010 under section 14A of the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2021*. The Committee is composed of between five and eight members appointed by the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission, as follows:

- one member of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission;
- at least one but not more than three other members of either House of the Oireachtas who are not members of the Commission;
- 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
- one member of the staff of the Service nominated by the Secretary General.

On 29 July 2020, the Commission appointed the following members to serve on the Audit Committee for the 33rd Dáil Éireann and 26th Seanad Éireann, in accordance with section 14A of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003 to 2021. The Commission agreed that Mr Pat McLoughlin be reappointed as Chair of the Audit Committee.

- Mr Pat McLoughlin: external member and Chair of the Audit Committee
- Deputy Francis Noel Duffy: member of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission
- Senator Victor Boyhan: member of Seanad Éireann

- Deputy Mairéad Farrell: member of Dáil Éireann
- Deputy Emer Higgins: member of Dáil 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

2. Role of the Audit Committee

The role of the Audit Committee is to:

- Advise the Secretary General on financial matters relating to his or her functions;
- Advise the Commission on matters of corporate governance relating to its functions; and
- 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:

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

disposing of assets, risk management, financial reporting, internal audit, internal controls; and

- 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.

3. 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 2021 with which it is published.

4. Audit Committee Activities in 2021

The Audit Committee for the 33rd Dáil and 26th Seanad met five times during 2021: on 25 February; 26 May; 7 July; 17 November; and 15 December. The agendas and minutes of the Audit Committee meetings are published on the Oireachtas website. Attendance at meetings by members of the Audit Committee, in 2021, is set out in the Appendix to this report.

External Quality Assessment on the Internal Audit Function

The Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing requires that an external assessment of an Internal Audit Function be conducted at least once every 5 years. An external quality assessment (EQA) of the Oireachtas Commission's Internal Audit

function was carried out in 2019 and the report was presented to the Audit Committee.

The EQA found that, based on the evidence provided, the Commission's Internal Audit Unit is operating effectively and generally conformed with internal auditing standards as set out by, and in accordance with, the Internal Audit Quality Assessment Framework and Government Internal Audit Standards.

The assessment identified certain areas which, when addressed, would significantly enhance existing arrangements and bring closer alignment with best practice as defined by the audit profession and Government Internal Audit Standards. All recommendations have now been considered and implemented as appropriate.

Internal Audit Workplan 2021

The Internal Audit Workplan 2021 was agreed by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 21 September 2020. This programme of work for the Internal Audit Unit may be adjusted from time to time in response to changes in the organisations business, risks, operations, programs, systems and controls.

The Internal Audit program of audits was selected using a risk-based approach agreed by the Secretary General and Audit Committee and communicated to the Management Board. The risk-based approach assisted in targeting limited Internal Audit resources to areas where greatest benefit can be obtained. The programme also took into consideration risk associated with the impact of Covid-19 on the control environment.

Final audit reports, incorporating management's responses, are provided to the Audit Committee, Accounting Officer, and to the Management Board.

*Internal Audit Reports considered in 2021***Internal Audit Report on Houses of the Oireachtas Members' Termination Payments**

The audit objective was to provide assurance that the termination payments process and the relevant internal controls are effective and to ensure that recommendations, resulting from the Internal Audit Review of Members' Termination Payments in 2019, were implemented. The impact of Covid-19 pandemic arrangements on termination payments processes and procedures was also examined as part of the review.

Internal Audit Report on Financial Controls in Place for Processing Non-Pay Payments

The principal aim of the audit was to review and appraise the adequacy, reliability and effectiveness of the risk management, control and governance processes in relation to processing of non-pay payments in 2020, taking into consideration the impact of Covid-19.

Report on Implementation of Internal Audit Recommendations

The Audit Committee considered reports in February, May, and December 2021 on the implementation of Internal Audit recommendations, incorporating management responses, arising from previous Internal Audit reports and those also completed in 2021. Following a review and follow-up with management, 30 Internal Audit report recommendations were submitted to the Audit Committee during the year for closure.

The Audit Committee will continue to monitor the implementation by management of the remaining 41 recommendations from previous audit reports.

*Independent Review by the Internal Auditor considered in 2021***Assessment of Financial Management Practices (applying the Financial Management Maturity Model)**

The principal aim of this review was to assess and identify opportunities for improvement in financial management practices within the organisation. The Internal Auditor carried out this independent review applying the Financial Management Maturity Model, which was issued by the C&AG, in June 2018, as a good practice guide for use within the public sector.

*External Audit Reports considered in 2021***Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) Audit Reports***Report from the C&AG on its annual audit of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Appropriation Account for year ending 31st December 2020*

In November 2021, the Audit Committee met with nominees of the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (OC&AG) and considered the 2020 OC&AG Report on the financial accounts of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission.

The Audit Committee noted that the OC&AG audit had been conducted in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs), with the aim of obtaining reasonable assurance that the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement whether due to fraud or error.

The Audit Committee also noted that on 29 June 2021, the OC&AG issued a clear audit opinion on its annual audit of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Appropriation Account for year ending 31st December 2020.

Report of the C&AG on the Ciste Pinsean Thithe an Oireachtais (Comhaltaí) Account for year ending 31st December 2020

The C&AG's Report on the Ciste Pinsean Thithe an Oireachtais (Comhaltaí) Account, prepared by the Commission for the year ending 31 December 2020 pursuant to the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993, stated the auditor's opinion that the Account properly presented the transactions on the account for 2020, and the balance on the Fund at 31 December 2020. The auditor had no matter to report by exception.

Independent Auditor's Report to the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission pursuant to the Public Representation Allowance (PRS) (S.I. No. 84 of 2010 and S.I. No. 149 of 2013)

In May and December 2021, the Committee considered the Independent Auditor's Reports on the Public Representation Allowance (PRA) for 2019 and 2020, respectively. These audits are conducted annually by an external auditor. The PRA is payable to all TDs, Ministers and Senators at rates applicable to each office.

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

2021 Risk Management

The Audit Committee recognises the importance of risk management within the Houses of the Oireachtas Service. During 2021, the Committee considered the Chief Risk Officer's (CRO) Risk Management Reports on corporate risks identified

across the organisation and the measures and mitigants put in place to resolve such issues, particularly in the context of managing the impact and risks associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Progress made on the reporting of risk and on embedding a risk aware culture across the organisation is also recognised by the Audit Committee. There is ongoing engagement by the Risk Office with Business Units, providing support for reporting through the eRisk system and on developments incorporated by the OGCIO into that system. This has strengthened risk identification capabilities across business areas. The Management Board has also been active in carrying out corporate risk assessments and ongoing reviews of mitigants.

Overall, the Audit Committee is satisfied that progress was achieved in 2021 on further embedding and strengthening risk management in the Oireachtas Service and will continue to support the CRO in this important role.

5. Representation on National and International Audit Networks

The Committee noted that the Internal Audit Unit continues to participate 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 to help ensure the Service is up to date with new initiatives, noting that these activities were severely curtailed during 2021 because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

6. Effective Discharge of Responsibilities In 2021

The Audit Committee is satisfied that it has effectively discharged its statutory remit during 2021, pursuant to section 14A of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003-2021.

Appendix: Attendance at meetings in 2021 by members of the Audit Committee

Member	Attendance
Mr. Pat McLoughlin (Chair)	5/5
Deputy Francis Noel Duffy	4/5
Senator Victor Boyhan	5/5
Deputy Mairéad Farrell	3/5
Deputy Emer Higgins	3/5
Mr. Cyril Maybury	5/5
Ms. Noreen Fahy	5/5
Mr. Charles Hearne	5/5

Appendix IV

Bills Initiated in the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2021

126

No.	Bill Title
1	Insurance (Restriction on Differential Pricing and Profiling) Bill 2021 [PMB]
2	Period Products (Free Provision) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
3	Health (Amendment) (Dual Diagnosis: No Wrong Door) Bill 2021 [PMB]
4	Free Provision of Period Products Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
5	Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud Offences) (Amendment) (Pets) Bill 2021 [PMB]
6	Equality (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2021 [PMB]
7	Criminal Justice (Public Order) (Quadbikes and Scramblers) (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]
8	Criminal Procedure Bill 2021
9	Oireachtas Members (Economic Justice) (Covid-19) Bill 2021 [PMB]
10	Children (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]
11	Land Development Agency Bill 2021
12	Criminal Procedure and Related Matters Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
13	Derelict Sites (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]
14	Health (Parliamentary Oversight of Certain Instruments Relating to Covid-19) Bill 2021 [PMB]
15	Industrial Relations (Provisions in Respect of Pension Entitlements of Retired Workers) Bill 2021 [PMB]
16	Student Nurses (Pay) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
17	Defence (Restriction on Use of Certain Titles) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
18	Rural Equality Bill 2021 [PMB]
19	Principles of Social Welfare Bill 2021 [PMB]
20	Civil Registration (Right of Adoptees to Information) (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]
21	Veterinary Practice (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]

No.	Bill Title
22	Consumer Protection (Loyalty Penalty and Customer Complaints) Bill 2021 [PMB]
23	Health (Amendment) Bill 2021
24	Local Government (Use of CCTV in Prosecution of Offences) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
25	Criminal Justice (Amendment) Bill 2021
26	Residential Tenancies (Student Rents and Other Protections) (Covid-19) Bill 2021 [PMB]
27	Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
28	Road Traffic (Amendment) (Personal Light Electric Vehicles) Bill 2021 [PMB]
29	Adoption (Information and Tracing) Bill 2021
30	Health Insurance (International Students) (Amendment) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
31	Taxi Regulation (Amendment) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
32	Quality in Public Procurement (Contract Preparation and Award Criteria) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
33	Family Leave and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2021 [Seanad]
34	Civil Liability and Courts (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]
35	Adoption (Information) Bill 2021 [PMB]
36	Ceathrú Chultúir 1916 Bill 2021 [PMB]
37	Residential Tenancies Bill 2021
38	Organisation of Working Time (Reproductive Health Related Leave) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
39	Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2021
40	Road Traffic (Amendment) (Electric Scooter Trials) Bill 2021 [PMB]
41	Firearms and Offensive Weapons (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]

No.	Bill Title
42	National Standards Authority of Ireland (Carbon Footprint Labelling) Bill 2021 [PMB]
43	Electoral (Amendment) (Voting at 16) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
44	Electricity Regulation (Amendment) (Prohibition of Winter Disconnections) Bill 2021 [PMB]
45	Labour Exploitation and Trafficking (Audit of Supply Chains) Bill 2021 [PMB]
46	Employment Permits (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2021 [PMB]
47	Planning and Development, Heritage and Broadcasting (Amendment) Bill 2021
48	Gambling (Prohibition of Advertising) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
49	Private Security Services (Amendment) Bill 2021
50	Garda Síochána (Compensation) Bill 2021 [Seanad]
51	Judicial Council (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]
52	Hospital Parking Bill 2021 [PMB]
53	Companies (Protection of Employees' Rights in Liquidations) Bill 2021 [PMB]
54	Education (Leaving Certificate 2021) (Accredited Grades) Bill 2021 [Seanad]
55	Sale of Tickets (Cultural, Entertainment, Recreational and Sporting Events) Bill 2021
56	Planning and Development (Strategic Housing Developments) (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]
57	National Lottery (Amendment) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
58	Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]
59	Proceeds of Crime (Investment in Disadvantaged Communities) (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]
60	Planning and Development (Amendment) (Repeal of Part V Leasing) Bill 2021 [PMB]
61	Clean Air (Smoky Coal Ban) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
62	Loan Guarantee Schemes Agreements (Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland) Bill 2021
63	Maritime Jurisdiction Bill 2021 [Seanad]

No.	Bill Title
64	Dog Breeding Establishments (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]
65	Trade Union Recognition Bill 2021 [PMB]
66	Social Welfare (Payment Order) (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]
67	Thirty-ninth Amendment of the Constitution (Right to Vote at 16) Bill 2021 [PMB]
68	Protection of Employment (Platform Workers and Bogus Self-Employment) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
69	Civil Legal Aid (Exclusion of Value of Free or Partly Free Board) (Amendment) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
70	Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
71	Affordable Housing Bill 2021 [Seanad]
72	Pensions (Amendment) (Transparency in Charges) Bill 2021 [PMB]
73	Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) (Foetal Pain Relief) Bill 2021 [PMB]
74	Wildlife (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]
75	Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2021 [PMB]
76	Nursing Homes Support Scheme (Amendment) Bill 2021
77	Redundancy Payments (Lay off, Short Time and Calculation of Reckonable Service) Bill 2021 [PMB]
78	Health and Criminal Justice (Covid-19) (Amendment) Bill 2021 [Seanad]
79	Dáil (All-Ireland Representation) Bill 2021 [PMB]
80	North-South Interconnector Review Group Bill 2021 [PMB]
81	Regulation of Tenderers Bill 2021 [PMB]
82	Employment Equality (Amendment) (Non-Disclosure Agreements) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
83	Planning and Development (Amendment) (First-Time Buyers) Bill 2021 [PMB]
84	Acquisition of Development Land (Assessment of Compensation) Bill 2021 [PMB]
85	Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 3) Bill 2021 [Seanad]

No.	Bill Title
86	Planning and Development (Climate Emergency Measures) (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]
87	Residential Tenancies (No. 2) Bill 2021
88	Planning and Development (Solar Panels for Public Buildings, Schools, Homes and Other Premises) (Amendment) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
89	Finance (Covid-19 and Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2021
90	Mental Health (Capacity to Consent to Treatment) Bill 2021 [PMB]
91	Consumer Protection (Regulation of Retail Credit and Credit Servicing Firms) Bill 2021
92	Companies (Rescue Process for Small and Micro Companies) Bill 2021
93	Workplace Relations (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2021
94	Worker Co-Operatives and Right To Buy Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
95	Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2021
96	Ban on Rent Increases Bill 2021 [PMB]
97	CervicalCheck Tribunal (Amendment) Bill 2021
98	National Minimum Wage (Removal of Sub-minimum Rates of Pay) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
99	Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Bill 2021
100	Health (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2021
101	Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person (Amendment) (Stalking) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
102	Child and Family Agency (Amendment) Bill 2021 [Seanad]
103	Criminal Justice (Mutual Recognition of Custodial Sentences) Bill 2021
104	Maritime Area Planning Bill 2021
105	Criminal Justice (Smuggling of Persons) Bill 2021 [Seanad]
106	Finance (European Stability Mechanism and Single Resolution Fund) Bill 2021
107	Companies (Corporate Enforcement Authority) Bill 2021
108	Sea-Fisheries (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2021

No.	Bill Title
109	Garda Síochána (Functions and Operational Areas) Bill 2021
110	Just Transition (Worker and Community Environmental Rights) Bill 2021 [PMB]
111	Planning and Development (Amendment) (20 per cent Provision of Social and Affordable Housing) Bill 2021 [PMB]
112	Residential Tenancies (Tenants' Rights) Bill 2021 [PMB]
113	Education (Voluntary Contributions) Bill 2021 [PMB]
114	Housing (Housing Assistance Payment Waiting Times) (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]
115	Local Government (Amendment) (Transparency in Allocation of Funding) Bill 2021 [PMB]
116	Housing (Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability) Bill 2021 [PMB]
117	Freedom of Information (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]
118	Land and Conveyancing Law Reform (Amendment) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
119	Registration of Wills Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
120	Companies (Emission Reporting) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
121	Defective Dwellings Bill 2021 [PMB]
122	Health (Pricing and Supply of Medical Goods) (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]
123	Workplace Ventilation (Covid-19) Bill 2021 [PMB]
124	Irish Corporate Governance (Gender Balance) Bill 2021 [PMB]
125	Betting (Prohibition on Use of Credit Cards) Bill 2021 [PMB]
126	Maternity Care (Covid-19) Bill 2021 [PMB]
127	Organisation of Working Time (Workers' Rights and Bogus Self-Employment) (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]
128	Road Traffic and Roads Bill 2021
129	Property Services (Land Price Register) Bill 2021 [PMB]

No.	Bill Title
130	Safe Access to Termination of Pregnancy Services Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
131	Electricity (Supply) (Amendment) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
132	Finance Bill 2021
133	Protection of the Native Irish Honey Bee Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
134	Credit Union (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]
135	Flood Insurance Bill 2021 [PMB]
136	Animal Health and Welfare and Forestry (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2021
137	Social Welfare (Surviving Cohabitant's Pension) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
138	Health (Inspection of Emergency Homeless Accommodation and Asylum Seekers Accommodation) Bill 2021 [PMB]
139	Protection of Private Residences (Against Targeted Picketing) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
140	Land and Conveyancing Law Reform Bill 2021 [Seanad]
141	Planning and Development (Amendment) (Large-scale Residential Development) Bill 2021 [Seanad]
142	Merchant Shipping (Investigation of Marine Casualties) (Amendment) Bill 2021
143	Parental Bereavement Leave (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]
144	Sex Offenders (Amendment) Bill 2021
145	Residential Tenancies (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2021
146	Protection of Children's Health (Idling of Mechanically Propelled Vehicles in Vicinity of Schools) Bill 2021 [PMB]
147	Education (Health, Relationships and Sex Education) Bill 2021 [PMB]
148	Local Government (Maternity and Family Leave for Elected Members) Bill 2021 [PMB]
149	Horticultural Peat (Temporary Measures) Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]
150	Seller's Legal Pack for Property Buyers Bill 2021 [PMB]

No.	Bill Title
151	Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Bill 2021
152	Social Welfare Bill 2021
153	Health and Criminal Justice (Covid-19) (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2021
154	Health Insurance (Amendment) Bill 2021
155	Health (Amendment) (No. 3) Bill 2021
156	Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Bill 2021 [PMB]
157	Appropriation Bill 2021
158	Dublin Bay Bill 2021 [PMB]
159	Residential Tenancies (Amendment) (Extension of Notice Periods) Bill 2021 [PMB]
160	Regulation of Air Traffic Over Sporting Events Bill 2021 [Seanad] [PMB]

Appendix V

Bills Passed by the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2021

No.	Bill Title
1	Health (Amendment) Bill 2021
2	Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud Offences) (Amendment) Bill 2020
3	Criminal Justice (Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing) (Amendment) Bill 2020
4	Family Leave and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2021
5	Residential Tenancies Bill 2021
6	Children (Amendment) Bill 2020 [PMB]
7	Criminal Procedure Bill 2021
8	Education (Leaving Certificate 2021) (Accredited Grades) Bill 2021
9	Loan Guarantee Schemes Agreements (Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland) Bill 2021
10	Personal Insolvency (Amendment) Bill 2020
11	Planning and Development, Heritage and Broadcasting (Amendment) Bill 2021
12	Health and Criminal Justice (Covid-19) (Amendment) Bill 2021
13	Criminal Justice (Perjury and Related Offences) Bill 2018 [PMB]
14	Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2021
15	Public Service Pay Bill 2020
16	Counterfeiting Bill 2020
17	Residential Tenancies (No. 2) Bill 2021
18	Planning and Development (Amendment) (No. 3) Bill 2021
19	Private Security Services (Amendment) Bill 2021
20	Gender Pay Gap Information Bill 2019
21	Sale of Tickets (Cultural, Entertainment, Recreational and Sporting Events) Bill 2021
22	CervicalCheck Tribunal (Amendment) Bill 2021
23	Finance (Covid-19 and Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2021
24	Health (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2021

No.	Bill Title
25	Affordable Housing Bill 2021
26	Land Development Agency Bill 2021
27	Nursing Homes Support Scheme (Amendment) Bill 2021
28	Maritime Jurisdiction Bill 2021
29	Workplace Relations (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2021
30	Companies (Rescue Process for Small and Micro Companies) Bill 2021
31	Finance (Local Property Tax) (Amendment) Bill 2021
32	Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2021
33	Defence (Amendment) Bill 2020
34	Child and Family Agency (Amendment) Bill 2021
35	Land and Conveyancing Law Reform Bill 2021
36	Criminal Justice (Amendment) Bill 2021
37	Health (Amendment) (No. 3) Bill 2021
38	Finance (European Stability Mechanism and Single Resolution Fund) Bill 2021
39	Residential Tenancies (Amendment) Bill 2021
40	Planning and Development (Large Scale Residential Developments) Bill 2021
41	Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Bill 2021
42	Criminal Justice (Smuggling of Persons) Bill 2021
43	Appropriation Bill 2021
44	Social Welfare Bill 2021
45	Finance Bill 2021
46	Health and Criminal Justice (Covid-19) (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2021
47	Health Insurance (Amendment) Bill 2021
48	Companies (Corporate Enforcement Authority) Bill 2021
49	Official Languages (Amendment) Bill 2019
50	Maritime Area Planning Bill 2021

Appendix VI

Meetings and Reports of Parliamentary Committees in 2021

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	70	7
Joint Committee on Children, Disability, Equality and Integration	52	1
Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action	64	2
Joint Committee on Disability Matters	60	1
Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science	41	3
Joint Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment	36	4
Joint Committee on European Union Affairs	47	2
Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach	48	4
Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence	45	1
Joint Committee on Gender Equality	1	–
Joint Committee on Health (and Sub-Committee on Mental Health)	114	2
Joint Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage	58	8
Joint Committee on Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement	32	–
Joint Committee on Justice	28	15
Joint Committee on Key Issues affecting the Traveller Community (Note: this was a special committee)	34	1
Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media	38	2
Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands	34	4
Joint Committee on Transport and Communications	75	3
Total	876	60

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	6	–
Select Committee on Children, Disability, Equality, and Integration	1	–
Select Committee on Environment and Climate Action	5	–
Select Committee on Disability Matters	–	–
Select Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science	2	–
Select Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment	4	–
Select Committee on European Union Affairs	–	–
Select Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach	15	–
Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence	4	–
Select Committee on Health	2	–
Select Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage	16	–
Select Committee on Justice	9	–
Select Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media	2	–
Select Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands	3	–
Select Committee on Transport and Communications	4	–
Total	73	–

Standing Committees		
Committee	Number of meetings held	Number of reports presented to the Houses
Committee on Budgetary Oversight (Dáil)	47	5
Comhchoiste na Gaeilge, na Gaeltachta agus Phobal Labhartha na Gaeilge	46	3
Select Committee on Members' Interests of Dáil Éireann	1	–
Select Committee on Members' Interests of Seanad Éireann	6	–
Committee of Public Accounts (Dáil)	56	4
Joint Committee on Public Petitions	30	1
Total	186	13

Special Committees		
Committee	Number of meetings held	Number of reports presented to the Houses
Select Committee on the Withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union (Seanad)	35	2
Total	35	2

Notes

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

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

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

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

Special Committees (Joint or Select) are established to examine a particular subject and usually cease to exist when they have completed their work and presented their final reports to the House(s).
- The 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 2021 to 31 December 2021.

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 2021

No protected disclosures were received by the Houses of the Oireachtas Service in the reporting period 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021.

Appendix VIII

Commission Meetings and Attendance in 2021

The table shows the number of meetings held by the Commission, its Finance Committee and attendance at meetings in 2021.

January-December 2021 Meetings		
Members	Commission	Finance Committee
Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl, Ceann Comhairle (Chairperson)	12/12	–
Senator Mark Daly Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann (Deputy Chairperson)	12/12	6/6
Deputy Joe Carey	12/12	6/6
Deputy Francis Noel Duffy	11/12	–
Mr. Peter Finnegan, Secretary General (Chief Executive)	09/12	–
Senator Seán Kyne	12/12	–
Deputy Jennifer Murnane O'Connor	09/12	–
Deputy Louise O'Reilly	11/12	3/6
Senator Ned O'Sullivan	12/12	5/6
Deputy Duncan Smith	10/11	–
Senator Mark Wall	11/12	6/6

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.

COVID-19 – is a highly infectious respiratory disease caused by a novel coronavirus. The disease was first identified in December 2019 and the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared a pandemic in March 2020.

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

Management Board (MB) – the Management Board 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.

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.

OneLearning – The Civil Service shared learning and development system.

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.

The Plinth – Houses of the Oireachtas Intranet Platform.

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.

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.

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.