

# Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Annual Report 2022



Coimisiún Thithe  
an Oireachtais  
Houses of the  
Oireachtas Commission



## Houses of the Oireachtas

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## Introduction by Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach



**Seán Ó Fearghail T.D.**  
Ceann Comhairle  
and Chairperson  
of Commission



**Senator Jerry Buttimer**  
Cathaoirleach of Seanad  
Éireann and Deputy  
Chairperson of Commission

We are pleased to present the 2022 Annual Report of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission 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 first progress report on implementation of the 2022-2024 Strategic Plan, presented to the Commission by the Secretary General as required by section 16 of the Commission Acts. Guided by the Plan's vision of a *Parliament working effectively for the People* the Houses of the Oireachtas Service (the Service) continued to advance the key strategic objectives of the Commission to deliver high quality services to support the parliamentary work of members.

The Commission welcomes the progress that has been made and looks forward to this continuing over the next phase with the focus on providing quality services and being responsive to the changing needs and priorities of the Houses and members.

The audited financial accounts for the year 2022 are presented at page 111. The accounts shows that expenditure for running the Houses last year was €141.5m. The Commission will continue to build on its achievements over the last year and is committed to ensuring efficient use of available resources in its ongoing work.

An important area of focus for the Commission at the current time is to ensure that all members of the Houses and their staff have the personal security they need when carrying out their work away from Leinster House. There has been a growing trend in recent times of threats of violence and other incidents directed at members because of the position they hold. This situation is extremely concerning. Members must be allowed to go about their work safely and securely, free from any form of threats of violence or intimidating behaviour, whether in their homes, meeting their constituents, or participating in public events. In response to this situation the Commission has put a scheme in place to support

members to implement additional security measures, as necessary, based on a security assessment of their constituency offices and homes by their local Crime Prevention Officer.

Protecting female members of the Houses from online threats and intimidation is a particularly important consideration. At a meeting we held recently with female members of the Dáil and Seanad we heard directly from them regarding the misogynist harassment they face online and its impact. In an effort to counter this abuse we have established a Task Force charged with addressing the abuse and harassment experienced by those in public life.

The Commission will continue to support and facilitate this process and we would like to acknowledge the contribution of the Oireachtas Women's Parliamentary Caucus and *Women for Election* to this process.

We also continue to support members of the Houses, in their role as employers, and members' staff. The Commission established a Dignity and Respect Steering Group charged with supporting implementation of the Dignity and Respect Policy for the parliamentary community. The Policy was introduced to help promote a respectful and positive working environment in which everyone is treated with dignity and respect. A staff engagement plan has been implemented to enhance engagement with political staff as key members of the parliamentary community, whether they are based in constituency offices or in the Leinster House complex. A workplace support programme has been introduced to provide a confidential wellbeing support service for members and their staff and family members.

To further the goal of diversity and inclusion, the Commission provided support for the establishment of the first Oireachtas LGBTQI+ Caucus, formed with the objective to bring more LGBTQI+ issues to the forefront. Its main purpose is to provide a forum for discussion and engagement with other parliamentarians on issues that affect the LGBTQI+ community. The Caucus began its work this year and its achievements will be reported in the Commission's annual report next year.

Over the past year the Houses marked another important milestone in our parliamentary history as we commemorated the centenary of Seanad Éireann, 100 years after the first sitting of the Seanad on 11 December 1922. The *Seanad 100* commemorative programme, reflecting the theme *Minority Voices, Major Changes*, explores the origins and achievements of Seanad Éireann and its place in our parliamentary democracy, as well as contributions of Senators to Irish public life. The commemorative events included public lectures, exhibitions and educational activities and highlighted some notable Seanad debates over the last 100 years. A ceremonial sitting of the Seanad took place in the Dáil Chamber on 12 December 2022 concluding the commemoration of the first 100 years of Seanad Éireann. Content curated for the commemorative programme and a documentary chronicling 100 years of Seanad Éireann, featuring contributions from historians and Senators, can be viewed on the Oireachtas website [www.oireachtas.ie](http://www.oireachtas.ie)

Another important parliamentary occasion was the special sitting of Dáil Éireann on Saturday 17 December to approve the nomination of a new Taoiseach and members of government. This was a significant constitutional event and the second occasion a Taoiseach was nominated by the 33rd Dáil. Deputy Leo Varadkar's nomination was approved by 87 votes to 62 votes in the House.

We continued to facilitate young people in having their voices heard in our national parliament. Under the *Seanad 100* programme, it was a great privilege to host members of *Foróige* and *Comhairle na nÓg* for a debate on Climate Action in the Seanad Chamber. Organised in partnership with the *Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action*, the event was a wonderful occasion to observe young people's engagement with the democratic process and to hear their perspectives on climate challenges and climate action. We would like to thank the Chairman of the Joint Committee, Deputy Brian Leddin, and Committee members for facilitating the event.

We were also privileged to host the first *Seanad na nÓg* student debate involving youth delegates from across the island of Ireland for a debate in the Seanad Chamber on issues that matter to young people. This was another important opportunity for young people to advocate on issues of particular importance to their generation from within the Houses of the Oireachtas. We would like to thank Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderick O'Gorman TD, for his support in relation to this.

We commend all the young people involved for their inspiring and passionate debates in the chamber.

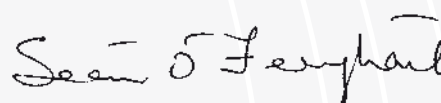
As the pandemic-related restrictions were lifted we have been able to welcome visitors, tour groups and cultural activities back to Leinster House. We welcomed almost 30,000 visitors last year and 1,063 participated in guided tours of the House.

We also had the privilege of welcoming foreign leaders to address joint sittings of both Houses of the Oireachtas, including the President of Ukraine, H.E. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who delivered a virtual address,

President of the European Commission, H.E. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Parliament, H.E. Roberta Metsola, and President of the United States of America, H.E. Joseph R. Biden.

Earlier this year we held a tree-planting ceremony on the grounds of Leinster House where we planted a tree as a living memorial to those who lost their lives during the COVID-19 pandemic. We hope the tree will be a source of solace and remembrance for the families and friends of those who died from Covid 19.

In closing, we wish to thank the members of the Commission and committees of the Commission for their work towards achieving our objectives. We also express our appreciation to former members who served on the Commission over the last year and former Deputy Chairperson Senator Mark Daly. We would like to acknowledge the achievements of the Service over the past year. We express our gratitude to the Secretary General, the Management Board and the staff of the Service for their work in delivering the services required to support the business of the Houses and the work of members.



**Seán Ó Fearghail TD**  
Ceann Comhairle



**Senator Jerry Buttimer**  
Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann

## Secretary General's Overview

### Annual Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022-2024 – A Parliament Working Effectively for the People.



**Peter Finnegan**  
Clerk of the Dáil and  
Secretary General

I am pleased to present the first progress report on the Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022-2024 – *A Parliament Working Effectively for the People*. The Plan presents an ambitious programme that seeks to meet the challenges of both today and tomorrow.

During 2022 the parliamentary community continued to adopt the important preventative measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the Leinster House complex. While staff continued to remain vigilant and to implement the public health guidance, there was a clear sense around Leinster House that business was returning to normal.

In 2022 the Oireachtas Service continued to build on the blended working practices initiated during the pandemic to support both organisational effectiveness and the wellbeing of the parliamentary community. The Houses of the Oireachtas *Blended Working Policy* was approved by the Management Board in June following completion of a broad consultation process. The intention of the *Blended Working Policy* is to build on the agile and flexible work practices adopted during the pandemic in order to improve our standards of service and organisational effectiveness.

Supporting the business needs of the organisation is of paramount importance. In October 2022 the Facilities Management Unit (FMU) commenced a large-scale procurement and distribution of furniture, to support staff working from home in response to the policy. This process will continue into 2023.

The Commission's net outturn was €139.3m for 2022. At the end of 2022, the Commission employed 674 FTE staff and 461 FTE members' and party staff were employed under the Scheme of Secretariat Assistance.

Cyber security remains a key focus for the Service. In 2022 the Oireachtas Cyber Security Strategy and Roadmap were developed with input and guidance from the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and cyber security specialists and are supported by the results of the Oireachtas cyber security maturity assessment conducted in 2021. Initiatives have been and will continue to be developed that will ensure alignment with the NCSC baseline standards over a three-year period.

Numerous public events took place throughout 2022, these events helped strengthen public engagement and raise awareness of the work of the Houses of the Oireachtas. In February the Cathaoirleach, Senator Mark Daly launched *Seanad100 – Minority Voices, Major Changes*, the programme of events to commemorate and celebrate the centenary of Seanad Éireann.

A two-part documentary, chronicling 100 years of Seanad Éireann was broadcast by Oireachtas TV in December; featuring contributions from noted historians and



members past and present, including President Michael D. Higgins, former President Mary Robinson and Senator David Norris. The final initiative in the year-long programme of commemoration for the centenary of the first sitting of Seanad Éireann was the publication of *100 Bliain de Sheanad Éireann 1922-2022* by the Institute of Public Administration. This was launched by the Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann in a ceremony hosted in the Oireachtas Library Reading Room in February of this year.

In May the PBO hosted the 14th Annual Meeting of the OECD Working Party of Parliamentary Budget Officials and Independent Fiscal Institutions (PBO Network) in Dublin Castle. Approximately 100 participants representing the OECD countries and the OECD partner countries were in attendance. As host, the PBO also participated in and chaired sessions on the agenda.

In July the Library and Research Service, in partnership with the Standing Committee of IFLAPARL (International Federation of Library Associations – Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section), hosted the 37th annual IFLAPARL pre-conference in Dublin. The theme of the pre-conference was: *The parliamentary life of information: how library & research services provide value for parliaments, members, and citizens.*

Members' inter-parliamentary meetings resumed in person in January, there were 35 PACE Plenary and Committee meetings in 2022.

On 6 April H.E. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, addressed a joint sitting of both Houses of the Oireachtas via video link from Kyiv. President Zelenskyy is the sixth head of state to address a joint sitting of the Houses of the Oireachtas and the first to do so via video link. A photo exhibition entitled '*Chronicles of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022:*

*the beginning*' went on display in Leinster House 2000 on the 13 July. The exhibition was opened by the Ambassador of Ukraine to Ireland, H.E. Larysa Gerasko. The Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD, agreed to host the exhibition following his visit to Ukraine.

On 1 December President Ursula von der Leyen of the European Commission addressed a joint sitting of the Houses of the Oireachtas as part of a visit to Dublin. The political messages she laid out in her speech reinforced in depth the Union's support for Ireland in terms of economic development, Brexit and the peace process.

2022 was another key year for UK-Ireland relations. Against the backdrop of the EU-UK negotiations on the Northern Ireland protocol, both Ireland and the UK sought to accelerate the recovery of their economies and strengthen the close political ties that connect us. The 61st Plenary of the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA) took place in Westminster Hall's Grand Committee Room on 1 March and the 62nd Plenary of the BIPA concluded on 25 October following a two-day meeting held at the Farnham Estate Hotel in Co. Cavan. At both meetings there was constructive and engaging debate on a range of topics from the Northern Ireland Protocol, legacy issues, Brexit, the attack on Ukraine, and vaccine rollout.

Early in 2022 the Service established a Steering Committee to review the recommendations made in the report of the *Forum on a Family Friendly and Inclusive Parliament*. The forum was established by the Ceann Comhairle to generate practical and achievable recommendations that could make the Houses of the Oireachtas a more inclusive, family friendly and gender sensitive workplace. All of the recommendations include timelines for implementation, generally ranging from 12 months to 3 years. Implementation plans will be developed to progress the recommendations.

The Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group was renamed the '*Steering Group on Openness and Inclusion*'. The renaming of the Steering Group acknowledged the emerging demand for diversity and inclusion in the workplace and additional pathways to employment with five official placement programmes now in place in the Oireachtas, namely: the Student Placement Programme for members; the Transition Year Programme; the Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) Programme; WAM (Willing, Able, Mentoring) Programme; and the ISL and Trinity College Deaf Studies Programme.

The OWL programme continues to be hugely successful based on the support and contribution of everyone in the Houses of the Oireachtas and the HR team who currently manage the programme on a daily basis. At the 8th Annual Civil Service Excellence and Innovation Awards ceremony which took place on 30 March in St. Patrick's Hall, Dublin Castle, the OWL programme won the award in the category *Workplace and Organisation of the Future*. There are now 12 graduates from the programme working in Civil Service departments/ offices and the remaining graduates are undertaking further education and training. We are immensely proud of our graduates and we wish them every success in their new careers.

The Service's Digital Transformation Programme has been a key driver in transforming the way we work. 2022 was a building year for a lot of digital transformation projects. The development of the Chamber Business Platform will provide the overall data model, architecture and core screens for the Dáil Chamber Business System. The Speakers list system will allow staff to create, update and manage all information relating to members speaking on any item of business in the Dáil chamber.

Phase 2 of Áis-Linn Parliamentary Business Calendar, a bi-lingual bespoke portal which enhances service delivery to members, included enhancements to Topical Issues and Commencement Matters. This enhanced functionality will provide members with important additional information.

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service is committed to growing its capacity to work through the first official language of the State, the Irish language. During 2022 implementation of the Rannóg 2024 Plan continued with the objective of publishing official translations of the Acts of the Oireachtas.

To advance the Strategic Outcome '*Toward a Bilingual Parliament*' the Library and Research Service (L&RS) was commissioned to carry out a comparative study of bilingual parliaments. Over the last 12 months the L&RS worked with *Rannóg* an Aistriúcháin to scope and plan the study. This work will help chart a path towards functional bilingualism for the Houses of the Oireachtas. Work also progressed to facilitate an increase in the amount of Irish spoken in both Houses. Two 'An Ghaeilge sa Teach' steering groups were launched in 2022, final reports from the two groups will be published this year.

Considerable progress has been made in increasing the cohort of bilingual staff in the Service despite challenges along the way. A Bilingual Recruitment Strategy is currently under development to support this strategic outcome. Work also progressed on the range of services that the Houses of the Oireachtas provides bilingually, building on *Straitéis na Gaeilge and the Oireachtas Language Scheme 2018*.

The *Bilingualism in Technology Policy* was approved in December by the Management Board and will ensure early analysis of projects to guarantee timely

identification of bilingual requirements. Carrying out a Bilingual Scoping Analysis (BSA) is at the core of this new approach. Rannóg an Aistriúcháin involvement and contribution to the Digital Parliament programme has been ongoing and all systems are being developed bilingually e.g., Áis-Linn and new Digital Signage which is in development for use throughout the Leinster House Campus.

Other systems with a bilingual component include the Houses of the Oireachtas bilingual app, and the DocsLaid application which became available in Irish last September, an important milestone for Parliamentary Library and Research Services. Future systems development such as Dáil Journals, Seanad systems and Committee portals will also include bilingualism.

Given the Service's increased reliance on digital infrastructure to conduct business, the Oireachtas, during 2022, proceeded to plan for the migration to cloud services and storage and retrieval of data. Extensive consultation took place with the NCSC and with other Parliaments while also recognising the OGCIO cloud computing advice. This move will greatly enhance the Oireachtas's ability to prevent and respond to cyber-attacks or data breaches.

The Oireachtas Service throughout 2022 committed to reducing energy consumption and improving energy efficiency, with the support of the OPW. In September, the Government announced measures to cut energy use across the public sector in response to energy security needs in the context of the Russian war in Ukraine. The Facilities Management Unit (FMU) has engaged with the OPW to implement a suite of measures over and above normal energy management in line with the government's proposals. The Houses of the Oireachtas Service's Climate Action Roadmap will set out a number of performance indicators for the Service.

To help prepare for this a new sustainability team was established in the Service during 2022.

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.

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. 2022 saw important work towards achieving our strategic objectives against the backdrop of a rapidly changing operating environment. Staff wholeheartedly embraced the challenges placed upon them over the last year. Supporting the work of Parliament and its members is a critical function in any democracy and staff of the Service do this to an exceptionally high standard.

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

I also wish to thank the members of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission for their support over the past year. Working together, significant progress has been made in 2022 and I am confident that we can build on this over the next 12 months in realising our shared vision of *A Parliament working effectively for the People*.



**Peter Finnegan**

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



## Our Governance Framework

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### 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.

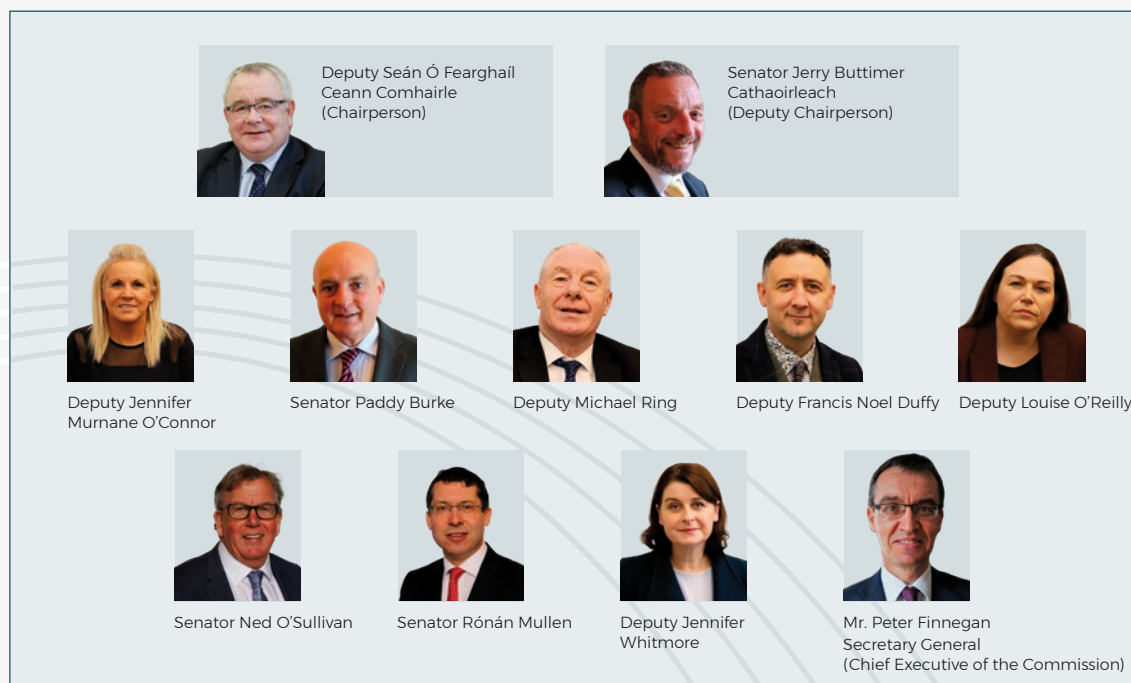
The Service is headed by the Clerk of the Dáil and Secretary General. It is staffed by 622 Civil Servants of the State and 52 State industrial staff (full-time equivalents) whose terms and conditions of employment are set down in the General Civil Service Statutory Code, the Staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Act 1959 and the Commission Acts 2003 to 2021.

There are 461 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 (June 2023)



## 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, the Deputy Secretary General, and four Assistant Secretaries reporting to the Secretary General.

The Management Board comprises the Secretary General (Chair of the Board), the Deputy Secretary General, 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 Strategic Committee (GPA); Engagement, Sustainability and Campus Development Strategic Committee (ESCD); People and Organisation Strategic Committee (P&O); Technology and Digital Transformation Strategic Committee (TDT); and Coiste Straitéiseach an Oireachtais Dhátheangaigh (CSOD). 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.

## Members of the Management Board (June 2023)



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 Action Plans for the Service 2022-2024. 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 €462m 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 of 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 was 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 2022 can be found at Appendix III. The Commission may also establish sub-Committees as necessary to assist it in carrying out its responsibilities.

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

Deputy Seán Ó Fearghail Ceann Comhairle	Chairperson <i>Ex officio</i> member
Senator Jerry Buttimer 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
Senator Paddy Burke	Seanad member
Deputy Francis Noel Duffy	Minister's representative
Deputy Jennifer Murnane O'Connor	Dáil member
Deputy Louise O'Reilly	Dáil member
Senator Ned O'Sullivan	Seanad member
Deputy Michael Ring	Dáil member
Senator Rónán Mullen	Seanad member
Deputy Jennifer Whitmore	Dáil member

## Members of the Audit Committee (June 2023)

 <div>Mr Pat McLoughlin (external member and Chair)</div>			
 <div>Deputy Francis Noel Duffy</div>	 <div>Ms Noreen Fahy (external member)</div>	 <div>Mr Cyril Maybury (external member)</div>	 <div>Senator Victor Boyhan</div>
 <div>Deputy Emer Higgins</div>	 <div>Mr Charles Hearne (Staff of the Service)</div>	 <div>Deputy Rose Conway Walsh</div>	



## Overview of the Work of the Commission in 2022

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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 2022 is set out in Appendix VIII of this report. The Commission has continued to meet virtually during this period.

In 2022 the Commission held 11 meetings, including one incorporeal meeting. The matters dealt with can be summarised as follows:

### Membership of Commission Sub-groups

- The Commission appointed members to fill vacancies in the membership of the Finance Committee

### 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 2021
- Commission's Statement of Estimates for 2023

### Strategy

- Strategic Plan 2022-2024 for the Houses of the Oireachtas Service
- Programme of Work for the Leinster House Complex
- ICT Digital Transformation Strategy Implementation
- Cyber Security Strategy for the Houses of the Oireachtas Service
- Communications Strategy Implementation
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy for the Houses of the Oireachtas Service

### Policy and Services

- Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members
- Digital Transformation Workplan and Budget 2023
- Dignity and Respect Policy for the Parliamentary Workplace
- Dignity and Respect Policy Steering Group: appointment of members
- 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 Certification Form in 2023
- Service Level Agreement for the Print Facility
- Professional Development Training for Members of the Houses
- Report of the review of the Private Members' Bills Service
- Report of the Steering Group on Diversity and Inclusion
- Child Safeguarding Statement for the Houses of the Oireachtas

- Scheme for Student Work Experience Placements offered by members of both Houses of the Oireachtas
- Survey by a UCD research team of members of both Houses of the Oireachtas
- Leinster House Guided Tours Service
- Blended Working Policy for staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service

### Annual Reporting

- Commission Annual Report 2021 to the Houses of the Oireachtas in accordance with section 6 of the Commission Acts
- Audit Committee Annual Report 2021 to the Commission in accordance with section 14A(10)(c) of the Commission Acts
- Secretary General's 2021 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
- Senior Public Service Appointment: Chief Operations Officer (Deputy Secretary General) Houses of the Oireachtas Service
- Filling of the post of Superintendent of the Houses of the Oireachtas
- Extension to term of office of Clerk of Dáil Éireann and Secretary General of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service

### Legal

- Legal Proceedings involving the Houses of the Oireachtas

### Business Case Approval

- Chamber Business Manager Application

- Development of a Speakers' Lists Application
- Development of *Áis-Linn* Parliamentary Business Calendar
- Transfer of ICT services and storage of data to a cloud-based platform
- Installation of Hybrid Meeting Room Technology
- Cyber Security Programme
- Chief Information Officer Post
- Replacement of software for the counting of votes for the vocational panel seats in Seanad elections
- Proposal from the Working Group on Portraiture and other Art
- Proposal for a *Houses of the Oireachtas Covid-19 Oral History Project*

### Accommodation

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

### Security Matters

- Personal Safety and Security of 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

### 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 the Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022-2024 – A Parliament Working Effectively for the People

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## Vision

A Parliament working  
effectively for the People.

## Mission

To be an innovative and responsive  
parliamentary service that proudly supports  
the Houses of the Oireachtas in effectively  
discharging their constitutional functions;  
supports members as parliamentarians and  
representatives of the People; and promotes  
an accessible and engaged Parliament.

## Values



Impartial



Accountable



Inclusive



People  
focused



Collegiate



Innovative



# Secretary General's Report

## Annual Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Plan

### A Parliament Working Effectively 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.

This is the first progress report on the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2022-2024 and provides a good foundation from which we aim to achieve the five high-level strategic outcomes that underpin our three-year strategy. In 2022 the Service made significant progress in achieving the 27 goals as set out under the five key strategies of the Strategic Plan 2022-2024:

1. An Effective Parliament
2. An Inclusive and Well-Supported Parliamentary Community
3. An Open, Engaged and Sustainable Parliament
4. A Digitally Transformed Parliament
5. Towards a Bilingual Parliament.

This report is an important step towards achieving our strategic objectives against the backdrop of a rapidly changing operating environment. Over the course of the Strategic Plan, we will continue to transform our capacity as a digital parliament and invest in technology to support parliamentary activity and inform the public. The adoption of a new

Cyber Security Strategy for the Houses of the Oireachtas Service will help build a resilient parliament. The Service's Digital Transformation Programme has been a key driver in transforming the way we work. Through this programme we have built resilience into our operating systems, enhanced public engagement, and improved our efficiency and effectiveness.

Prior investment under the Programme enabled the Service to transition rapidly to a blended working model at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Blended Working Policy has allowed us to take the best from our experiences of the restrictions, without impacting adversely on the importance of building the parliamentary community whilst also maintaining and improving our standards of service.

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy will also be an important foundation on how we seek to broaden our parliamentary community. At the heart of our strategic plan is a recognition that the people who make up our parliamentary community are our greatest asset.

Overall, this Report shows how the Service has responded successfully to the emerging challenges and opportunities presented in our eighth strategic plan for the Houses of the Oireachtas Service.

## Key Parliamentary Activities 2019-2022

Key Parliamentary Activities	2022	2021	2020	2019
<b>Sittings of the Houses</b>				
Dáil sitting days	106	95	82	102
Seanad sitting days	105	84	48	93
Dáil sitting hours	1,076	943	822	914
Seanad sitting hours	721	608	324	511
<b>Divisions recorded (votes in the Houses)</b>				
Dáil Divisions	152	154	139	161
Seanad Divisions	125	76	93	192
<b>Parliamentary Questions</b>				
PQs and replies to PQs processed <sup>1</sup>	68,153	68,297	48,735	57,697
Questions for written answer	55,688	55,898	37,941	47,197
Questions for oral answer	2,349	1,690	977	2,018
<b>Official Debate and Translation</b>				
Hours of parliamentary debate	3,639	3,303	1,743	2,754
Pages reported and published	44,502	37,466	20,948	35,123
Days of simultaneous translation of Oireachtas proceedings	211	179	130	195
Bilingual titles of Bills	121	160	78	108
<b>Meetings of Parliamentary Committees</b>				
Committee meetings	1,065	1,170	344	623
Committee sitting hours	1,842	1,752	597	1,329
Committee witnesses	3,296	2,596	792	1,986
Reports presented by Committees	69	75	9	61
<b>The Legislative Process</b>				
Bills initiated in both Houses	121	160	78	108
Government Bills	66	49	35	40
Private Members' Bills	55	111	43	68
Bills initiated in the Dáil	96	112	60	80
Government Bills	58	36	24	28
Private Members' Bills	38	76	36	52
Bills initiated in the Seanad	25	48	18	28
Government Bills	8	13	11	12
Private Members' Bills	17	35	7	16
Amendments proposed to Bills	7,238	4,283	1,620	2,660
Bills passed by both Houses	52	50	32	54
Government Bills	52	48	31	48
Private Members' Bills	0	2	1	6

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

Key Parliamentary Activities	2022	2021	2020	2019
<b>Legal and Legislative Services</b>				
Legal advices issued	619	639	593	537
<i>To Parliamentary Committees</i>	160	145	64	99
<i>To the Service</i>	459	494	529	438
PMB proposals (new) in receipt of legal advice	45	57	42	31
PMB proposals (new) in receipt of drafting services	22	33	32	16
<b>Parliamentary Library &amp; Research Service Services</b>				
Parliamentary Library & Research Service Publications	108	129	102	103
<i>Bill Digests published</i>	50	42	19	34
<i>Bill Briefings published</i>	41	61	24	26
Customised briefings for members & other users	1,301	1,186	1,225	1,542
Documents laid before the Houses	1,835	2,128	1,930	2,029
<b>Records Management</b>				
FOI requests received	120	125	200	272
<b>Parliamentary Budget Office</b>				
Parliamentary Budget Office Publications	61	68	84	78
Briefings provided to Oireachtas Committees	7	5	3	9
<b>Public Engagement</b>				
Press releases	592	619	204	469
Visitors to Leinster House	29,239	1,874	13,302	98,402
Facebook followers <sup>2</sup>	9,164	8,713	8,052	5,986
Twitter followers <sup>2</sup>	44,669	41,498	38,892	32,181
<b>Oireachtas.ie</b>				
Visits to website	1,405,838	1,231,016	2,298,617	2,338,948
Website page views	4,661,853	4,576,635	6,611,405	7,044,427
<b>Oireachtas TV</b>				
Oireachtas TV Hours of Broadcast	8,769	8,769	8,784	8,760
<i>Live broadcast of Oireachtas proceedings</i>	1,254	1,435	982	1,039
<i>Broadcast of original content</i>	972	859	2,424	1,401
<b>Interparliamentary Engagement</b>				
PACE Plenary and Committee meetings	35	68	58	38
Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE	6	15	13	8
<b>MS Teams</b>				
MS Teams virtual meetings	89,180	47,913	21,121	-

<sup>2</sup> As at 31 December.

Key Resources	2022	2021	2020	2019
Staff of the Service (Civil Service Staff, State & Industrial) (FTEs) <sup>3</sup>	674	637	596	572
Members' staff (FTEs) <sup>3</sup>	461	451	437	454
Net Expenditure (€000)	139,280	132,493	134,065	124,612

<sup>3</sup> As at 31 December.

## Five Strategic Outcomes, Goals and Key Activities, 2022

### Strategic Outcome 1

#### An Effective Parliament

1. Support and advise Dáil Éireann, Seanad Éireann, Oireachtas Committees and their members in conducting their business effectively.
2. Promote initiatives to support an effective legislative process in Dáil Éireann, Seanad Éireann and Oireachtas Committees.
3. Strengthen the delivery of research, analysis and information services to support the legislative, oversight and scrutiny functions of the Houses, Oireachtas Committees and members.
4. Ensure the delivery of quality support services to members in a changing working environment.
5. Ensure high standards of professionalism and corporate governance.

### Strategic Outcome 2

#### An Inclusive and Well-Supported Parliamentary Community

1. Promote and support the health, wellbeing and resilience of the parliamentary community.
2. Reimagine the way we work and implement flexible and innovative blended working practices.

3. Provide ongoing support and development opportunities to ensure we are an employer of choice.
4. Strengthen our culture of dignity and respect, diversity and inclusion.
5. Develop a strategy to implement the recommendations of the Forum on a Family Friendly and Inclusive Parliament.
6. Provide a safe, secure and accessible physical environment that meets the needs of the parliamentary community.

### Strategic Outcome 3

#### An Open, Engaged and Sustainable Parliament

1. Strengthen public engagement with the Houses of the Oireachtas, including through the use of digital communication technologies.
2. Further develop our education programme for primary, post-primary and third-level institutions.
3. Establish a centralised Oireachtas Archives to safeguard and preserve the documents produced by the Houses of the Oireachtas.
4. Enhance our engagement with Government Departments.
5. Strengthen our EU, UK and other international relationships.
6. Support the delivery of the *Public Sector Decarbonisation Strategy, Climate Action Plan 2021* and the implementation of biodiversity initiatives.



**Strategic Outcome 4**

A Digitally Transformed Parliament

1. Continue to advance our cyber security capabilities.
2. Progress the implementation of the Digital Transformation Programme.
3. Continue to implement innovative solutions to modernise our technical infrastructure in the context of a blended working model.
4. Provide effective and responsive technical supports to ensure resilience and continuity of service in our digital systems.

**Strategic Outcome 5**

Towards a Bilingual Parliament

1. Continue to implement the Rannóg 2024 Plan with the objective of publishing official translations of the Acts of the Oireachtas in a timely manner and clearing historic arrears.
2. Conduct a comparative study of bilingual parliaments to enable us to progress towards a bilingual Oireachtas.
3. Facilitate a progressive increase in the amount of Irish spoken in both Houses.
4. Progressively increase the cohort of bilingual staff in the Service.
5. Develop initiatives to support members and staff in maintaining and improving their competence in spoken Irish.
6. Adopt a 'Bilingualism through Technology' programme for the Service.

## Strategic Outcome 1: An Effective Parliament

### Our Goals:

- Goal 1:** Support and advise Dáil Éireann, Seanad Éireann, Oireachtas Committees and their members in conducting their business effectively.
- Goal 2:** Promote initiatives to support an effective legislative process in Dáil Éireann, Seanad Éireann and Oireachtas Committees.
- Goal 3:** Strengthen the delivery of research, analysis and information services to support the legislative, oversight and scrutiny functions of the Houses, Oireachtas Committees and members.
- Goal 4:** Ensure the delivery of quality support services to members in a changing working environment.
- Goal 5:** Ensure high standards of professionalism and corporate governance.

### Our Key Activities and Achievements 2022:

- **Dáil Éireann** sat for 106 days (1,076 hours).
- The Dáil Business Committee held 36 meetings.
- The new Dáil Business website facilitated the production of 135 Dáil business daily PDF versions and 38 Dáil business weekly PDF versions, replacing the printed Dáil Order Papers.
- 152 Dáil divisions were recorded.
- 385 Topical Issues were selected for debate in the Dáil.
- 68,153 Parliamentary Questions were processed.
- **Seanad Éireann** sat for 105 days (721 hours).
- 125 Seanad divisions were recorded.
- 406 Commencement matters were tabled for debate in the Seanad.
- 121 **Bills** were initiated in the Houses – 55% were Government Bills and 45% were Private Members Bills (PMBs).
- 52 Bills were passed by both Houses during 2022, all Government Bills.
- The **Debates Office**:
  - published 44,502 pages of the Official Report of the proceedings of the Dáil, Seanad and Parliamentary Committees,
  - three Dáil Bound Volumes
  - four Seanad Bound Volumes.
  - written replies to Parliamentary Questions (55,688 questions) not taken on the floor of the Dáil are also included in the Official Report.
- Overall, parliamentary **Committees** held 1,065 meetings (over 1,842 hours).
- 3,296 witnesses attended Committee meetings.
- 69 Committee reports were presented.

#### Office of the Parliamentary Legal Advisers (OPLA):

- 619 parliamentary and corporate legal advices were issued. One hundred and sixty of these advices took the form of legal briefings delivered to Parliamentary Committees. 459 advices issued to the Service, with 197 issuing to the Service on parliamentary and procedural issues and 262 issuing to the Service on corporate issues.
- Legal advisory services were provided for 45 PMB proposals and
- Legislative drafting services were provided for 22 PMB proposals.
- Eleven PMBs settled by the OPLA were introduced to the Houses in 2022 and a further 10 PMBs were settled in 2022 with the members concerned.
- The OPLA for the first time, provided a dedicated legal advisor to an Oireachtas Committee for the duration of that Committee's work, namely the Joint Committee on International Surrogacy.

**Library and Parliamentary Research**

**Service (PRS)** delivered 1,301 information and research briefings in response to requests from members and Parliamentary Committees.

**Parliamentary Research Service (PRS):**

- published 50 Bills Digests
- 41 Bills Briefings on Government Bills
- Detailed scrutiny of five PMBs and eight Pre-Legislative Scrutiny outputs of general schemes of Government Bills for Committees.
- provided 12 Committees with research support during 2022.

**Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO):**

- produced 61 publications (briefing papers, commentaries, notes, working papers, analytical tools, and original data visualisation presentations and infographics)
- prepared 7 briefings for Oireachtas Committees and
- completed 39 costing requests.

The PBO released a new version of its Debt Sustainability Analysis (DSA) calculator, including an explainer guide and a new Interest Rate Risk interactive tool.

In addition, the PBO published additional material to assist members and the public understand the costs of potential Budget proposals ahead of the Budget. This included a “ready reckoner” in infographic format which provides a quick overview of the cost of particular measures. This was supported by interactive data visualisation tools.

**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. At the end of 2022, there was 460.95 FTE members’ and party staff employed under the *Scheme of Secretariat Assistance* and Members’ HR processed 133 new hires in the twelve months of 2022.

The Political Staff Engagement Plan was successfully rolled out in 2022 which included the Political Staff Newsletter, bespoke seminars provided by the Workplace Support Programme on topics such as Dealing with Aggressive Callers and Dealing with Constituents with Mental Health or Addiction Issues; and the political staff lunches held in Leinster House in October 2022.

**Members’ Pensions Unit**, in 2022, undertook a review of pension entitlements for 460 pensioners, and applied pension increases in line with the public sector pay agreement.

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. In 2022 there were 2,606 callers (in person and by phone) to the One Stop Shop.

**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. In 2022, a total of 99 governance meetings were held.

**The Houses of the Oireachtas Service Strategic Plan 2022-2024** and **Action Plan 2022** were published.

The **Finance Unit** processed 6,129 invoices for goods and services. Twenty-five **procurement processes** were brought to conclusion in 2022, while at year end there were an additional 20 live procurements at various stages of completion.

The **Records Management Unit** coordinated the Service’s response to 120 FOI requests, and eight Data Protection Subject Access Requests (SARS). The **FOI GDPR Cross Service Working Group** met 10 times during 2022.

## Strategic Outcome 2: An Inclusive and Well-Supported Parliamentary Community

### Our Goals:

- Goal 1:** Promote and support the health, wellbeing and resilience of the parliamentary community.
- Goal 2:** Reimagine the way we work and implement flexible and innovative blended working practices.
- Goal 3:** Provide ongoing support and development opportunities to ensure we are an employer of choice.
- Goal 4:** Strengthen our culture of dignity and respect, diversity and inclusion.
- Goal 5:** Develop a strategy to implement the recommendations of the Forum on a Family Friendly and Inclusive Parliament.
- Goal 6:** Provide a safe, secure and accessible physical environment that meets the needs of the parliamentary community.

### Our Key Activities and Achievements 2022:

The Service operates a suite of health and wellbeing initiatives which supports increased resilience and enhances work-life balance.

The **Health and Wellbeing Group** organises monthly events and webinars to promote the health, wellbeing and resilience of all members of the parliamentary community. Eight took place in 2022.

The Houses of the Oireachtas **Blended Working Policy** was approved by the Management Board on 27 June 2022. The Blended Working Policy is based upon the central Civil Service Framework and aims to allow for the greatest level of flexibility while ensuring the Service can operate effectively as a parliamentary service.

An updated **Attendance Policy for the Service** was approved by the Management Board in January 2023.

In December HR Services began preparations to take part in a training and research programme with the University of Limerick called 'Pilot Your Day', in which staff learn strategies for self-regulation and self-organisation in both their work and personal lives.

**HR Services** provides a wide range of **training and development** opportunities to the staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service and members and their staff.

- There were 1,275 attendances at 556 courses (521 courses were delivered by external providers while the remaining 35 courses were delivered by internal Subject Matter Experts). Courses were delivered online and in-person.
- Forty-three Service staff pursued courses under the Advance/Refund of Fees Scheme.
- 34 managers availed of 'Managing a Blended Workforce' an online virtual classroom session delivered via WebEx on OneLearning.



### The Procedural Development Unit

designed and delivered several training initiatives, tailored to the specific procedural requirements of individual groups. Eighty-six of these courses were delivered to Departments, Oireachtas staff, and OneLearning users, with a total of 4,827 attendees.

The **PO Network** met six times in 2022 to discuss a range of issues.

HR Services continued to implement a strategic recruitment approach to ensuring the timely placement of new staff and bringing recruitment competitions in-house for faster turnaround. During 2022, 28 competitions were held and there were 93 new entrants to the organisation.

Throughout 2022 research on the **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy** took place.

The Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group was renamed the '**Steering Group on Openness and Inclusion**' to reflect its broader remit around diversity and inclusion programmes and its educational, access and engagement agenda.

The second group in the **Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) programme** graduated on 6 July 2022, at an awards ceremony in Leinster House, with 10 young people graduating who had commenced the OWL programme in September 2019. The third group of OWL trainees commenced placement onsite in September 2022. This is the first onsite placement of OWL trainees since the Covid-19 pandemic.

A **Dignity at Work (DAW)** e-learning course was developed in 2022 which includes the Civil Service Dignity at Work (DAW) Policy as well as the Oireachtas Service's own codes of practice.

Under the requirements of the Children First Act 2015, the Houses of the Oireachtas Service has a **Child Safeguarding Statement** in place, supported by a Child Safeguarding Implementation Plan.

On 21 December the Houses of the Oireachtas Service published its **Gender Pay Gap Report for 2022** in line with legislative requirements. The mean gender pay gap for the Service for the period 30 June 2021 to 29 June 2022 is -3.56%, while the median gender pay gap for the same period is -5.62%. The gender pay gap is the difference in the average hourly wage of men and women across a workforce, this includes basic pay, allowances and overtime.

The **Service's Safety Statement** sets out the commitments the Service expects from:

- the Office of Public Works (OPW)
- Political Personnel (members and their staff)
- Service Contractors
- Media Personnel
- Visitors.

In 2022 a new Safety Unit was established in the Houses of the Oireachtas Service and a new management system has been introduced to help reduce health and safety risks on the campus. The management system is based on a *Plan-Do-Check-Act* cycle of continuous improvement.

An Garda Síochána, at the request of the Houses of the Oireachtas, provided in person briefing sessions with members and their staff in respect of personal security.

A **Tours Management app** for members was launched in November. In December 2022 work began on a new **Visitor Management System (VMS)** in the Superintendents Section.

## Strategic Outcome 3: An Open, Engaged and Sustainable Parliament

### Our Goals:

- Goal 1:** Strengthen public engagement with the Houses of the Oireachtas, including through the use of digital communication technologies.
- Goal 2:** Further develop our education programme for primary, post-primary and third-level institutions.
- Goal 3:** Establish a centralised Oireachtas Archives to safeguard and preserve the documents produced by the Houses of the Oireachtas.
- Goal 4:** Enhance our engagement with Government Departments.
- Goal 5:** Strengthen our EU, UK and other international relationships.
- Goal 6:** Support the delivery of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Strategy, Climate Action Plan 2021 and the implementation of biodiversity initiatives.

### Our Key Activities and Achievements 2022:

The **Seanad100 – Minority Voices, Major Change** programme was launched on 15 February by the Cathaoirleach, Senator Mark Daly.

- The programme featured lectures, focussed exhibitions, a TV documentary, themed tours of Leinster House, Culture Night events, a Seanad100 newspaper supplement in partnership with the Irish Independent and Seanad na nÓg student debates hosted by Oireachtas Education in partnership with Foróige.
- There was dedicated Seanad 100 web content developed by the Oireachtas web team, and a #Seanad100 social media campaign. Oireachtas TV produced and aired a special centenary documentary marking the role and impact of the Seanad in December.
- The programme of events culminated in a special 100th Anniversary Ceremonial Sitting of the Seanad in December which was streamed live on Oireachtas TV.

In July 2022, the Library and Research Service, in partnership with the Standing Committee of IFLAPARL (International Federation of Library Associations – Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section), hosted the 37th annual IFLAPARL pre-conference in Dublin.

The Houses of the Oireachtas **Twitter and Facebook** accounts saw an increase in followers in 2022. 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 three awards at the annual national social media awards in 2022 in the following State Organisation categories: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. This was the fifth consecutive year that the social media team received Sockies awards.

The [Oireachtas.ie](https://oireachtas.ie) website is the primary public engagement vehicle for the work of the Houses of the Oireachtas, a wide variety of parliamentary content is published and consumed each sitting day on Oireachtas.ie.

2022 in summary:

- 1.4 million visits to Oireachtas.ie
- 4.67 million page views
- 584,000 page views of Members' pages
- 394,000 users
- 258,000 document downloads
- 20 million minutes of live streaming consumed
- 7,120 documents published (excluding legislation)

- 950 email and phone queries from the public answered.

In 2022 Oireachtas.ie was noted as one of the strongest performers in the National Disability Authority's web accessibility directive monitoring.

During 2022 **Oireachtas TV** presented **Irish Sign Language (ISL)** for all sittings including Leader's questions, parliamentary questions on policy and legislation and commencement matters.

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 *Seanad Éireann One Hundred Years, Part 1 and Part 2* was broadcast in December 2022.

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

- Oireachtas TV Budget 2023 Special
- The Russian invasion of Ukraine
- 50 Years of Ireland in the EU.

There were:

- 1,254 hours of live broadcast of parliamentary proceedings
- 972 hours of Oireachtas original TV content broadcast.

There were:

- 29,239 visitors to Leinster House. A comparison between the number of visitors to Leinster House in this period and the number of visitors to Leinster House in 2021 (1,874) highlights the gradual re-opening of Leinster House to the public.

There were:

- 1.4 million visits to the website with 4.6 million website page views.

592 Press releases were issued in 2022.

The **Oireachtas Education Programme** led by the Parliamentary Education Officer is made up of several strands.

- The **Transition Year (TY) Programme 2021/22** continued in March and April 2022 with one week for students from Irish Medium schools and students from Gaeltacht areas in March (7-11th) while the week in April (4-8th) was delivered through English. The first cohort of the 2022/23 work experience programme was delivered from the 28 November to the 2 of December 2022 and was delivered via a blended approach.

In conjunction with the **South Dublin Community Partnership** a programme for Transition Year students from DEIS schools in South County Dublin was piloted.

- Thirty members were assigned students for placements under the 2021/2022 Oireachtas **Student Placement Programme** for members which continued to be delivered online for this group.
- The first onsite version of a **Continuing Professional Development (CPD)** programme for primary school teachers was held from the 15-19 August 2022. Twenty-one teachers from different schools took part.
- 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 from January until May. In person workshops resumed in May.

2022 saw the conclusion of the **Treaty Debates essay competition** with an awards ceremony in May in Leinster House.

Senior cycle Politics and Society students continued to engage in the **Ceann go Ceann programme** from their own classrooms in 2022. The programme was presented by the Oireachtas Education Officer at the **International Forum of Parliament Visitor Centers** in Jerusalem in November.

In 2022 three actions supporting the establishment of the **Oireachtas Archives** were completed.

The **Procedural Development Unit** (PDU) designed and delivered a number of training initiatives, tailored to the specific procedural requirements of individual groups across the Civil Service.

The **Parliamentary Budget Office** (PBO) engages with the Department of Finance, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and with other government departments and bodies in relation to information on public finances. In 2022 it further developed links with government departments by developing analytical tools for forecasting and enhancing its data visualisation output.

A strategic objective of the **Parliamentary Research Service** is increasing its engagement with the wider academic community. The Library & Research Service (L&RS) has developed strategic partnerships with the **Science Foundation Ireland (SFI)**.

From March 2020 until early 2022, members' inter-parliamentary activities were mainly facilitated through virtual engagements. In-person meetings resumed in January of 2022.

- There were 35 PACE Plenary and Committee meetings in 2022.
- On 6 April 2022, **H.E. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine**, addressed a joint sitting of both Houses of the Oireachtas via video link from Kyiv.
- On 1 December **President Ursula von der Leyen of the European Commission** addressed a joint sitting of the Houses of the Oireachtas as part of a visit to Dublin.
- The 61st Plenary of the **British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA)** took place in Westminster Hall's Grand Committee Room on 1 March. It was the first face-to-face meeting between Assembly members in more than two years due to the pandemic.

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service is an active participant in the **European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD)**. In 2022 the Houses of the Oireachtas responded to 127 requests for comparative information and made 14 requests for information to the network.

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service's **Climate Action Roadmap** will set out how the Service will:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 51% in 2030
- Increase the improvement in energy efficiency in the public sector from the 33% target in 2020 to 50% by 2030.

In 2022 the Service's reported primary energy consumption was 12.1 GWh for 2021. The energy performance indicator, **energy used per full-time equivalent employee**, shows a saving of over 39% against the baseline.

The Service's energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduced by 23% when compared with baseline emissions (average annual emissions between 2016 and 2018).

The Oireachtas Service throughout 2022 committed to:

- reducing energy consumption and improving energy efficiency,
- managing and reducing energy use across the parliamentary complex,
- accelerating energy efficiency measures, such as necessary window replacement programmes, with the support of the OPW, and
- encouraging coordination of building closures to minimise heating costs.

The **Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action** published a report on 17 November on Biodiversity which makes 75 recommendations across five key themes identified during engagements with stakeholders and through submissions to the Committee.



## Strategic Outcome 4: A Digitally Transformed Parliament

### Our Goals:

- Goal 1:** Continue to advance our cyber security capabilities.
- Goal 2:** Progress the implementation of the Digital Transformation Programme.
- Goal 3:** Continue to implement innovative solutions to modernise our technical infrastructure in the context of a blended working model.
- Goal 4:** Provide effective and responsive technical supports to ensure resilience and continuity of service in our digital systems.

### Our Key Activities and Achievements 2022:

**The Oireachtas Cyber Security Strategy and Roadmap** have been developed with input and guidance from the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and cyber security specialists. The strategy and roadmap are aligned with international security standards and best practices and comply with regulatory and legislative requirements. Changing cultural awareness and building cyber-security knowledge among members and staff will continue to be an important part of supporting the organisation against cyber-attacks.

The Service's **Digital Transformation Programme** has been a key driver in transforming the way we work. 2022 is considered a building year for a lot of digital transformation projects.

A **Digital Team** was established in 2022 to support business areas and to continue the progress of digital transformation across the Oireachtas Service through requirement gathering, development and particularly assisting with business process testing (BPT) of Digital Parliament modules.

The TDT Strategic Committee, with the support of the Management Board, maintained high-level oversight of the 2022 *Digital Transformation Work Plan*. Achievements include:

- Development of the Chamber Business System (the Chamber Business Platform, Speakers List and Chamber Business Manager)
- Completion of the SRA Upgrade staff attendance project
- Additional MS Teams features (audio conferencing, *chat with yourself*, and Teams Shared Channels).
- Áis-Linn Calendar project
- Analysis and Design of the Committee Task Manager Work Items project
- Development and go live of the Áis-Linn Topical Issues and Commencement Matters project.

Rannóg an Aistriúcháin and ICT have worked together to deliver the **Bilingualism in Technology policy**, promoting bilingualism in the Oireachtas.

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

In 2022 there were:

- 89,180 virtual meetings held on MS Teams; this compares to nearly 48,000 virtual meetings in 2021.
- 174,288 Team calls, and overall, since MS Teams was introduced over 370,500 Teams calls have been made

- Over 1.5 million chat messages and
- 380 private Committee meetings of which 323 (85%) had a virtual element.

Overall, the **ICT Helpdesk** provided support for 18,578 calls in 2022 for members and their staff, and for Service staff.

Rooms 2 and 4 in Historic Leinster House are now equipped with state-of-the-art Video Conferencing and Presenting equipment to facilitate in-person meetings and remote participation.

**Fios, the new Learning Management System** for the Houses of the Oireachtas Service went live in December 2022. All training organised by the Training and Development Unit now appears on Fios. This includes classroom-based, Teams-based, and e-learning training.

The Oireachtas, during 2022, proceeded to plan for the **migration to cloud services** and storage and retrieval of data. Extensive consultation took place with the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and with other Parliaments while also recognising the OGCIIO cloud computing advice.

A move to the use of **cloud services, cloud data storage and cloud information protection services** will improve the capability of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service to provide effective and responsive technical supports to the parliamentary community.

The Oireachtas's ability to prevent and respond to cyber-attacks or data breaches will be greatly enhanced.

## Strategic Outcome 5: Towards a Bilingual Parliament

### Our Goals:

- Goal 1:** Continue to implement the Rannóg 2024 Plan with the objective of publishing official translations of the Acts of the Oireachtas in a timely manner and clearing historic arrears.
- Goal 2:** Conduct a comparative study of bilingual parliaments to enable us to progress towards a bilingual Oireachtas.
- Goal 3:** Facilitate a progressive increase in the amount of Irish spoken in both Houses.
- Goal 4:** Progressively increase the cohort of bilingual staff in the Service.
- Goal 5:** Develop initiatives to support members and staff in maintaining and improving their competence in spoken Irish.
- Goal 6:** Adopt a 'Bilingualism through Technology' programme for the Service.

### Our Key Activities and Achievements 2022:

#### Publication of official translations:

- Current Acts (2019-2022): 79% have been translated and **48% published**.
- Arrears Acts (1992-2018): 100% have been translated and **21% published**.

The Library and Research Service (L&RS) worked with Rannóg Aistriúcháin to scope and plan a **comparative study of bilingual parliaments**. During 2022 the work comprised of a literature review and **two surveys** of parliaments and legislative assemblies, including analysis of survey responses. A Final Report is being prepared and is expected to be submitted to the Management Board by the end of Q2 2023.

'An Ghaeilge sa Teach' Steering Groups for each of the Houses were launched in 2022. Final reports from the two Groups will be published by the end of Q2 2023.

Rannóg an Aistriúcháin provided a variety of translation services aimed at facilitating the use of Irish in the Houses, including the provision of **Bills Glossaries** (terminology lists for new Government Bills) for Second Stage and the provision of the **simultaneous translation (interpretation) service**.

#### A Bilingual Recruitment Strategy

has been drafted and is being further developed to support the strategic outcome *Towards a Bilingual Parliament*.

The Service continues to work with PAS to seek Irish language generalist candidates for assignment to the Service, and to run its own competitions for specialist roles. An additional **12 staff with Irish language** were recruited during 2022. The Service is also working to develop a paid student internship programme for Rannóg an Aistriúcháin and is scoping the development of a graduate programme.

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service organises delivery of **in-house Irish language** classes for the Oireachtas community. **Online Irish learning resources** are also promoted.

Work progressed on the range of services that the Houses of the Oireachtas provides bilingually, building on *Straitéis na Gaeilge, 2021* and the *Oireachtas Language Scheme 2018*.

A working group between Rannóg an Aistriúcháin and ICT is examining potential for maximising use of technology to support translation processes and the bilingualism programme. During 2022 work was ongoing on the development of the policy of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service on the use of **bilingualism in IT** systems and applications. The **Bilingualism in Technology Policy** was approved in December 2022 and will ensure early analysis of projects to guarantee timely identification of bilingual requirements. Carrying out a Bilingual Scoping Analysis (BSA) is at the core of this new approach.

Rannóg an Aistriúcháin involvement and contribution to the **Digital Parliament programme** has been ongoing and all member and public-facing systems are being developed bilingually e.g., Áis-Linn, DocsLaid, etc.



## Strategic Outcome 1 – An Effective Parliament

**Goal 1: Support and advise Dáil Éireann, Seanad Éireann, Oireachtas Committees and their members 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 business of the Houses is conducted in accordance with the rules and precedents as set out in Standing Orders and in salient Rulings of the Chair. During 2022, 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.

In 2022 the Service continued to engage with the parliamentary community (members, Political staff, Oireachtas staff, members of the Press and Contractors) in our combined effort to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in the Oireachtas complex. The parliamentary community continued to practice vigilance and follow public health advice on preventing the spread of the infection. Good progress was made in managing risk and due to a huge collective effort, the parliamentary community remained safe.

The Service supported Dáil Éireann on each of its 106 sitting days and Seanad Éireann on each of its 105 sitting days.

Figure 1: Sitting Days of the Houses

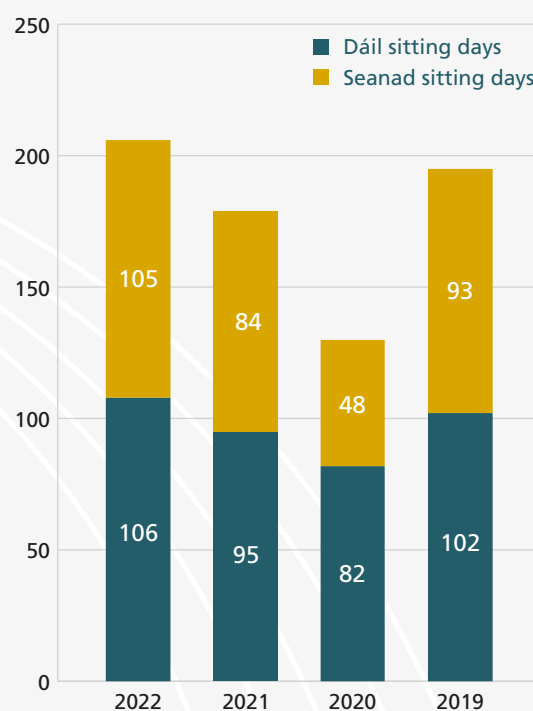


Figure 2: Sitting Hours of the Houses

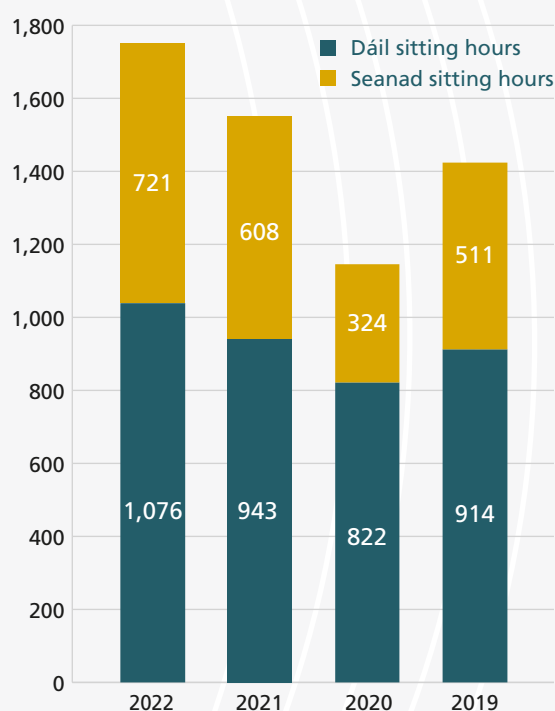


Table 1: Meetings of Dáil Standing Committees	2022	2021	2020	2019
Dáil Business Committee	36	39	51	44
Committee on Parliamentary Privileges and Oversight <sup>1</sup>	8	5	6	8
Committee on Standing Orders and Dáil Reform	9	12	8	5
Committee of Selection	8	5	3	3

<sup>1</sup> formerly the Committee on Procedure.

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.

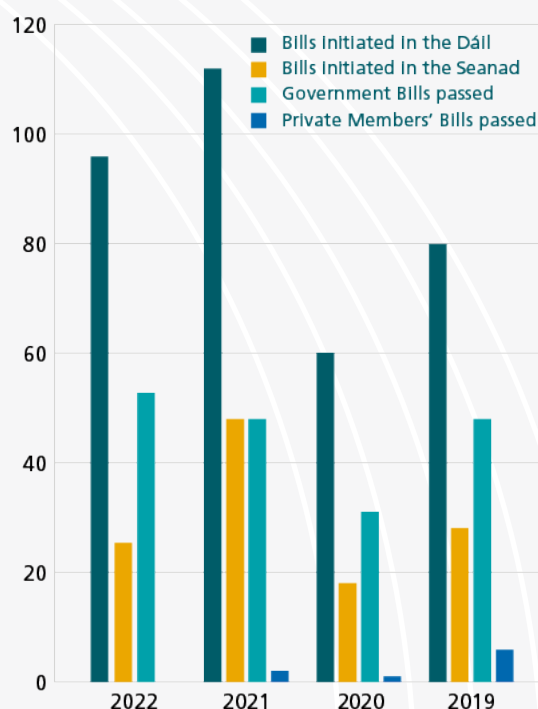
The **Journal Office** provides a range of procedural support services to the Dáil. In 2022, 135 Dáil business daily PDF versions and 38 Dáil business weekly PDF versions were provided to members through the Dáil Business website, which was launched in November 2021, and which replaced the printed Dáil Order Paper. Production of the Dáil Order Paper ceased on 19 January 2022. The Dáil Business website marks a significant milestone in the Oireachtas's Digital Transformation journey.

The Journal Office recorded 152 Dáil divisions (votes in the House).

The Journal Office also provided support to the **Dáil Committee on Parliamentary Privileges and Oversight**, which held eight meetings in 2022. The **Dáil Business Committee** held 36 meetings in 2022 and the Committee on Standing Orders and Dáil Reform (CSODR) held 9 meetings.

The CSODR's work in 2022 included the establishment of a number of Special Committees and a review of the procedures for pre-legislative scrutiny of draft government legislation.

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



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 121 Bills were initiated in both Houses, 55 of which were PMBs. **Appendix IV** lists Bills initiated in the Houses and **Appendix V** lists Bills passed.

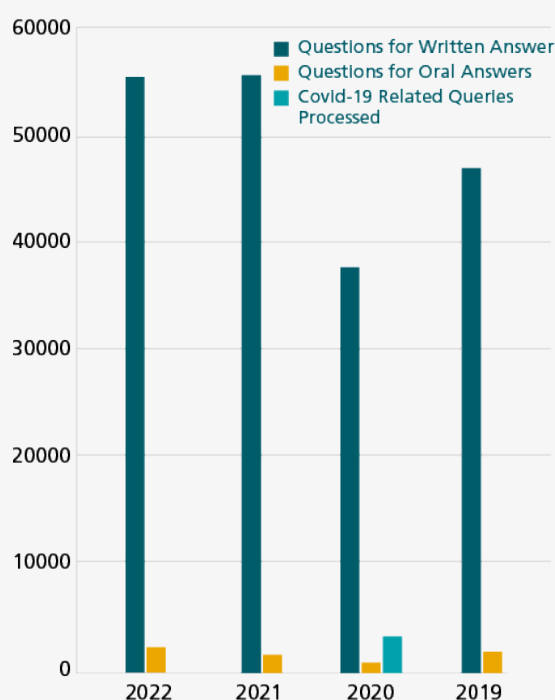
In 2022, the Houses passed 52 Bills, all Government Bills.

Table 2: Parliamentary Questions (PQs)	2022	2021	2020	2019
PQs processed <sup>1</sup>	68,153	68,297	48,735	57,697
Questions for Written Answer	55,688	55,898	37,941	47,197
Questions for Oral Answer	2,349	1,690	977	2,018
'Covid-19-related Queries' processed	–	–	3,398	–

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

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. In 2022 there were 7,238 amendments proposed to Bills as they passed through the legislative process. 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.

Figure 4: Parliamentary Questions (PQs)



<sup>1</sup> 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.

The **Questions Office** processed 68,153 Parliamentary Questions (PQs), of which 2,349 were for oral answer. There were 5,863 pages of Question Papers published in 2022.

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.

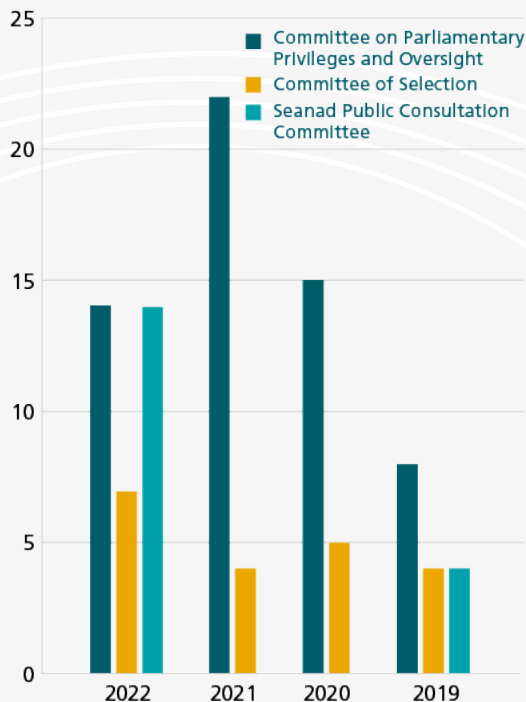
The Seanad sat for 105 sitting days (721 hours) in 2022 and produced 115 Order Papers including Supplementary Order Papers.

Of the 121 Bills initiated in the Houses in 2022, 25 were initiated in the Seanad; 8 were Government Bills and 17 were Private Members' Bills.

The Seanad Office supported 14 meetings of the Seanad Committee on Parliamentary Privileges and Oversight<sup>1</sup>, and 14 meetings of the Seanad Public Consultation Committee. The Seanad Public Consultation Committee had its first meeting in July 2022, when Covid-19 restrictions were relaxed. Its first public consultation was on the topic of *The Constitutional Future of the island of Ireland*, where the Committee engaged with a total of 82 witnesses in the Seanad Chamber, including voices from all communities and traditions in Northern Ireland, as well as witnesses from other jurisdictions.

A bye-election took place in March 2022 to fill a vacancy in the membership of the Seanad. The vacancy was caused by the resignation of Ivana Bacik who was elected to Dáil Éireann in July 2021.

**Figure 5: 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 2022, the Debates Office reported 3,639 hours of Dáil, Seanad, and Committee debate. This amounted to 44,502 pages of Official Report of proceedings in addition to 58,561 published Parliamentary Questions. The Office published these debates to the website in HTML, PDF and XML formats. Bound volumes of the debates are also printed and deposited with the copyright libraries.

The year saw an increase from 2021 in the number of parliamentary meetings taking

place, with more than 100 meetings each of both the Dáil and Seanad reported. There were 685 parliamentary committee meetings in public session reported.

Although committee meetings outnumber those of Dáil and Seanad, the total word counts of the Official Report of meetings of committees and the Houses are roughly equivalent. The total reported for the Dáil and Seanad came to approximately 13.9 million words for the year, with committees accounting for approximately 13.2 million words. Parliamentary questions form a large part of parliamentary debates, the written replies to parliamentary questions not taken on the floor of the Dáil account for a further approximately 14 million words (55,688 questions for written answer) of the Official Report.

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 1,076 hours of Dáil debate, 721 hours of Seanad debate, and to Committee meetings when requested. It also provided the official translation in respect of Dáil and Seanad business.

**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.

Table 3: Translation Services	2022	2021	2020	2019
Simultaneous translation provided on sitting days for the parliamentary proceedings	211	179	130	195
Bilingual Titles of Bills <sup>1</sup>	121	160	78	108
<i>Government Bills</i>	66	49	35	40
<i>Private Members' Bills</i>	55	111	43	68

<sup>1</sup> Includes long and short titles of Bills formally initiated in the Houses.

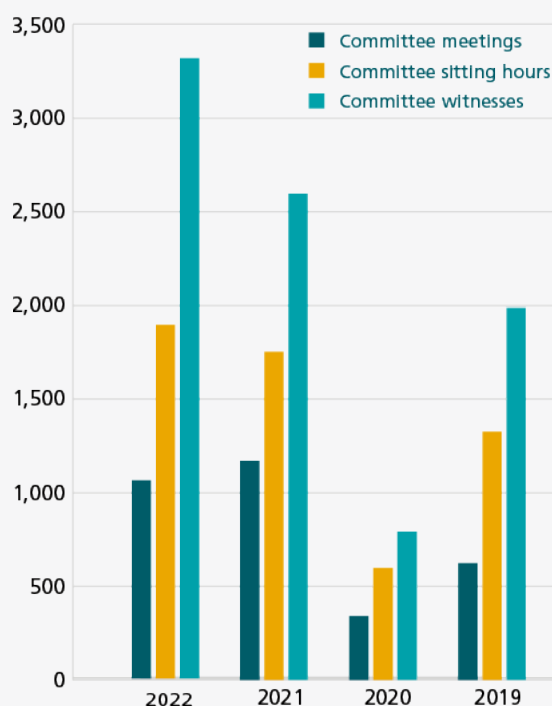
The **Committees' Secretariat** teams of Clerks, Policy Advisers and administrative staff provided support to 26 Parliamentary Committees in 2022.

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

There were two Special Committees in 2022:

- The Joint Committee on Autism, which is due to report in 2023, and
- The Joint Committee on International Surrogacy, which reported in July 2022.

**Figure 6: Parliamentary Committees**



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

The **Committees' Press Officers** 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.

In 2022, the Committees' Secretariat supported 1,065 parliamentary Committee meetings over 1,842 sitting hours at which 3,296 witnesses, including key stakeholders and independent experts across a range of public policy areas, contributed.

Of the 1,065 Committee meetings held there were:

- 685 public meetings
- 380 private meetings
  - 323 private meetings (85%) had a virtual element
  - 57 private meetings (15%) were Committee Room attendance only, with no virtual element.



Two **Special Committees** published their final reports in 2022:

- The **Joint Committee on International Surrogacy** published its final report on 6 July. The Committee met over several weeks and engaged extensively with academics, legal experts and stakeholders from various organisations, nationally and internationally. The report made 32 recommendations following examination of the issue.
- The **Joint Committee on Gender Equality** published its final report on the 15 December entitled *Unfinished Democracy: Achieving Gender Equality*. The report is based on the work carried out by the Oireachtas Committee in 2022 and makes a series of recommendations.

Overall, Committees presented 69 reports in 2022, setting out findings and recommendations in their respective policy areas. A selection of reports published are listed below.

- The **Select Committee on Budgetary Oversight** published a report on 8 March 2022 on Inflation in which it made a series of recommendations and observations following examination of the issue. The Committee noted that the report and related sessions were undertaken prior to the commencement of the invasion of Ukraine by Russia.
- The **Joint Committee on Disability Matters** published a report on 10 March entitled *Ensuring independent living and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. The report calls for strengthening of rights for people with disabilities.

- The **Joint Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage** published a report on 24 May entitled *Urban Regeneration* in which it makes 39 recommendations around incentives and enforcement measures, policy issues and resourcing aimed at regenerating urban centres by bringing derelict or vacant properties back into use, including for social and affordable housing.
- The **Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport & Media** published a report on 28 June entitled *The Elimination of Abuse directed towards Referees, Officials and Players in Sport* in which it makes a series of recommendations following examination of the issue.
- The **Joint Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment** published a report on 29 June on the Working from Home (Covid-19) Bill, 2020. The Private Members' Bill sought to introduce the 'right to disconnect' in Irish law, update the regulatory framework to address issues arising from employees working from home and widen the access of the working from home expense payment.



In July the Joint Committee on International Surrogacy published its report: *Final Report of the Joint Committee on International Surrogacy*.

- The **Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science** published a report on 6 July entitled *Education and Supports Provision for Displaced Ukrainian Students* in which it makes a series of recommendations following examination of this issue.
- The **Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport & Media** published a report on the 15 November entitled *Working Conditions and Skills Shortages in Ireland's Tourism and Hospitality Sector* in which it makes a series of recommendations.
- The **Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action** published a report on 17 November on Biodiversity, (*Report on Biodiversity*) which makes 75 recommendations across five key themes identified during engagements with stakeholders and through submissions to the Committee.

- The **Joint Committee on Justice** published a report on the 14 December entitled *An Examination of the Present Approach to Sanctions for Possession of Certain Amounts of Drugs for Personal Use* in which it makes a series of recommendations.



In December the Joint Committee on Gender Equality published its final report entitled *Unfinished Democracy: Achieving Gender Equality*.

## Strategic Outcome 1 – An Effective Parliament

### Goal 2: Promote initiatives to support an effective legislative process in Dáil Éireann, Seanad Éireann and Oireachtas Committees.

The **Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers (OPLA)** provides independent legal services to the Ceann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach, members of both Houses, the Parliamentary Committees and the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission. The independence of the OPLA is given statutory effect by section 14C of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003. The OPLA is headed by the Chief Parliamentary Legal Adviser and the team comprises specialist lawyers, legal researchers, and administrators. The Office has four specialist legal teams:

- the Parliamentary Services Legal Advisory team
- the Corporate Services Legal Advisory team
- the Parliamentary Legislative Drafting team, and
- the Private Members' Bills Legal Advisory team.

The OPLA's Step-by-Step Guide for members outlines the services the OPLA provides to support them in their legislative work. The purpose of the service is to provide both opposition Deputies and Senators and the backbenchers of Government parties with high quality legal advice, legal research, legal policy analysis and legislative drafting assistance in the

preparation of their PMB proposals. All legal advice is provided on a strictly confidential basis. Having an in-house team assist members has a number of positive aspects, by enabling members:

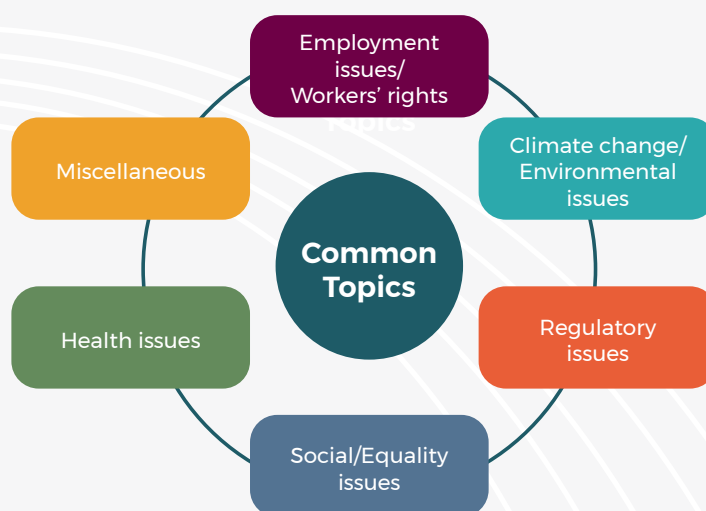
- to have a dedicated Legal Adviser and Legislative Drafter to assist them in the development of their policy into a legally sound, researched and considered legislative proposal,
- to be well informed of the law in the area concerned,
- to obtain advice on the legislative options they wish to propose, and,
- to have access to the technical specialised expertise needed for legislative policy development and drafting.

In this way, members are supported in their constitutional role as legislators by the provision of specialist legal services to enable members to bring forward legally sound legislative proposals. This support takes place from the initial advice, through to the legislative drafting of the Bill, its publication and continues on for any specialist legal assistance required in respect of any amendments brought forward on their Bill.

Fifty-five PMBs were initiated in both Houses in 2022. Eleven PMBs which had been settled by the OPLA were introduced to the Houses in 2022.

<b>Table 4: OPLA PMB Services</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
PMB proposals in receipt of legal advisory services	45	57	42	31
PMBs assigned to the legislative drafting service	22	33	32	16
PMB Pre-Committee Stage Scrutiny	2	3	0	5

Common policy areas advised upon or resulting in PMBs being drafted include:



The OPLA has been proactive in its engagement with members and parties in supporting their PMB development and the Office has planned information/ training sessions on 'PMB Drafting and the Legislative Process' to all parties in conjunction with the Oireachtas Training Officer, following their success in 2021. Overall, feedback on the PMB Service from both members and Committees has been very positive. Members who use the Houses of the Oireachtas legal services appreciate and value the service provided in formulating a robust PMB which is legally sound.

The OPLA also assists with the pre-Committee stage scrutiny of PMBs. The Memorandum of Understanding between the Government and Dáil Éireann on Private Members' Bills, which was adopted by the sub-Committee on Dáil Reform on 5 December 2018 (the "MoU") establishes the pre-Committee stage scrutiny framework.

The MoU also provides that a waiver of Committee Scrutiny can be obtained in particular circumstances. The OPLA also assists members and Committees in scrutinising government policy through the provision of legal advice regarding government Bills which undergo pre-legislative scrutiny.

The OPLA issued 619 legal advices in 2022. Of these, 74% (459) were issued to the Service, with 197 issuing to the Service on parliamentary and procedural issues and 262 issuing to the Service on corporate issues. The remaining 26% (160) of the advices issued to Committees. The number of parliamentary Committee requests increased by 10 per cent in 2022 (160) compared to 2021 (145) and more than doubled since 2020 (64) due to increased parliamentary Committee activity.

During 2022, the OPLA, for the first time, provided a dedicated legal advisor to an Oireachtas Committee for the duration of that Committee's work, namely the Joint Committee on International Surrogacy. This advisor supported the work of the Committee by providing targeted weekly briefings on legal issues pertinent to the work of the Committee, as well as addressing specific legal issues as they arose.

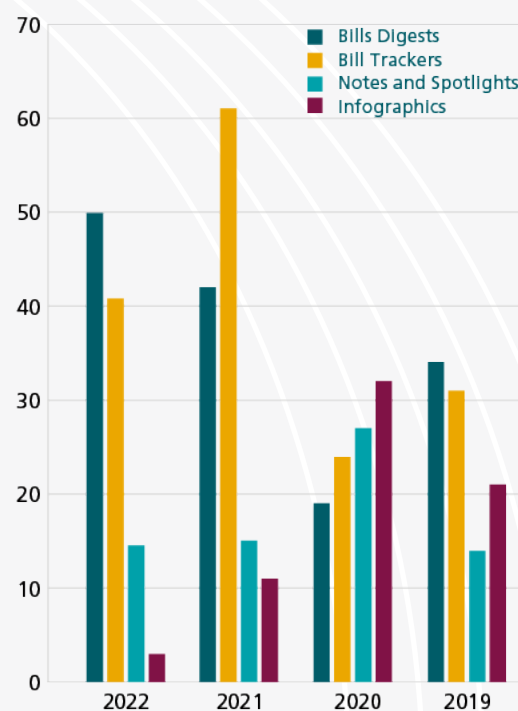
The **Library & Research Service** (L&RS) provides impartial analysis to support members of the Houses of the Oireachtas in their role as legislators. Its legislative analysis service includes briefings on Government Bills (Bill Digests) and Private Members Bills (PMB briefings). The purpose of Bill 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 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 2022, the L&RS produced 50 Bills Digests and 41 Bills Briefings on Government Bills. The L&RS supported detailed scrutiny of five PMBs and pre-legislative scrutiny of eight general schemes of government Bills for the Parliamentary Committees. It provided 220 customised research briefings and 1,081 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.

**Figure 7: Parliamentary Library Research Service Research Publications**



The Oireachtas Library manages the procedures relating to the laying of documents before the Houses. During 2022, 1,835 documents were laid before the Houses and made available electronically to members and to the public.



## Strategic Outcome 1 – An Effective Parliament

### Goal 3: Strengthen the delivery of research, analysis and information services to support the legislative, oversight and scrutiny functions of the Houses, Oireachtas Committees and members.

In 2022 the Oireachtas **Library and the Parliamentary Research Service** continued to collaborate on and coordinate their delivery of commissioned reference and research services to members and the wider parliamentary community. The Library enhanced the parliamentary community's access to authoritative content by delivering an enhanced Factiva press monitoring service, and new contracts with the Irish Times and an eBook supplier. The Library supported research intensive business areas (including Committees, OPLA, and the PBO) and working groups (including the Climate Action Hub) with new information resources and targeted information sessions. The Library also supported political staff with its information skills programme 2022.

The accessibility of the Library's contemporary research collections was improved with the completion of a 12-month cataloguing project using an external cataloguer. The impact of this work is that the metadata, having been substantially cleaned, will enhance user's accessibility of collections.

The Houses of the Oireachtas heritage collections are managed by the Library and particularly by the Special Collections Librarian. During 2022 the Special Collections Librarian continued to integrate

these collections into external repositories such as JSTOR Collections (Journal Storage collections of images and primary sources from libraries, museums, and archives around the world) making them available to an international audience. These collections were also used to support the Seanad 100 programme and the Law Reform Commission's research programme.

There were two organisation changes in the Parliamentary Research Service in 2022:

- A Parliamentary Affairs team was established in Q1 2022 to provide research in response to developments in parliamentary procedure and practice, and Dáil reform issues. This team's research is included in the work programme of the **Committee on Standing Orders and Dáil Reform** and also supports other Service strategies. In Q3 the Parliamentary Affairs team procured research expertise to explore the impact of Private Members' Bills on legislative and policy outcomes, and this research will be concluded in 2023.
- The specialist PMB (Private Member's Bills) research team was disbanded, reflecting the decline in the number of PMBs. The Parliamentary Research Service now manage research for PMB scrutiny in the same way as research for government legislation i.e., on the basis of subject knowledge. Commissioned research services to members were enhanced by working more directly with members to scope their research queries, and by taking a 'researcher as consultant' approach. Twelve Committees were provided with research support during 2022.

The **Parliamentary Budget Office** (PBO) has been established on a statutory basis by the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2018. The objective of the PBO is to support the Houses of the Oireachtas and its Committees in relation to fiscal issues and the management of the public finances. The establishment of the PBO on a statutory basis follows recommendations made in the OECD report *Review of Budget Oversight: Ireland* (November 2015) and by the Sub-Committee on Dáil Reform to improve Dáil Éireann's engagement with and oversight of the budget process.

The functions of the PBO 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 addition, the Secretary General of the Houses of the Oireachtas may assign additional functions to the Director.

In 2022, the PBO produced 61 publications (briefing papers, commentaries, notes, working papers, analytical tools, and original data visualisation presentations and infographics). In addition, the PBO prepared 7 briefings for Oireachtas Committees, presented at 8 external events and presented at 5 events to Oireachtas members and staff, and completed 39 costing requests.

The PBO carried out costing analysis, including a small but complex number of requests for new policies. There has been ongoing capacity building in the PBO by developing other analytical tools for forecasting and enhancing its data visualisation output. The PBO's data visualisation presentations bring information to members in a visually attractive and accessible manner, and they are often revised to provide up-to-date data and information. As these are interactive, they allow users to understand fiscal issues in a more comprehensive way and can allow members to consider their own policy preferences. For example, the PBO's tax and welfare tool allows users to design their own tax and welfare package and see the total effect; making technical material more accessible to members, Oireachtas staff and the public to improve the transparency of budget information.

In August, the PBO released a new version of its Debt Sustainability Analysis (DSA) calculator, including an explainer guide and a new Interest Rate Risk interactive tool. These interactive tools have been produced for members of the Oireachtas to facilitate an analysis of the sustainability of Ireland's public debt. The tools aim to support members in exploring the long-term fiscal implications of different budgetary policies in Budget 2023.

<b>Table 5: Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO)</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>
Total Output*	123	76	100	87
Briefing Papers/Commentaries	10	10	10	18
Notes	14	20	49	43
Analytical notes/Working papers	3	2	1	1
Analytical tools (including models)*	10	–	–	–
Data visualisation presentations/infographics	24	36	24	16
Updates to existing Analytical tools (including models)/ Data visualisation presentations/infographics	3	3	13	–
Costing requests completed*	39	–	–	–
Briefings to Oireachtas Committees	7	5	3	9
Presentations at external Events (Speakers)*	8	–	–	–
Oireachtas Presentations to Members or Staff*	5	–	–	–

Notes=\* indicates a new metric introduced in 2022.

The PBO published its Pre-Budget 2023 Commentary on 19 September. The commentary provides members of the Oireachtas with an overview of the fiscal position and the macroeconomic circumstances that frame the budget and highlights key issues for consideration. In addition, the PBO published additional material to assist members and the public understand the costs of potential Budget proposals ahead of the Budget. This included a “ready reckoner” in infographic format which provides a quick overview of the cost of particular measures. This was supported by interactive data visualisation tools which allow users to choose from a range of potential tax and welfare changes and see their cumulative impact. This year, the PBO also designed and published an interactive tool to calculate the full year cost of hiring additional public servants. The PBO also produced distributional analysis using the ESRI’s SWITCH model, which showed how specific policy changes would affect people of different income levels. This material compared measures which were universal (i.e., given to all income levels) to those that were targeted. This was followed up, during the week before the Budget,

with a number of information sessions for members and political staff, providing an introduction to the budgetary process, and also an overview of the specific material prepared by the PBO in advance of Budget 2023.

These outputs were followed by the PBO preliminary review of Budget 2023 published on Budget Day.

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.



Parliamentary Budget Office – post-Budget 2023 Information Booth.

## Strategic Outcome 1 – An Effective Parliament

### Goal 4: Ensure the delivery of quality support services to members in a changing working environment.

**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 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 2022, there was 460.95 FTE members' and party staff employed under the *Scheme of Secretariat Assistance* and Members' HR processed 133 new hires in the twelve months of 2022.

During 2022 the Members' HR Unit worked with SIPTU, facilitated by the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) to resolve the SIPTU pay claim, outstanding since 2018. The resolution (in October 2022) included an upgrade of the Secretarial Assistant grade to Administrative Assistant and the extension of the public sector pay increases under '*Building Momentum*' to political staff, backdated to October 2021. The upgrades and increases were

applied to political staff and political staff pensioners in November and December, including payment of arrears. Concluding and implementing the Agreement, was a considerable body of work in terms of the negotiating process, supporting the work of the Independent Reviewer and in the logistics of calculating and implementing all payroll changes and the subsequent audit of the process. Members, as employers, were provided with a template job specification and other information resources were updated on foot of the agreement.

**The Members Pensions Unit** provides services for the administration of members' pensions under the Ciste Pinsean Scheme and under the Single Public Sector Pension Scheme. In 2022 the Unit undertook a review of pension entitlements for 460 pensioners and applied pension increases in line with the public sector pay agreement with effect from 1 February 2022, 2 February 2022 and 1 October 2022, respectively.

The **Political Staff Engagement Plan** was successfully rolled out in 2022, the highlights included:

- the Political Staff Newsletter
- bespoke seminars provided by the Workplace Support Programme, and
- the political staff lunches held in Leinster House in October 2022.

The **Election Steering Group**, led by Members' HR, was established in January 2022 to oversee the planning process for the next election. The Steering Group considered a review of the 2020 Election and agreed recommendations for the next election on the basis of the review. Sub-groups were established and met and agreed plans for their respective remits. The Steering Group will submit a high-level cross-functional Election Plan to the Management Board in 2023.

The **Members' Services One Stop Shop** provides members with a single access point for information on the services and resources available 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.



## Strategic Outcome 1 – An Effective Parliament

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

The Commission's three-year budget is €462m for the period 2022-2024. 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 continued investment in information technology.

The vision for Strategic Plan 2022-2024 is to be a *Parliament working effectively for the People*.

To achieve this vision the Service set itself five strategic objectives:

- An Effective Parliament
- An Inclusive and Well-Supported Parliamentary Community
- An Open, Engaged and Sustainable parliament
- A Digitally Transformed Parliament
- Towards a Bilingual Parliament

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 99 governance meetings held in 2022.

**The Commission** held 11 meetings in 2022.

The Commission presented its Annual Report for 2021, including its audited annual accounts, to the Houses of the Oireachtas by the statutory deadline of 30 June 2022 in accordance with section 6(4) of the Commission Acts. The Commission also presented an annual statement of estimates for 2023 to the Dáil for noting by way of motion in accordance with section 13 of the Commission Acts. An overview of the Commission's work programme in 2022 is set out on pages 16-17 of this report.

The Commission's **Finance Committee** held five virtual meetings in 2022. The Committee considered quarterly financial and performance reports and the draft statement of estimates for 2023 and made recommendations on these to the Commission.

The Service's **Management Board** met 22 times during 2022, in addition 33 Management Board de-brief meetings were held.

The Management Board is assisted in its work by 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.

**Table 6: Governance of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service Meetings**

	2022	2021	2020	2019
Commission	11	11	11	15
Management Board	22	28	19	20
Management Board de-brief	33	24	72	-
Finance Committee of the Commission	5	5	3	5
Audit Committee	5	5	3	4
Risk Management	23	26	58	5

The following are the Strategic Committees of the Management Board:

- Governance, Performance and Accountability (GPA)
- Engagement, Sustainability and Campus Development (ESCD)
- People and Organisation (P&O)
- Technology and Digital Transformation (TDT)
- Coiste Straitéiseach an Oireachtais Dhátheangaigh (CSOD)

The Board's Strategic Committees held 40 meetings during 2022.

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).

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.

In 2022 the Risk Office, led by the **Chief Risk Officer**, continued to promote a risk aware culture and supported users in the management and reporting of their risks.

- Following the launch of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission's new *Strategic Plan 2022-2024 and Action Plan 2022* by the Secretary General in May, Principal Officers (POs) were asked to reassess their business area's risks. The mid-term assessment was necessary to ensure that the risks and challenges identified by business areas met the actions identified in *Action Plan 2022* and continued to relate to the organisation's strategic goals.

- Review meetings on *Action Plan 2022* began in October with Assistant Secretaries and the Secretary General, these meetings also identified the continuing challenges facing the organisation. A key focus for the Organisation's risk management arrangements is to report on risk management performance in an integrated way and the outcome of discussions on risk management at these meetings informed *Action Plan 2023*.
- Throughout 2022 the Technological and Digital Transformation (TDT) Strategic Committee continued to review the key high-level risks identified as significant in terms of delivering the 2022 Digital Parliament Work Plan. These key risks included cyber security, effective cyber security defences have become more critical to operations within the Oireachtas as the impact of cyber-attacks are increasing and becoming more sophisticated.

In addition to the work of the Risk Office it is important to note that the Commission, the Management Board, the Health & Safety Committee and the Audit Committee all continue to have oversight and manage the impact and risks of the Organisation.

The Audit Committee met five times during 2022.

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;
- consider risk materialisation reports.

Its Annual Report for 2022 is at **Appendix III**.

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

In 2022 the Chief Risk Officer, with the support of the Internal Audit function and Risk Office, developed a policy for the management of Internal Audit Reports and Recommendations to form part of the risk management reporting process. The *Policy for the Management of IA Reports and Recommendations* was approved by the Management Board in April 2022.

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 net outturn for 2022 was €139.3m which was managed by effective budget monitoring and reporting. The Finance Unit processed 6,129 invoices for goods and services in 2022. Significant work was also undertaken to ensure the efficient payment of salaries and pensions.

Ongoing pensions administration by **HR Services** included processing 17 staff retirements. The Tableau reporting system was implemented and generated 360 Single Scheme pension statements to staff members of the scheme, in compliance with statutory obligations.

The audited accounts of the Commission for 2022 are presented on page 111 of this report.

The **Procurement Unit** continued to provide support to business units in the procurement of goods and services and ongoing contract management. The Procurement Unit held an average of 32 meetings each month with contract managers across the Service and provided advice to business areas when requested.

During 2022, twenty-five procurements were brought to conclusion, including Requests for Tender (RFTs), Requests for Quotes (RFQs); Office of Government Procurement (OGP) Frameworks and Market Soundings. At year end there were an additional 20 live procurements at various stages of completion.

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 11 occasions in 2022 and considered 22 submissions.

The Service has a **Performance Evaluation Framework** in place that is aligned to the Strategic Plan for 2022-2024. The Management Board considered one post project benefits realisation review conducted under the Service's **Efficiency**

**Evaluation Programme** during 2022.

Quarterly reports on Parliamentary and Service Activities are also submitted to the Management Board.

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** (RMU).

The Service operates a centralised co-ordination and decentralised decision-making model for FOI requests. In 2022, 120 **FOI requests** were received and 137 were managed over the course of the year (the FOI requests managed in a year are not necessarily received in the same year). Included in this figure are requests that are handled outside FOI, withdrawn and those deemed invalid. The overall number of FOI requests received in 2022 was down compared to the two previous years, which has been the trend. The Training Unit and the Records Management Unit (RMU) continued to provide ongoing training to FOI decision-makers, internal reviewers and to users of the eFOI system.

**Table 7:  
Records  
Management  
Unit**

	2022	2021	2020	2019
FOI requests received	120	125	200	272
Non-Personal	119	121	197	261
Personal	1	4	2	10
Mixed	0	0	1	1

The **FOI GDPR Cross Service Working Group** chaired at Assistant Secretary level was established in December 2021 to implement an agreed work programme for 2022. The Working Group comprises of staff from across the Houses of the Oireachtas Service and met 10 times during 2022.

The primary work outputs of the Group were as follows:

- The Microsoft Teams Recording Privacy Notice was approved;
- Incident response planning took place and major Data Breach Incident Response roles were assigned;
- A Data Breach Handbook was compiled; and
- Contact mechanisms including a SMS notification service and a Microsoft Teams Group were set up to alert the Incident Response Team in the event of a data breach.

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 2022, the RMU managed eight Data Protection Subject Access Requests (SARS).

As the Digital Transformation Programme continues and effective cyber security defences become more critical to operations within the Oireachtas it is important that the Service develops a consolidated programme of records management with input from business areas. During 2022 the RMU was committed to strengthening information governance through a best practice approach to records management. Good progress was made on producing and implementing a new **File Plan and Retention Schedule & Records Management Policy**, this work will be completed in 2023.

In 2022 The RMU also completed its annual programme of data protection awareness sessions for members and staff. All sessions were well attended.



## Strategic Outcome 2 – An Inclusive and Well-Supported Parliamentary Community

### Goal 1: Promote and support the health, wellbeing and resilience of the parliamentary community.

The health and wellbeing of all staff is paramount. While recognising that staff have a personal responsibility to manage their own health, both physical and mental, the Service, through the work of HR and the **Health and Wellbeing Group**, has put together a range of supports to increase resilience and enhance work life balance. The Health and Wellbeing Group has supported HR to develop a **Health, Wellbeing and Inclusion Strategy 2021-2023**. The strategy is led by public health guidance, considers the blended working environment and provides specific supports on health and wellbeing issues that have arisen due to Covid-19.

Through the development of this strategy, the Service is demonstrating its commitment to providing a working environment that ensures the health and wellbeing of all staff is, as far as possible, reasonably protected. It seeks to support all staff so they can reach their full potential in the workplace and live healthy and balanced lives. The strategy sets out a number of outcomes to be achieved by the Service in meeting both individual needs and organisational needs, while taking account of the Civil Service Health and Wellbeing Framework.

The overall development of the strategy will ensure the Service is well placed to meet future challenges through maximising the potential of its workforce and will support the continued development of the Service as an employer of choice.

The Health and Wellbeing Group organises monthly events and webinars. All events are recorded and made available for everyone to watch in their own time. Eight took place in 2022.

**Table 8: Health and Wellbeing Group: 2022 Monthly Events and Webinars**

<b>January</b>	Veganuary Cooking Demonstration
<b>January</b>	Plant Based Diet and Gut Health
<b>February</b>	Blended/Hybrid Working
<b>March</b>	Update on the OWL Programme (OWL Graduates and the ED&I Team)
<b>April</b>	Fighting Fake News
<b>July</b>	How We Get Our Water (Environmental Protection Agency)
<b>October</b>	Health Insurance (Health Insurance Authority)
<b>November</b>	Men's Health

HR Services also advertises health and wellbeing seminars through One Learning and the Civil Service Employee Assistance Service (CSEAS) to staff across the organisation. In addition, the circulation of the staff newsletter, Aon Scéal, which began during Covid-19 to keep staff connected continued during 2022 with three editions circulated to the parliamentary community.

An **updated Attendance Policy for the Service** was approved by the **People and Organisation (P&O) Strategic Committee** on 21 June 2022 and was discussed at Departmental Council on 26 July. Following consideration by Unions no changes were requested. The policy is in place for office and blended working, it outlines the hours of attendance for staff and provides guidance for staff and managers on office attendance. (Hours of attendance are fixed under section 23 of the Staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Act, 1959). Flexibility regarding working hours is a prerequisite for all staff. The updated Attendance Policy was approved by the Management Board in January 2023.

**A Right to Disconnect Policy** is under development by HR and will be brought to the Management Board for approval in 2023.

In December 2022, led by HR Services, the organisation signed up to a training and research programme with the University of Limerick, *'Pilot Your Day'*, in which staff will learn strategies about self-regulation and self-organisation in both their work and personal lives.

A new People and Organisational Development programme has been assigned to the Service's P&O Strategic Committee for development in 2023.

## Strategic Outcome 2 – An Inclusive and Well-Supported Parliamentary Community

### Goal 2: Reimagine the way we work and implement flexible and innovative blended working practices.

The Oireachtas Service is committed to the ongoing learning and development of staff to ensure the capacity is there to meet the key challenges and continue to be a high-performing organisation. This commitment is part of a long-term policy of supporting all staff across the organisation to achieve their full potential while enhancing organisational performance. The Service aims to be a learning organisation and one that is continually learning, systemically adapting to change and reviewing how to do things better. The **Learning and Development Strategy** will form part of the strategic planning process for HR Services. The Strategy will align with the new **HR People Strategy** under development.

The Learning and Development Strategy is being developed through consultation, against the backdrop of a rapidly changing operating environment and will be published in 2023. A number of factors have emerged, both internally and externally, which impact on the way parliamentary services are delivered and how the Service manages its business. The Service faces increasing challenges in providing the services required to support a 21st century Parliament, and the parliamentary model has changed radically in recent years. The Service has recruited a large number of new staff. 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 will be the cornerstone of succession planning policies. The Service's HR People Strategy will commit to the provision of suitable and relevant training opportunities, tailored to suit the increasingly diverse range of general and specialist needs.

The Learning and Development (L&D) Strategy will set out a two-year Learning and Development programme in the Oireachtas Service within the Learning and Development Framework for the wider Civil Service. The foundations for learning and development in place will be further developed and enhanced over the period of the Strategy, supported by HR Services and the Training and Development Unit.

In January 2022 the Training and Development Unit established a **Knowledge Sharing Programme** focusing on the work of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service. The programme aims to give attendees an overview of the roles of the various sections and how they fit into the work of the Oireachtas as a whole. The sessions are held over MS Teams and are open to all staff to attend. They are particularly useful for those who are new to the Oireachtas Service. Eleven webinars took place in 2022.

**Table 9: Training and Development Unit: Knowledge Sharing Programme Webinars**

<b>January</b>	Office of the Commission and Secretary General
<b>February</b>	Bills Office – Introduction to legislation
<b>March</b>	Journal Office – Guide to daily business
<b>May</b>	Questions Office – Introduction to Dáil Questions
<b>May</b>	Seanad Office
<b>June</b>	Committees' Secretariat
<b>June</b>	Library and Research Service
<b>September</b>	Debates Office
<b>October</b>	Communications, Web and Broadcasting Units
<b>November</b>	Parliamentary Budget Office/OPLA
<b>December</b>	Rannóg an Aistriúcháin

The **Procedural Development Unit** was established in 2021 as a section with central responsibility to drive the implementation plan for Procedural Capacity and Knowledge Management. Loss of procedural skills and diminution of procedural capacity represent a risk for the Service. These are skills that cannot be directly recruited or bought and must be developed internally. In 2019, the Management Board approved a Procedural Capacity Strategy from the Management Board's People & Organisation Strategic Committee which aims to develop procedural staff who will become expert in, and custodians of, the procedures, precedents, rules and Standing Orders of the Houses of the Oireachtas and their Committees and who will be able to advise impartially on their application.

In 2022 the Procedural Development Unit designed and delivered a number of training initiatives, tailored to the specific procedural requirements of individual groups. These initiatives included the following:

- Introductory training for all new Oireachtas entrants providing an induction into the role and work of the Houses.
- Tailored sessions for sections and political groups as requested aimed at meeting their particular needs.
- Regular briefings for all temporary Clerks on procedural and business matters, offering an opportunity to learn how to Clerk an item and to gain insight from experienced Clerks.
- Knowledge sharing sessions through departmental learning units and OneLearning.
- Focused training for officials engaged in the legislative process.

**Table 10: Procedural Development Unit Training sessions 2022**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Attendees</b>	<b>Courses</b>
Departmental Staff	1,221	55
Oireachtas Staff	379	17
Political Staff	59	5
OneLearning	3,168	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,827</b>	<b>86</b>

In 2022 the Oireachtas Service continued to build on the blended working practices catalysed by the pandemic, to support both organisational effectiveness and the wellbeing of the parliamentary community. The Houses of the Oireachtas **Blended Working Policy** was approved by the Management Board on 27 June following completion of the consultation process with managers, staff and Departmental Council. The Blended Working Policy is based upon the central Civil Service Framework and aims to allow for the greatest level of flexibility while ensuring the Service can operate effectively as a parliamentary service. The policy comes following research of remote working policies in other organisations and parliaments and wide consultation within the organisation.

The intention of the Blended Working Policy is to take the best from our experiences of the Covid-19 restrictions, without impacting adversely on the importance of building the parliamentary community whilst also maintaining and improving our standards of service.

The following key principles were adopted to inform the Blended Working Policy:

- **Supporting the Business Needs of the Houses of the Oireachtas**

The Oireachtas Service aims to be as flexible as possible, ensuring that blended working arrangements are aligned with business needs and the delivery of excellent parliamentary services.

- **Leadership and Management**

Leaders and managers are actively encouraged to facilitate blended working where practical and assist in embedding this organisational change.

- **Be an Employer of Choice**

Blended working is part of our commitment to be an employer of choice and is one of a range of initiatives that support work life balance with a rewarding career.

- **Transparency and Consistency**

The policy sets out organisation standards to manage and implement blended working arrangements with a focus on clear communications.

- **Health and Safety**

The health and safety of employees is of paramount importance and policies to support best practice working arrangements in the home and in the office have been incorporated into the policy.

Supporting the business needs of the organisation is vital. In October 2022 the Facilities Management Unit (FMU) commenced a large-scale procurement and distribution of furniture, to support staff working from home in response to the policy. This process will continue into 2023.

The policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis in line with legislative changes and other developments that may arise as part of the evolving blended working landscape. In addition, the operation of arrangements will be subject to review at section level in accordance with decisions of the Management Board or of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. A formal review of the blended working arrangements will take place as part of the PMDS process.

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 six times in 2022 to discuss a range of issues including:

- the assessment of Bilingualism in Technology
- Consultation on a draft Blended Working Policy
- Burnout
- The psychological impact of Covid-19 and Return to Work
- The psychological aspects of Return to Work for Us and Our Staff (virtual seminar)
- Risk Assessment.



## Strategic Outcome 2 – An Inclusive and Well-Supported Parliamentary Community

### Goal 3: Provide ongoing support and development opportunities to ensure we are an employer of choice.

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service strives to provide high-quality parliamentary services to the Houses of the Oireachtas, their Committees, their members and the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission. Our staff are our principal resource, and their experience and dedication to high-quality service are critical to the achievement of our goals. The Service's priority in this area is to place employee engagement, learning and development, and good communications at the centre of initiatives taken and at the centre of services and supports that are provided to staff. HR Services supports the development of organisational development programmes in response to gaps identified from staff engagement surveys and feedback forums. The unit also ensures that the Service's employment practices attract, retain, develop and engage a diverse and high-performing workforce.

At the end of 2022, the total number of staff (Civil Servants, State Industrial, Printers and Office Holders' staff) employed by the Service was 674 Full Time Equivalents (FTEs).

HR Services provides a wide range of training and development opportunities to the staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service and members and their staff. There was a return to some in-person training in April 2022. Training interventions and information seminars also continued via MS Teams. Training and learning interventions were provided in a broad range of areas encompassing technical, professional and personal development training. There were 1,275 attendances at 556 courses delivered during 2022 (521 courses were delivered by external providers while the remaining 35 courses were delivered by internal Subject Matter Experts). The Service also promotes and supports the central Refund/Advance of Fees Scheme. Forty-three Service staff pursued courses under the scheme in 2022.

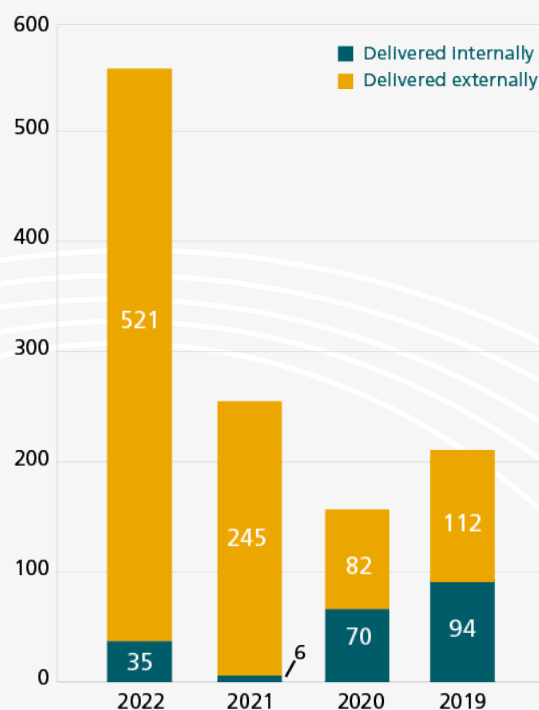
Key training initiatives provided to staff of the Service in 2022 included:

- ICT Helpdesk Support: Call Centre Training
- Oireachtas Education Programme: Children First training
- High Performing Teams training for the OPLA and the Members' HR & Pensions Unit.

Key training initiatives provided to members and their staff in 2022 included:

- Constituency Database training
- Data Protection/FOI/GDPR Training
- Social Media Training for political personnel
- Speech Writing for political personnel.

Figure 8: Staff Training and Development



Note: The 'Delivered externally' data includes OneLearning courses.

Key initiatives took place in 2022 that also provided support and learning opportunities to staff:

- **Fios, the new Learning Management System** for the Houses of the Oireachtas Service went live in December 2022. The system offers new training opportunities including a bespoke Oireachtas e-learning course on Dignity at Work, and the opportunity for managers to assign staff to undertake compliance courses (including Data Protection and Protected Disclosures). Microlearning was also introduced on Fios, short 15-minute e-learning segments, with topics including health and wellbeing and effective leadership.
- Over 10 **management and leadership courses** were advertised for Civil Service staff and rolled out on the OneLearning platform in 2022.

A total of 34 managers availed of 'Managing a Blended Workforce' an online virtual classroom session delivered via WebEx on OneLearning. The course presents the 5 principles outlined in the Blended Working Policy Framework for Civil Service Organisations and is designed to raise awareness and allows time to discuss the challenges and opportunities blended working creates.

- An away day took place in September for the senior management team to focus on upcoming leadership challenges. The purpose of the day was to re-energise strategic thinking at senior management level including how the organisation will approach future challenges and opportunities. It was an opportunity to explore approaches to change through practical and experiential workshops.
- The **Openness and Inclusion Steering Group** monitors five work programmes focused on broadening recruitment channels for people from all backgrounds.

The Service is also working on a policy for a formalised internship programme for specialist civil service areas.

- Willing Able Mentoring (WAM) is a work placement programme which aims to promote access to the labour market for graduates with disabilities and build the capacity of employers to integrate disability into the mainstream workplace. One WAM placement commenced in July 2022.

A change to the WAM programme in 2022 allows WAM graduates to compete in a confined interview competition leading to permanent employment in the Civil Service. The 2022 WAM graduate in the Houses of the Oireachtas Service was successful in the confined interview competition in December and will join the Oireachtas Service on a permanent basis.

In 2022 HR Services continued to implement a strategic recruitment approach to ensuring the timely placement of new staff and bringing recruitment competitions in-house for faster turnaround. The recruitment team focused particularly on the placement of specialist grades such as translators, researchers and economists, creating panels for existing and future needs and expanding the advertisement of jobs from the Public Appointment Service (PAS) and Oireachtas channels to include more targeted websites based on the specialist stream of recruitment.

## Strategic Outcome 2 – An Inclusive and Well-Supported Parliamentary Community

### Goal 4: Strengthen our culture of dignity and respect, diversity and inclusion.

Throughout 2022 research on the **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy** took place. A consultative process is also planned. The EDI Officer, who was a member of the Forum on a Family Friendly and Inclusive Parliament, took the recommendations of that forum's report into account when drafting the EDI Strategy for the Oireachtas. In addition, Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014 places a statutory obligation on all public bodies to put measures in place to:

- Eliminate discrimination,
- Promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services, and
- Protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services.

The Public Sector Duty relates to all members of the public, people who use our services, and our staff. The Houses of the Oireachtas plans to meet its obligations under the Public Sector Duty through its Equality Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I) Strategy and Framework.

In 2022 the Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group was renamed the '*Steering Group on Openness and Inclusion*' to reflect its broader remit around diversity and inclusion programmes and its educational, access and engagement agenda. This

Steering Group has two distinct and equal aims; to improve diversity and inclusion across the nine equality grounds in the Houses of the Oireachtas and to develop and monitor educational and engagement opportunities to increase access to the Houses of the Oireachtas using recruitment, placement, internship and apprenticeship models. The two aims are interlinked with the overarching objective to develop an open, inclusive and accessible National Parliament and to become an employer of choice.

The renaming of the Steering Group in 2022 acknowledged the emerging demand for diversity and inclusion in the workplace and additional pathways to employment with five official placement programmes now in place in the Oireachtas, namely:

1. Student Placement Programme for members
2. Transition Year Programme
3. Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL Programme)
4. WAM (Willing, Able, Mentoring) Programme
5. ISL and Trinity College Deaf Studies Programme.

Details on the Student Placement Programme for members, the Transition Year Programme, the WAM Programme and ISL and Trinity College Deaf Studies Programme are provided in strategic goals 3.2, 2.3 and 3.1 respectively.



The **Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) Programme** is an applied learning, development and socialisation programme specifically tailored towards young adults with an intellectual disability. The Programme was first launched in September 2018 by the Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD, as a pilot programme with two sponsor organisations, *WALK* and *KARE*, and was facilitated by the Houses of the Oireachtas Service who provide a workplace in which these adults can learn and develop their skills to be “work ready”. The Houses of the Oireachtas is the first Parliament in the world to host a programme of its kind.

The second group in the Oireachtas Work Learning (OWL) programme graduated on 6 July 2022, at an awards ceremony in Leinster House.



OWL programme graduates, July 2022.

The outcome of the programme is to support OWL graduates to find meaningful and viable part-time permanent employment in the wider Civil and Public Service through the OWL Graduate Programme. Seven of this year's graduates have secured part-time employment following their participation in the programme; six across Government Departments and Offices and one in the private sector.

During their time in Leinster House, the ten programme trainees (now graduates) were placed across different offices in-house and in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media where they gained valuable work experience in multiple areas. Throughout 2020 and 2021 the trainees engaged in remote working tasks where they gained valuable experience in a blended working setting.

While the Covid-19 pandemic presented a challenge it also presented the programme partners with an opportunity to expand the programme and use the time to work with the trainees to add a blended working element to the programme.

The third group of OWL trainees commenced placement onsite in September 2022, this is the first onsite placement of OWL trainees since the Covid-19 pandemic. The group of 10 trainees completed induction on 19 September and since then have been taking up roles in different sections across the organisation and in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.

There is a continuous demand for the Service to expand its diversity and inclusion programmes arising from the success of the OWL programme. For example, **the Forum on a Family Friendly and Inclusive Parliament** recommended the development 'of a suite of work placement programmes with an emphasis on equitable and transparent access, best practice standards and good learning outcomes' (Recommendation 46).

With this focus on diversity and inclusion the Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD, hosted the **Parliamentary Symposium on Enhancing Participation in Public Life and Politics** on 13 September. Its purpose was to consider big picture ideas and challenges that the parliamentary community can advance in the spirit of common purpose. The symposium brought together members of the Parliament and stakeholders from both national and international areas of expertise. The Symposium examined three distinct areas to make a career in public life and politics more inclusive, attractive and accessible:

- diversity in 21st century Ireland
- the interests of young people and
- women's participation in the parliamentary community.

The keynote speakers at the event were:

- Furkan Karayel, Author, Diversity and Inclusion Speaker Ireland, on 'Reflecting the diversity of 21st century Ireland in the Parliamentary Community';
- Harry McCann, Founder of Digital Youth Council, on 'Representing the interests of Young People'; and
- Rachael Rollins, United States Attorney for District of Massachusetts, on 'Promoting Women's participation in the Parliamentary Community'.



Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD, hosted the *Parliamentary Symposium on Enhancing Participation in Public Life and Politics* on 13 September.

Everyone in the Houses of the Oireachtas strongly supports a culture of dignity and respect in the Parliamentary Workplace, in which bullying, harassment and sexual harassment are totally unacceptable forms of behaviour. Members and Political Parties, in adopting the Commission's **Dignity and Respect Statement of Principles and Policy** (2019), confirmed their commitment to encouraging and maintaining a positive and welcoming working environment in which all those working within the parliamentary community are treated with equality, dignity and respect. 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.

**A Dignity and Respect Steering Group** was established in March 2022 and the group met three times in the year. Their work in 2022 included ongoing appraisal of the Dignity and Respect Statement of Principles and Policy and raising awareness of the policy and the services available to support it.



A **Dignity at Work (DAW)** e-learning course was developed in 2022 which includes the Civil Service Dignity at Work (DAW) Policy as well as the Oireachtas Service's own codes of practice. Training and information sessions will be available to political staff and members in 2023. Furthermore, a variety of training options are being developed around dignity in the workplace.

Under the requirements of the Children First Act 2015, the Houses of the Oireachtas Service has a **Child Safeguarding Statement** in place, supported by a **Child Safeguarding Implementation Plan**. In 2022 a Working Group of the Openness and Inclusion Steering Group was set up to raise awareness of child safeguarding and develop a suite of resources to highlight the role of the parliamentary community in the safe provision of Oireachtas relevant services. Awareness raising events will be scheduled during 2023.

The Child 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 within the parliamentary complex. A Child Safeguarding Implementation Plan was also developed setting out actions to implement the Child Safeguarding Statement including the promotion of the requirements and supports in place.

On the 21 December the Houses of the Oireachtas Service published its **Gender Pay Gap Report** for 2022 in line with legislative requirements. The Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021 regulations require organisations with more than 250 employees to report on the hourly gender pay gap in their organisation across the range of metrics.

This report sets out the gender pay gap measures for the Houses of the Oireachtas Service for 2022. The Service chose 29 June 2022 as its snapshot date. The mean gender pay gap for the Service for the period 30 June 2021 to 29 June 2022 is -3.56%, while the median gender pay gap for the same period is -5.62%. The gender pay gap is the difference in the average hourly wage of men and women across a workforce; this includes basic pay, allowances and overtime.

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service is strongly committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion. At the heart of our strategic plan is a recognition that the people who make up our parliamentary community are our greatest asset. Houses of the Oireachtas Service staff (civil service and state industrial staff) have a wealth of knowledge and experience and are the key drivers of supporting an effective parliament. The Oireachtas Service will continue to progress a number of initiatives to enhance diversity and inclusion and will continue to monitor and report on gender representation.

## Strategic Outcome 2 – An Inclusive and Well-Supported Parliamentary Community

### Goal 5: Develop a strategy to implement the recommendations of the Forum on a Family Friendly and Inclusive Parliament.

The **Forum on a Family Friendly and Inclusive Parliament** was established by the Ceann Comhairle to generate practical and achievable recommendations that could make the Houses of the Oireachtas a more inclusive, family friendly and gender sensitive workplace. Chaired by Dr. Mary Upton, the forum presented its report in November 2021 which marked a significant milestone. The report makes 51 recommendations, 10 of which are considered priority. These relate to five key areas, namely:

1. A Referendum to address remote working and proxy voting.
2. Increased representation of women on Oireachtas Committees.
3. Reduce long, late and unpredictable sitting weeks.
4. Increasing diversity in the parliamentary community; and
5. Measures to ensure personal safety of members and their staff.

All of the recommendations include timelines for implementation, generally ranging from 12 months to three years.

Early in 2022 the Service established a Steering Committee, chaired at Assistant Secretary level, to review the recommendations under three broad headings. Three sub-committees were

established under these three headings and are chaired at Principal Officer level.

1. **Procedural:** Some of the key recommendations considered include for example, the establishment of a main Dáil Committee; a proposal in relation to a Constitutional Referendum to amend Article 15 (to allow for remote and proxy voting); the introduction of a formal pairing system to facilitate members taking maternity leave, paternity leave, sick leave, or travel for essential Government business; and the development of hybrid settings, regional hubs and revisions to standing orders. The OPLA are also involved in advising the Steering Committee on legal issues that may arise with regard to the recommendations, such as for example the proposed Constitutional Referendum, the constitutional parameters relating to the establishment of a main Dáil Committee and the introduction of proxy voting (for Maternity, Paternity and Sick Leave) and arrangements for members to participate with parliamentary privilege in certain Oireachtas business remotely.
2. **HR:** Some of the key recommendations to be overseen by this group include the Service addressing and facilitating long sitting hours in a more family-friendly way for staff which could include additional staff, the use of rosters, and/or job role re-design; as well as recommendations relating to the development of flexible and hybrid working arrangements, development of an Equality Diversity and Inclusion strategy, recruitment and training initiatives, and work placement programmes.

3. **Facilities and Accommodation:** Some of the main recommendations in this area include accommodation for a new “main” Dáil Committee, creating spaces for infant feeding, adequate infant changing facilities, provision of a dedicated Family Room for the children of members, a review of the creche facilities, toilet facilities and the accessibility of the campus.

Initial assessment of all of the recommendations by the sub-committees noting the cross-over in a number of areas was an important first task. Of note is that several recommendations involve discussions with other organisations, including the Government, who may need to take a lead role or be a consultative partner on recommendations.

For example, Recommendation 38 is:

*Political parties to set targets for ethnic minority women within political parties’ gender quotas.*

As part of its report, the Forum wrote to relevant sections of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and those establishing an Electoral Commission in Ireland, as well as the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, referring them to the recommendations that were within their remit.

Political involvement and ownership of the Report’s recommendations are achieved through regular reports to the Committee for Dáil Reform, the Seanad Committee on Parliamentary Privileges and Oversight (CPPO), the Dáil Business Committee and the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission. The work of the Steering Committee in implementing the report of the Forum on a Family Friendly and Inclusive Parliament will continue in 2023 with the development of implementation plans to progress the recommendations.

## Strategic Outcome 2 – An Inclusive and Well-Supported Parliamentary Community

### Goal 6: Provide a safe, secure and accessible physical environment that meets the needs of the parliamentary community

The overall responsibility for creating and maintaining a safe, secure and accessible physical environment starts with the Management Board and Secretary General. In order to enable the Management Board and Secretary General to deliver on their responsibility, the involvement and cooperation of all users of the Leinster House complex is required. Specific delegations, roles and responsibilities for managers and other stakeholders who use the complex are set out in the Houses of the Oireachtas Service Safety Statement. In addition to its own managers and employees, the Houses of the Oireachtas Service works alongside and shares its premises with a number of other organisations. The Service's Safety Statement sets out the commitments the Service expects from:

- the Office of Public Works (OPW)
- Political Personnel (members and their staff)
- Service Contractors
- Media Personnel
- Visitors.

The Head of Facilities has a lead role in providing accommodation and services to support a safe working environment. In 2022, FMU began engagement with the OPW with a view to commencing the

development of a long-term Estate Strategy for the Oireachtas complex. A full census of accommodation was completed across the Oireachtas buildings. Current needs and likely future needs were assessed, including the expected increase in Dáil membership following the next general election and proposals made by the Forum on a Family Friendly and Inclusive Parliament. This project is ongoing, and engagement will continue with the OPW.

The Head of Facilities is also responsible for business continuity planning and a process of consultation with Business units followed by workshops will begin in 2023. Safety management has been kept under ongoing review to ensure all measures take account of changing circumstances, measures are updated to reflect advice and best practice.

In 2022 a new Safety Unit was established in the Houses of the Oireachtas Service and a new management system has been introduced to help reduce health and safety risks on the campus. The management system is based on a *Plan-Do-Check-Act* cycle of continuous improvement. This allows the Service to set objectives for the coming year, implement the actions required to deliver them, check that they're being done and working, and act where they are not. A crucial component of this is the Health and Safety Committee. The committee, chaired at Principal Officer level by HR, acts as a forum at which Safety Representatives can consult with management and make representations on issues of health, safety and welfare in the workplace.

The safety unit also has responsibility for fire safety policy and works with the Superintendent's section to implement fire safety practices. A project to review evacuation routes began in 2022; this includes updating routes, maps and signage to help ensure safe evacuation for all throughout the campus.

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service Safety Statement sets out 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.

In line with this commitment An Garda Síochána, at the request of the Houses of the Oireachtas, provided in person briefing sessions with members in respect of personal security for themselves and their staff. Briefing sessions also included information on how to make their constituency offices and homes more secure. Two sessions were held in Q1 and 56 members attended.

A *Tours Management* app for members was launched in November. This app allows members to book tours directly (without contacting the Superintendent's Unit). The app allows members to manage bookings, amend and cancel bookings and also provides a history of previous booked tours.

In August 2022 a Tour Review Group was established in the Superintendent's Unit, prior to the introduction of the Tours Management App. The group, chaired at Assistant Principal level, was made up of Ushers of all grades and met 5 times between August and November 2022. Recommendations were made in respect of times, content and protocol for tours.

The recommendations were implemented with effect from November 2022 to coincide with the introduction of the *Tours Management* app. The group continues to meet to review the operation of tours.

In December 2022 work began on a new Visitor Management System (VMS) in the Superintendents Section. This new system will include provision for:

- pre-registration and self-service check-in, such as QR code scanning from mobiles.
- notifying hosts of visitor arrivals and checking out, ensuring all appropriate health, safety and legal requirements are met, including the provision for emergency measures such as Covid-19 compliance.
- linking to other systems such as the Tour Booking System and may lead to further integration with other systems in the future.

The new system will also facilitate visitors who opt to use Irish when registering/checking in. Overall, the new system will help support members in conducting their business effectively and will ensure high standards of professionalism and corporate governance by offering a world class VMS experience. It will also offer comprehensive reporting which will give the Oireachtas Service greater insights into the management of visitors and also contribute to the development of future strategies. Completion is scheduled for June 2023.



## Strategic Outcome 3 – An Open, Engaged and Sustainable Parliament

### Goal 1: Strengthen public engagement with the Houses of the Oireachtas, including through the use of digital communication technologies.

Numerous events took place throughout 2022, these events have helped strengthen public engagement and raise awareness of the work of the Houses of the Oireachtas. Digital communication technologies have supported these events.

On 15 February the Cathaoirleach, Senator Mark Daly launched **Seanad100 – Minority Voices, Major Changes**, the programme of events to commemorate and celebrate the centenary of Seanad Éireann.

The key events of the programme are outlined below:

- Two of Seanad Éireann's most distinguished members joined the Cathaoirleach to launch the programme of events celebrating the centenary of the Upper House. Senator David Norris and former Senator Mary Robinson reflected on the role of Seanad Éireann over the last century and the important subjects raised and progressed in Seanad debates.



Senator David Norris, former President Mary Robinson and Cathaoirleach Senator Mark Daly launched the 'Minority Voices, Major Changes' exhibition as part of Seanad100 centenary celebrations.



Seanad 100 Launch.

- By invitation of the Cathaoirleach, Senator Mark Daly, Senator David Norris on 5 May unveiled the *Minority Voices, Major Changes* exhibition in Leinster House. The exhibition in the Leinster House foyer is the first in a series of public exhibitions to highlight the life and work of Senators who have championed minority issues since the first Seanad in 1922. The exhibition can also be viewed online at [www.oireachtas.ie/seanad100](http://www.oireachtas.ie/seanad100).
- On 22 May, as part of the series of events to mark the centenary of Seanad Éireann, Congressman Richard Neal addressed the Seanad, where he discussed the strong connection between Ireland and the US and how bipartisan Congressional Friends of Ireland caucus, of which he is co-chair, continues to support the cause of peace in Northern Ireland.



Former senator Tras Honan launches 'Women in the Seanad' exhibition.



- On 12 July former Seanad Cathaoirleach Tras Honan launched the **‘Women in the Seanad’** exhibition at Leinster House. The former Fianna Fail Senator was invited to open the exhibition by Cathaoirleach of the Seanad, Senator Mark Daly, as the only woman ever to be elected as Cathaoirleach of the Seanad. ‘Women in the Seanad’ is the second exhibition to mark the Upper House’s centenary celebrations. In keeping with the ‘Minority Voices, Major Changes’ theme of Seanad 100, the exhibition highlighted the lives and work of women senators who have championed minority issues since the first sitting of the Seanad in 1922. The exhibition can also be viewed online at [www.oireachtas.ie/seanad100](http://www.oireachtas.ie/seanad100).
- On 28 September Cathaoirleach Mark Daly was joined by former Senators Catherine McGuinness, Martin McAleese and Ian Marshall to launch the **‘Northern Voices’** exhibition. This is the third in the ‘Minority Voices, Major Changes’ series of public exhibitions to highlight the role of Senators from Northern Ireland, both Nationalists and Unionists who used the Seanad as a platform to ensure representative and inclusive debate. The exhibition can also be viewed online at [www.oireachtas.ie/seanad100](http://www.oireachtas.ie/seanad100).
- **Seanad na nÓg** convened on 10 November 2022, with delegates from all over the island of Ireland. This event gave young people the opportunity to debate a number of topics selected by young people themselves. Speaking in the debate, the Leas-Chathaoirleach, Senator Joe O’Reilly, said *“The Seanad has championed minority voices since its foundation 100 years ago. It is fitting, that in its centenary year, the Seanad is empowering the voice of young people.”* Following the day-long event, delegates chose the topic of the cost of student living for discussion by Senators with a relevant Minister.
- On 24 November the Irish Independent published a Seanad100 Newspaper educational supplement with contributions from academics and former Senators. The supplement highlighted all the initiatives that took place throughout 2022 to commemorate the centenary of Seanad Éireann.
- On 12 December the Cathaoirleach Mark Daly launched the final exhibition in the ‘Minority Voices, Major Changes’ series of public exhibitions that celebrates 100 years of Seanad Éireann. This exhibition is focussed on the ongoing work in the Seanad that will strengthen its role in parliament.
- On 12 December the Cathaoirleach Mark Daly hosted a Ceremonial Sitting of Seanad Éireann to mark the centenary of the first sitting. This was marked by an address from Taoiseach Micheál Martin TD with an original reflection by Dr John Bowman.
- A two-part documentary, chronicling 100 years of Seanad Éireann was broadcast by Oireachtas TV in December; featuring contributions from noted historians and members past and present, including President Michael D. Higgins, former President Mary Robinson and Senator David Norris.



Seanad na nÓg.



Seánad 100 Book – 100 Bliain de Sheanad Éireann 1922-2022 edited by the Institute of Public Administration – 2023.

- In a ceremony hosted in the Oireachtas Library reading room on the 22 February 2023, the Institute of Public Administration publication **100 Bliain de Sheanad Éireann 1922-2022** was launched by the Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann. The book was produced to commemorate and celebrate the centenary of Seanad Éireann and draws together contributions from current senators and officeholders, a former senator, academics and researchers. The publication of this book, which gives the reader a valuable frame of reference on the first 100 years of the Upper House, is the final initiative in a year-long programme of commemoration for the centenary of the first sitting of Seanad Éireann.

In July 2022, the Library and Research Service, in partnership with the Standing Committee of IFLAPARL (International Federation of Library Associations – Library and Research Services for Parliaments Section), hosted the 37th annual IFLAPARL pre-conference in Dublin. The theme of the pre-conference was: *The parliamentary life of information: how library & research services provide value for parliaments, members, and citizens*. A total of 73 participants attended the conference and 18 speakers provided inputs over the course of the one-day event, including two Oireachtas staff. Parliamentary research and library services from Europe, Africa, North and South America and Asia were represented at the pre-conference. For the first time, the

pre-conference meeting was simultaneously livestreamed for participants unable to join the event in person, and data analytics from the event show that there were 220 views of the pre-conference livestream video. Virtual breakout rooms were also facilitated and 30 librarians and researchers from Asia, South America and Africa also participated in virtual small group discussions.

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. In 2022 there were 29,239 visitors to Leinster House. A comparison between the number of visitors to Leinster House in this period and the number of visitors to Leinster House in 2021 (1,874) highlights the gradual re-opening of Leinster House to the public.



Clifden Scoil Mhuire visiting Leinster House 25 Oct 2022 – In collaboration with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media and the Houses of the Oireachtas, and the Print Museum on Universal Suffrage celebration.

Leinster House is one of the most culturally and socially significant buildings in the country and opening the doors of the Parliament on Culture Night plays a vital part in promoting civic engagement between the public and their political system. Approximately 600 tickets were made available to the public for the event on 23 September, the theme was Seanad100. The Seanad 100 Exhibition in the Library Reading Room was part of the Tour. Visitors were also able to view the historic art on

display throughout the building. Musical entertainment was provided on the night by members of Brú Ború Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, Rathfarnham Ukulele Group, Birth of a Nation, Loreto Primary School Choir, Rathfarnham and the Ukrainian Crisis Centre Ireland.

**ISL** interpreted tours are provided for Deaf visitors to the Houses. ISL tours were included as part of Culture Night 2022 on 23 September and Open House Dublin 2022 which took place from 14-16 October.

The Houses of the Oireachtas Twitter and Facebook accounts saw an increase in followers in 2022. 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 three awards at the annual national social media awards in 2022 in the following State Organisation categories: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. This was the fifth consecutive year that the social media team received Sockies awards.

The [Oireachtas.ie](https://oireachtas.ie) website is the primary public engagement vehicle for the work of the Houses of the Oireachtas. It contains the outputs of parliament (e.g., live streams, the Official Report, legislation, Committee activity) and allows citizens to readily see who their elected representatives are, what they are saying in the Dáil, Seanad or Committees, how they are voting and, importantly, how to contact them. Members' profile pages collectively are the second most visited area of Oireachtas.ie, highlighting the importance of this information to external users.

A wide variety of parliamentary content is published and consumed each sitting day on Oireachtas.ie; for example, videos of parliamentary meetings, legislation, debates from both Houses and Committee rooms, Committee opening statements, Committee reports, corporate documents, press releases, and schedules of business. In 2022 there was a 14% increase on 2021, in overall website traffic.



Culture Night 2022.



Table 11: Oireachtas Website	2022	2021	2020	2019
Visits to the Oireachtas website	1,405,838	1,231,016	2,298,617	2,338,948
Website page views	4,661,853	4,576,635	6,611,405	7,044,427

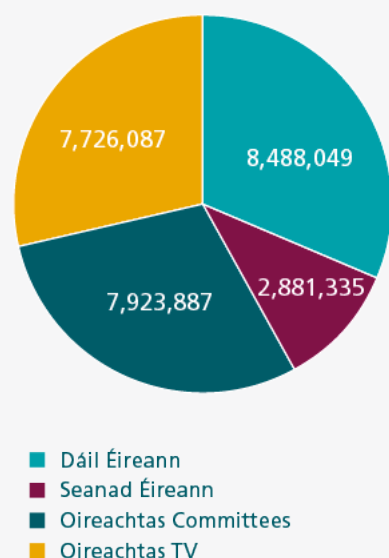
<sup>1</sup> In October 2020 changes to cookie consent on Oireachtas.ie in order to implement GDPR requirements resulted in a decrease in page views and visits to the Website.

2022 in summary:

- 1.4 million visits to Oireachtas.ie
- 4.67 million page views
- 584,000 page views of Members' pages
- 394,000 users
- 258,000 document downloads
- 20 million minutes of live streaming consumed
- 7,120 documents published (excluding legislation)
- 950 email and phone queries from the public answered.

Over 2022 Rannóg an Aistriúcháin's output and information presence on the Oireachtas website was developed to facilitate electronic publication and easy access for the public to all official translations and other Rannóg an Aistriúcháin outputs. Ongoing work in this area includes examining the future electronic format of official translations, particularly with regard to portability and searchability.

**Figure 9: Oireachtas Live Streaming (minutes served to viewers), 2022**



From April short videos of daily Topical Issues and Commencement Matters were available to view and download on the Oireachtas website. Topical Issues and Commencement Matters are an integral part of the daily proceedings of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann. With this new feature on the Houses of the Oireachtas website, Deputies, Senators, political staff, and local and national media outlets can now download the edited video and audio content of each topical issue and commencement matter to share this information on their relevant digital platforms.

The accessibility of the edited video files allows media outlets to share the Houses of the Oireachtas content in a user friendly and timely fashion. The edited video file is available to download for two weeks before being archived.

In 2022 Oireachtas.ie was noted as one of the strongest performers in the National Disability Authority's web accessibility directive monitoring. Work on accessibility will continue in 2023. New content was produced and published by the web team to commemorate the Seanad 100 centenary, which commenced in December 2022. Live streaming across 6 online channels was successfully maintained throughout the year. The address by H.E. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, to a joint sitting of both Houses of the Oireachtas via video link from Kyiv on 6 April was the consumption highpoint seeing more than 387,000 minutes served to users during the event.

The **Houses of the Oireachtas bilingual app** is another publicly available digital tool that supports citizen engagement with the Houses of the Oireachtas. The app is available for both Android and Apple

devices and contains live streams, schedule information and member details. There have been more than 9,200 downloads of the app across both app stores and every sitting week can see up to 1,200 active app users. Average engagement time is approximately 58 minutes.

**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)

The Houses of the Oireachtas strives to provide the highest standard of ISL-interpreted parliamentary debates, discussions and documentaries. During 2022 Oireachtas TV presented Irish Sign Language (ISL) for all sittings. This included Leader's questions, parliamentary questions on policy and legislation and commencement matters with ISL interpretation.

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. Oireachtas TV *Around the Houses*, is a monthly production looking back on some of the main events in the past month.

The *Oireachtas TV Documentaries* broadcast during 2022 included:

- **Seanad Éireann One Hundred Years Part 1 and Part 2**  
Broadcast in December 2022 this was a major two-part documentary, chronicling 100 years of Seanad Éireann.

#### ● **National Bravery Awards 2022**

An Ceann Comhairle, Deputy Seán Ó Feargháil, presented the National Bravery Awards for 2022 to individuals who risked their own lives to save others.

#### ● **Partition, 1921**

In this documentary Michael Portillo examines the Partition of Ireland a century ago. Using British government files from the time a unique perspective on the formative event for modern Ireland, North and South, is presented.

The *Oireachtas TV Debates* series broadcast during 2022 included:

- **Oireachtas TV Budget 2023 Special**  
Oireachtas TV presented the live Budget 2023 Special. Interviews took place with the Ceann Comhairle Seán Ó Feargháil, the Minister for Finance Paschal Donohoe and the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform Michael McGrath. Reports include, *Explaining the Causes of Inflation* with Dan O'Brien, Chief Economist at the IIEA and Columnist with the Sunday Business Post, *Two Economists Outline Differing Perspectives on Managing Inflation* with Michael Taft, Researcher with SIPTU and Conall MacCoille, Chief Economist at Davy and a look at the Energy Crisis with Professor Lisa Ryan, Energy Economist, UCD.
- **The July Edition of Oireachtas TV Debates** which presented a discussion on a review of the parliamentary term delving into the major international stories such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, global inflation, the continuing EU-UK discussions over the Northern Ireland Protocol, and the Conservative Party leadership race.
- **An EU Special May Edition** from the May Plenary in the European Parliament Marking 50 Years of Ireland in the EU. Interviews took place with the President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola on her role and the EU response to the war in Ukraine, and with Deirdre Clune MEP EPP & Elena Sánchez Nicolás, Journalist with the EU Observer on the Conference on the Future of Europe.

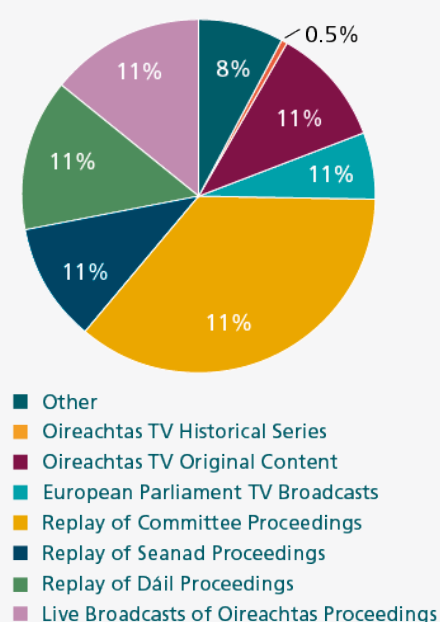
- An Interview with H.E. Larysa Gerasko, the Ambassador of Ukraine to Ireland prior to the address of H.E. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine to the Houses of the Oireachtas.
- The war in Ukraine, the spread of disinformation and the impact of social media on politics globally.
- The Russian invasion of Ukraine and Ireland's traditional foreign policy of neutrality while being members of the EU and UN.
- The impact of the Northern Ireland Protocol on day-to-day life there.

There were over 1,200 hours of live broadcasting of Oireachtas proceedings in 2022. Replay of Committee proceedings made up 60% of total Oireachtas TV Replay in 2022.



National Bravery Awards, November 2022

**Figure 10: Content of Oireachtas TV, 2022**



On 23 September the Houses of the Oireachtas marked *International Day of Sign Languages*. The day is a unique opportunity to support and protect the linguistic identity and cultural diversity of all deaf people and other sign language users and its theme for 2022 was 'Sign Languages Unite Us! It was part of a wider *International Week of Deaf People*.

The **Oireachtas Irish Sign Language (ISL)** team collaborated with the Centre for Deaf Studies, Trinity College Dublin to draft a new ISL glossary of parliamentary terminology. This unique initiative has resulted in 80 ISL signs being defined. The Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghaíl TD, invited all ISL users to examine the new glossary of parliamentary terms and send their feedback anonymously via an interactive online survey. Two outreach sessions were held with the Deaf Senior Citizens Day Centre in the Deaf Village Ireland (DVI) which included Deafblind participants to collect their views on the new glossary. A final version of the glossary is accessible on the Oireachtas website. The ISL team have been successfully selected to present this project at the World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI) conference in July 2023.

In April 2022, Deaf witnesses were called before the Joint Committee on Disability Matters to discuss disabled persons organisations and the implementation of the UNCRPD. The ISL team facilitated communication remotely throughout the meeting between the witnesses and committee members.

In September 2022 the Oireachtas ISL team attended the European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters annual conference in Manchester. This was an opportunity to network with European colleagues and become informed of developments and changes in sign language interpretation to ensure output is relevant and up to date.



## Strategic Outcome 3 – An Open, Engaged and Sustainable Parliament

### Goal 2: Further develop our education programme for primary, post-primary and third-level institutions.

The **Oireachtas Education Programme**, led by the Parliamentary Education Officer, 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 **Transition Year (TY) Programme** is a formalised programme managed and coordinated by the Parliamentary Education Officer and designed to give students an insight into careers in the Oireachtas. There are three student intakes during the year in November and April with another week in March, which is delivered through Irish. The feedback on the programme from students is very positive.
- The Transition Year Programme for the school year 2021/22 continued in March and April 2022 with one week for students from Irish Medium schools and students from Gaeltacht areas in March (7-11th) while the week in April (4-8th) was delivered through English. Both were one week in duration and were delivered online via Teams. The first cohort of the 2022/23 work experience programme was

delivered from the 28 November to the 2 of December 2022 and was delivered via a blended approach. Three days were delivered online and two were onsite in Leinster House. Based on feedback from the participants this model was very successful.

- The Parliamentary Education Officer is engaging with **Rannóg an Aistriúcháin** on targeting educational activities at Irish Medium schools, primarily through the Transition Year Work experience week, to promote the bilingual nature of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service.
- In conjunction with the **South Dublin Community Partnership** a programme for Transition Year students from DEIS schools in South County Dublin was piloted. Discussions also began with Northside Partnership with a view to linking with the **STAR (Supporting Travellers and Roma) programme**.
- The Oireachtas **Student Placement Programme** for members is a period of learning, and experience, offered to students by academic institutions and facilitated by the Service. Student placements are temporary positions with an emphasis on practical training and applied learning where students can work 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 Programme was launched in 2018 to formalise a process which had been in place between members and select colleges over several years. Following the pandemic and a review of the Student Placement Programme, 2022 saw the return to an on-site Student Placement

Programme, whereby students from participating third level institutions were placed with members and for the first time since March 2020 were given access to Leinster House. The total number of students for the 2022/23 academic year is 59.

- There was a visit in February from 25 interns from the **Ontario Legislature Internship Programme**.
- The Education Officer also presented on the **Education Outreach work** with young people to the INTER PARES (Parliaments in Partnership) Seminar with the Congress of Peru on the 6 May 2022.
- The first onsite version of a **Continuing Professional Development** (CPD) programme for primary school teachers was held from the 15-19 August 2022. Twenty-one teachers from different schools took part.
- 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 from January until May. In person workshops resumed in May. Requests for workshops also came from schools doing CSPE at Junior Cycle and offering Politics as a taster module in Transition Year with a view to introducing it as a subject in 5th year.

A series of lesson plans on Seanad100 published in December allows students and teachers to use specially designed learning resources to explore the social, political and historical circumstances surrounding the Seanad within the second-level curriculum.

Primary schools availed of the virtual tour throughout June. That month also saw the first on-site tours and Parliamentary Education Workshops for primary school pupils on a trial basis. A wide variety of schools took part in both the online and onsite tours and workshops.



May 2022 – A Leinster House awards ceremony for the winners of the Treaty Debates Essay Writing Competition.

2022 saw the conclusion of the **Treaty Debates essay competition** with an awards ceremony in May in Leinster House. Prizes were awarded on a regional basis for both Junior and Senior cycle students along with a special award for an overall winner and best use of the Oireachtas website for sourcing content from the Debate archives.

Senior cycle Politics and Society students continued to engage in the **Ceann go Ceann programme** from their own classrooms in 2022. This programme allows students and teachers to speak directly to the Ceann Comhairle, the Leas Cheann Comhairle and Cathaoirleach, via video link, and ask questions about Irish politics and the Oireachtas (a 40-minute session approximately). The programme was presented by the Oireachtas Education Officer at the **International Forum of Parliament Visitor Centers** in Jerusalem in November. It was well received and counterparts from other Parliaments expressed interest in learning more about the programme with a view to implementing it in their Parliaments.



The Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action met representatives of Foróige and Comhairle na nÓg in June.

## Strategic Outcome 3 – An Open, Engaged and Sustainable Parliament

### Goal 3: Establish a centralised Oireachtas Archives to safeguard and preserve the documents produced by the Houses of the Oireachtas.

In 2022 three actions supporting the establishment of the Oireachtas Archives were completed as follows:

- Following development work by the Records Management Unit (RMU) and ICT the procurement of archival management software (Axiell) was progressed and is in the final stage of acquisition.
- Under the direction of the RMU the project to catalogue 10,000 historical records from the procedural offices was completed by the Arcline consultancy. This project had been suspended because of the pandemic. The cataloguing of these records to an international archival standard was identified as a key 'building block' in the establishment of the Oireachtas Archives. The data created as a result of the project will be imported into the Axiell archives management system and it will aid in the retrievability and permanent preservation of the files themselves, when the Archives are established.
- Following discussions with House Services it was confirmed that the establishment of the archives would require legislation rather than a change to Standing Orders. This legislative change will be completed in 2023.

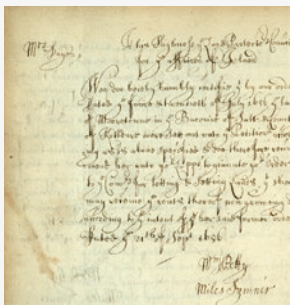


Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

## Strategic Outcome 3 – An Open, Engaged and Sustainable Parliament

### Goal 4: Enhance our engagement with Government Departments.

During 2022, the Service continued to enhance engagement with Government Departments and public bodies in relation to legislation and parliamentary procedures, including with the following:

- 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 **Procedural Development Unit** (PDU) designed and delivered a number of training initiatives, tailored to the specific procedural requirements of individual groups across the Civil Service. These initiatives included knowledge sharing sessions through departmental learning units and OneLearning.

- 9 OneLearning Courses were delivered by the PDU with 3,168 attendees. These courses included topics on legislative processes in the Houses, the processing of parliamentary questions and the procedures for Private Members Bills (PMBs).
- 55 Courses were delivered to Departmental Staff focusing on training

for officials engaged in the legislative process. A total of 1,221 attendees these courses.

The **Parliamentary Budget Office** (PBO) engages with the Department of Finance, the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and with other government departments 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.

The PBO has also formed networks with government departments by establishing a process to receive additional information on a monthly basis on departmental spending with a selected number of departments. 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.

The PBO further developed links with government departments in 2022 by developing analytical tools for forecasting and enhancing its data visualisation output.

A strategic objective of the **Parliamentary Research Service** is increasing its engagement with the wider academic community. Managers of the Parliamentary Research Team are members of a public



sector Research Managers Group and also participate in external research and evaluation advisory groups. The Library & Research Service (L&RS) continues to develop links specifically with the science research community through seminars, secondments and outreach activities. During 2020/2021 L&RS had partnered with **Science Foundation Ireland** (SFI) on their Fellowship Programme as part of the Oireachtas Academic Engagement Programme. During Q4 2022 the resulting research was disseminated to the parliamentary community with a series of online events. The Academic Engagement Programme is now being reviewed and a new strategy will be delivered in 2023.

- On 8 April the Oireachtas Library & Research Service and Science Foundation Ireland, hosted a seminar where Dr Tony Keene from the School of Chemistry in UCD discussed a new, zero emissions process for recycling batteries in Ireland that he and his colleagues have developed. The team hope their work will lead to cheaper batteries for electric vehicles, lower carbon emissions and relieve conditions for communities involved in mining the raw materials (cobalt and lithium).

- Marking Science Week 2022, the Oireachtas Library and Research Service hosted a webinar looking at the future of our water and energy systems. Given in partnership with Science Foundation Ireland, the webinar illustrated how Irish researchers are working to futureproof these vital systems in one of the 16 themes that the public voiced as a priority in *Creating our Future*, a national conversation on research in Ireland. This seminar took place on Wednesday, 16 November.

## Strategic Outcome 3 – An Open, Engaged and Sustainable Parliament

### Goal 5: Strengthen our EU, UK and other international relationships.

The Interparliamentary and Travel Unit, the Protocol Unit and the Committees Secretariat support members in the ongoing development of Interparliamentary relations.

From March 2020 until early 2022, members' inter-parliamentary activities were mainly facilitated through virtual engagements. In-person meetings resumed in January of 2022. There were 35 PACE Plenary and Committee meetings in 2022.

On 6 April 2022, H.E. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, addressed a joint sitting of both Houses of the Oireachtas via video link from Kyiv. President Zelenskyy is the sixth head of state to address a joint sitting of the Houses of the Oireachtas and the first to do so via video link.



H.E. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine, addressing a joint sitting of both Houses of the Oireachtas via video link from Kyiv in April 2022.

The Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghail TD and Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann Senator Mark Daly visited Ukraine on Friday 20 May. This historic visit came after the President of Ukraine H.E. Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed the Houses of the Oireachtas in April and was a direct invitation from the Speaker of the Rada, Mr

Ruslan Stefanchuk. The group had separate meetings with the President of Ukraine H.E. Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the Prime Minister Mr Denys Shmyhal and also the Head of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Mr Ruslan Stefanchuk. The group then had an opportunity to witness first-hand the consequences of the occupation of the towns of Bucha and Irpin by Russian armed forces.

A photo exhibition entitled '*Chronicles of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022: the beginning*' went on display in Leinster House 2000 on the 13 July. The exhibition was opened by the Ambassador of Ukraine to Ireland, H.E. Larysa Gerasko. The Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghail TD, agreed to host the exhibition following his visit to Ukraine.

On the 25 October the Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann, Senator Mark Daly, was honoured to be awarded the Order of Prince Yaroslav the Wise, II Degree, by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine. The Cathaoirleach was one of 12 speakers of parliamentary assemblies to be granted the honour. Among others to be honoured with the Order of Prince Yaroslav the Wise were Speaker Nancy Pelosi of the United States House of Representatives, President of the German Bundestag, Bärbel Bas, and President of the French Senate, Gérard Larcher. Also honoured were the speakers of parliaments in Poland, Norway, Switzerland, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and North Macedonia.

Attending the First Parliamentary Summit of the International Crimea Platform in Zagreb, Croatia, the Cathaoirleach thanked President Zelenskyy for the honour.

On 1 December President Ursula von der Leyen of the European Commission



addressed a joint sitting of the Houses of the Oireachtas as part of a visit to Dublin. The political messages she laid out in her speech reinforced in depth the Union's support for Ireland in terms of economic development, Brexit and the peace process. During her visit to Ireland President von der Leyen met with President Michael D. Higgins and the Taoiseach, Deputy Micheál Martin. She also received the Sutherland Leadership Award. She is the second President of the European Commission to address the Oireachtas, with Jean-Claude Juncker having done so in 2018.



H.E. Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, meeting the Ceann Comhairle, Seán Ó Fearghail TD, before her address to a joint sitting of both Houses of the Oireachtas in December.

During 2022, the following key events also took place:

- On 2 February MEPs representing the European Parliament South Constituency (Mr. Billy Kelleher, MEP, Mr. Seán Kelly MEP, and Ms. Grace O'Sullivan) addressed Seanad Éireann.
- On 3 March, Ms Linda Ervine MBE addressed Seanad Éireann to mark Seachtain na Gaeilge 2022. Through her *Turas* Irish language project, based in east Belfast, Ms Ervine aims 'to connect people from Protestant communities to their own history with the Irish Language'.



Ms Linda Ervine addressed Seanad Éireann, March 2022.

- In April, the Houses of the Oireachtas hosted meetings with the Vice President and Foreign Minister of Colombia Marta Lucía Ramírez Blanco (5 April); Alison Johnstone MSP, the Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament (7 April); H.E. Mr. YUN Jae-ok, Chairman of the National Policy Committee, National Assembly, People Power Party (PPP) of South Korea (14 April); and Madame Ma Keqing, Ambassador, head of the delegation, former Chinese Ambassador to Finland, the Czech Republic and the Philippines (25 April).
- On 10 May the Houses of the Oireachtas hosted Johannes Hahn, the European Commissioner for Budget and Administration.
- In May, US Congressman Richard Neal led a congressional delegation to Leinster House. On 24 May, Congressman Neal became the first member of the United States Congress to address Seanad Éireann in its 100-year history.



US Congressman Richard Neal addressed Seanad Éireann, May 2022.

- On 3 June the Houses of the Oireachtas hosted Olha Stefanishyna, Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine.
- On 14 June, four members of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine addressed Seanad Éireann. This was the first address in person by members of the Ukrainian Parliament to a chamber of another national parliament anywhere in the world since the war began.
- On 20 September MEPs representing the European Parliament Dublin Constituency (Mr. Barry Andrews, MEP, Mr. Ciarán Cuffe MEP, and Ms. Frances Fitzgerald) addressed Seanad Éireann.

- On the 5 October the Right Honourable Lord John McFall of Alcluith, Lord Speaker of the House of Lords addressed Senators as part of his first official visit to Ireland. Welcoming the Lord Speaker to the Seanad Chamber, the Cathaoirleach, Senator Mark Daly, said that Lord McFall's knowledge of and interest in Ireland was clear. Before a full Chamber, the Lord Speaker spoke on matters that included the centenary of the first sitting of Seanad Éireann, the hope of continued and enhanced co-operation between the Seanad and the House of Lords and the question of the Northern Ireland protocol.
- Week of the 10 October: *INTER PARES Partnership with the National Assembly of The Gambia and the Houses of the Oireachtas* – A Parliamentary Governance and Financial Management Study visit at the Houses of the Oireachtas. The overall objective of the partnership between the National Assembly of the Gambia and the Houses of the Oireachtas in the area of parliamentary governance and financial management is to strengthen the National Assembly's independence to effectively support members in their core legislative, budgetary, oversight and representative functions.
- On the 19 October President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa of Portugal was welcomed to Leinster House. The president was welcomed by the Cathaoirleach and Leas-Cheann Comhairle and accompanied by the Portuguese ambassador to Ireland, H.E. Barnardo de Lucena, and other officials. The president attended a Seanad sitting. It is the first state visit by a Portuguese president for 23 years, arising from the invitation of President Michael D. Higgins on the occasion of his visit to Portugal in 2015.



H.E. Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, President of the Portuguese Republic, signing the Distinguished Visitors' Book during his State visit in October. The President is accompanied by Cathaoirleach, Senator Mark Daly and the Leas-Cheann Comhairle, Catherine Connolly TD.

Table 12: International and Interparliamentary Functions	2022	2021	2020	2019
<b>Outgoing Parliamentary Delegations<sup>1</sup></b>				
IPU General Assemblies and related Meetings	3	5	10	6
PACE Plenary and Committee Meetings	35	68	58	38
Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE	6	15	13	8
Speaker-led delegations and bilateral meetings	4	1	0	10
<b>Incoming Parliamentary Delegations</b>				
Speaker-led Delegations	3	0	1	4
Bilateral meetings	6	1	1	16
<b>Friendship Groups</b>				
Incoming Parliamentary Friendship Groups	12	5	1	9
Outgoing Parliamentary Friendship Groups	4	0	0	3

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

The Protocol Unit managed and supported 26 incoming visits and addresses to the Houses during 2022. The Unit's programme of work also included support provided to five conferences during the year.

Table 13: Protocol Unit	2022
Incoming Visits	26
Heads of State	2
Government Ministers	5
EU Commissioners	6
Ambassadors on Official Visits	3
Other Distinguished Visitors <sup>1</sup>	10
Support provided to Conferences	5

<sup>1</sup> Other distinguished visitors include visiting parliamentarians, MEPs, and the heads of Advisory Bodies to the EU.

**Europe Day** takes place every year on 9 May. It celebrates peace and unity in Europe. The date marks the anniversary of the historic 'Schuman declaration' when French politician Robert Schuman set out his idea for a new form of political cooperation in Europe. In 2022 Ireland celebrated the 50th anniversary of the referendum that endorsed our entry into the EEC (10 May 1972). The year also saw the conclusion of the Conference on the Future of Europe after 12 months of debate. On 9 May the Conference presented its report with recommendations from EU citizens on the challenges and priorities ahead.

**Parliamentary Friendship Groups** are a forum for building better understanding and mutual agreement, on a broad range of subjects, between members of National Parliaments. Houses of the Oireachtas Friendships Groups function under the aegis of the Ceann Comhairle who nominates conveners to organise the groups' activities. On the 28 February there was a joint statement by the Ceann Comhairle and the Cathaoirleach of the Seanad on the dissolving of The Houses of the Oireachtas Irish-Russian Parliamentary Friendship Group, in solidarity with the National Parliament of Ukraine, Verkhovna Rada, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.



Visit to Leinster House by Poet Laureate of the Canadian Parliament – Louise B. Halfe – 23 November 2022.

On 24 November Poet Laureate to the Canadian Parliament, Ms Louise Bernice Halfe visited Leinster House as part of a First Nations delegation. The visit, part of a wider three-day engagement, was organised by the Ireland-Canada interparliamentary friendship group and hosted by Deputy David Stanton.

The **Irish Parliamentary Women's Caucus** is a cross-party forum for Irish women parliamentarians to discuss and campaign on issues predominantly affecting women. At their meeting held on 2 March, the caucus passed a motion of solidarity with the female members of the Ukrainian Parliament and with the women in society in Ukraine. Caucus Chairperson Senator Fiona O'Loughlin was in contact with Ukrainian female MPs through the Council of Europe and met with the Ukrainian Ambassador, Gerasko Larysa, to express solidarity and support.



Dr Karina Doorley, Senior Research Officer at the ESRI, addressing a Workshop on the Care Economy held by the Women's Parliamentary Caucus in October.

2022 was another key year for UK-Ireland relations with both looking to accelerate their post-Covid-19 economic recoveries and with EU-UK negotiations over the Northern Ireland Protocol still ongoing. The 61st Plenary of the **British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (BIPA)** took place in Westminster Hall's Grand Committee Room on 1 March. It was the first face-to-face meeting between Assembly members in more than two years due to the pandemic. The meetings on both days featured constructive and engaging debate on a range of topics from the Northern Ireland Protocol, legacy issues, Brexit and the attack on Ukraine.

The 62nd Plenary of the BIPA concluded on 25 October following a two-day meeting held at the Farnham Estate Hotel in Co Cavan. Lawmakers from Ireland and British legislatures, and the Crown Dependencies and British Overseas Territories gathered to discuss matters of mutual interest, debate trade and publish reports on a range of issues including post Brexit trade and vaccine rollout. In their opening remarks, An Taoiseach Micheál Martin T.D. and UK Minister of State for Northern Ireland Steve Baker MP both paid tribute to the work of the Assembly and its importance in strengthening bi-lateral ties.

Established in 1990 and expanded in 2001 to include members of the Senedd (then the Welsh Assembly), the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly, BIPA provides a forum for discussion of issues affecting relations and a means to improve mutual understanding. The body usually meets twice a year, alternating venues between the UK and Ireland. BIPA Committees also conduct regular research and at plenary sessions publish reports on areas of mutual interest.

### **The Oireachtas National Parliament Office (NPO)**

in Brussels represents both Houses of the Oireachtas to the European Commission, Council and Parliament and other EU institutions. The main role of the NPO is to report on EU-related issues of particular interest or importance to the work of the Houses of the Oireachtas and its Committees. It also supplies targeted, summary information on European legislation and other matters. A key function of the NPO is to report on any subsidiarity issues arising under the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty.

Of particular Irish interest in 2022 was:

- Commissioner Věra Jourová's visit to Dublin that included meeting the Taoiseach and Ministers and appearing before the Oireachtas Committees on Justice and European affairs.
- Deputy Neale Richmond and Deputy John Lahart's participation in the Conference on Stability, Economic Coordination and Governance in the European Union (IPC-SECG) in Prague; and
- A Study Group visit from the Oireachtas Committee Secretariat to the EU institutions in Brussels.

**Sectoral Committees** have ongoing engagement with relevant EU Commissioners regarding Commission Policy and continue to engage in European Parliament hosted inter-parliamentary committee meetings. The Oireachtas submitted Reasoned Opinions on:

- Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2003/87/EC as regards aviation's contribution to the Union's economy-wide emission reduction target and appropriately implementing a global market-based measure.



- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Regulation (EU) 2019/631 as regards strengthening the CO2 emission performance standards for new passenger cars and new light commercial vehicles in line with the Union's increased climate ambition.
- Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on ensuring a level playing field for sustainable air transport.
- Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2003/87/EC as regards the notification of offsetting in respect of a global market-based measure for aircraft operators based in the Union.
- The European Parliaments Proposal for a Council Regulation on the Election of the members of the European Parliament by Direct Universal Suffrage.

The **Joint Committee on European Union Affairs** published a report on 11 May entitled *Travel Report Moldova and Romania 4th – 8th April 2022*. The report summarises the engagements undertaken by the delegation on the visit, including visits to border crossings and refugee facilities in Moldova and Romania, as well as high level meetings with officials and representatives of local and national authorities and NGOs with responsibility for managing the response to the invasion. The report also presents a number of conclusions arising from the lessons learned from the visit.

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service is an active participant in the **European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD)**. ECPRD is an inter-parliamentary network for knowledge sharing and information exchange, its

members are the European Parliament; Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe; and Parliaments where the Speaker is a member of the European Conference of Presidents of Parliament. The main activities of ECPRD are comparative information requests and seminars hosted by the Member Parliaments. The L&RS is the point of contact for the ECPRD in the Houses of the Oireachtas.

In 2022 the Houses of the Oireachtas responded to 127 requests for comparative information and made 14 requests for information to the network. Staff participated in eight seminars/webinars during the year on the following topics:

- mainstreaming EU affairs in parliamentary administrations,
- parliamentary research services,
- IT in parliament,
- the budgetary sovereignty of parliament,
- parliamentary involvement in the implementation of the National Recovery and resilience Plans,
- data protection in parliament and parliamentary coordination committees.

The L&RS ensures information about the Houses of the Oireachtas on the **Inter-Parliamentary Unit (IPU) Parline** website is maintained and up to date. On an annual basis the details for parliamentary activities are provided. The results of by-elections to the Dáil and Seanad and the change of Cathaoirleach of the Seanad were also reported in 2022. Data on gender of members of the Oireachtas is used to report on the representation of women in national parliaments by the IPU.

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.

The PBO public engagements in 2022 included the following:

- February: A presentation at the European Parliament: EP BUDG committee workshop on 'Gender Budgeting: from theory to practice'.
- February: Participation in the Inter-Parliamentary Financial Information Network (IPFIN) Annual Conference providing updates from the Irish PBO and hosting a breakout session on 'Using Audio Outputs when Communicating with members'.
- May: the PBO hosted the 14th Annual Meeting of the OECD Working Party of Parliamentary Budget Officials and Independent Fiscal Institutions (PBO Network) in Dublin Castle. Approximately 100 participants representing the OECD countries and the OECD partner countries were in attendance. As host, the PBO also participated in and chaired sessions on the agenda.

The **Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers (OPLA)** continued to develop its interparliamentary relationships.

- In January the OPLA presented (virtually) on 'The Irish Parliamentary System and the Measures Adopted to Respond to Covid-19' at the 'Parliamentary Officers' Study Program' held in Canada.
- In October the OPLA took part in the UK-Ireland Interparliamentary Lawyers Conference in Edinburgh.



OECD Conference 2022 – Commissioner Mairéad McGuinness at the 14th Annual Meeting of the Working Party of OECD Parliamentary Budget Officials and Independent Fiscal Institutions hosted by the Oireachtas Parliamentary Budget Office in May.



## Strategic Outcome 3 – An Open, Engaged and Sustainable Parliament

### Goal 6: Support the delivery of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Strategy, Climate Action Plan 2021 and the implementation of biodiversity initiatives.

On 7 September 2022, the Government announced measures to cut energy use across the public sector in response to energy security needs in the context of the Russian war in Ukraine.

**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 **Facilities Management Unit** (FMU) is responsible for managing energy consumption in the Leinster House complex and has engaged with the OPW to implement a suite of measures over and above normal energy management in line with the government's proposals insofar as they can be applied to energy usage in Leinster House. 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.

As part of the national effort to address energy security risks, reduce carbon footprints and to combat rising costs, the Facilities Management Unit (FMU)

is reviewing energy use throughout the Oireachtas campus, with particular emphasis on heating systems which account for approximately 60 per cent of energy use.

The Sustainability Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) and Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) *'Public Sector Bodies Climate Action Roadmaps Guidance'* was published on 25 October 2022 and a new target date for publication of Roadmaps across the public sector was set for the end of March 2023.

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service's **Climate Action Roadmap** will set out how the Service will:

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 51% in 2030
- Increase the improvement in energy efficiency in the public sector from the 33% target in 2020 to 50% by 2030.

To help prepare for this a new sustainability team was established in the Service during 2022. The sustainability team and the Facilities Management Unit work closely with the OPW to implement energy management projects and initiatives.

The Oireachtas Service throughout 2022 committed to:

- reducing energy consumption and improving energy efficiency,
- managing and reducing energy use across the parliamentary complex,
- accelerating energy efficiency measures, such as necessary window replacement programmes, with the support of the OPW, and
- encouraging the coordination of building closures to minimise heating costs.

Through the implementation of these measures the Oireachtas Service can make a significant contribution to the impact of this energy crisis in the workplace (notwithstanding that there are some structural issues that do not support an energy reduction campaign).

Measures proposed by government and to be implemented by the Oireachtas Service to reduce future energy consumption include:

- **Reduce your use:** The FMU will adopt the 'Reduce your Use' campaign and will adapt the campaign posters, suggested activities and suggested communications in a manner appropriate to the parliamentary community.
- **Heating Schedules:** As part of ongoing energy management activities over several years the FMU has implemented a schedule of turning the heating on and off to match the seasons and sittings. The FMU will continue to monitor heating schedules and to adjust for savings where the opportunities arise.
- **Lighting:** The FMU has arranged with OPW for non-essential external lighting to be reduced/switched off where possible.
- **Energy Efficiency measures, LED replacement:** During Summer 2022 lighting in committee rooms was replaced with LED lighting, a programme of lighting replacement with LED systems is continuing in Kildare House. This will yield reasonable savings. Lighting systems in some parts of the Leinster House complex (including LH2000 and the 1966 Block) had already been upgraded to LED systems prior to the energy crisis.
- **Energy efficiency, use of buildings:** The FMU will continue to look for ways to save energy by considering how each building/area operates, aiming to ensure an appropriate working environment without heating the entire building.
- **Energy Awareness Activities:** The FMU will arrange energy awareness activities similar to those run in the past with "lunch and learn" seminars.

- **Oireachtas Green Team:** Prior to Covid-19, the Oireachtas Green Team had arranged briefing events on climate action, carbon footprint, single-use plastics reduction, and other climate-related issues. The Green Team will recommence activities and arrange similar briefing sessions in 2023. The Green Team will include representatives from all areas of the parliamentary community.
- **Personal responsibility:** personal responsibility and the cumulative effect of hundreds of small personal changes are likely to be the most effective.

The Service reports to the SEAI every year on energy consumption and activity. The SEAI publishes an annual report showing progress made by all public sector organisations towards the national energy efficiency targets. In 2022 the Service's reported primary energy consumption was 12.1 GWh for 2021. The energy performance indicator, **energy used per full-time equivalent employee**, shows a saving of over 39% against the baseline. Similarly, the Service's energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions reduced by 23% when compared with baseline emissions (average annual emissions between 2016 and 2018).

On the 5 October 2022 the **Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action** welcomed the publication of the OECD Report *Redesigning Ireland's Transport for Net Zero: Towards Systems that Work for People and the Planet*. The findings in the report align with the report by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Environment and Climate Action, *Reducing Emissions in the Transport Sector* by 51% by 2030, published in June 2021.

The Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action published a report on 17 November 2022 on Biodiversity, (*Report on Biodiversity*) which makes 75 recommendations across five key themes identified during engagements with stakeholders and through submissions to the Committee.

## Strategic Outcome 4 – A Digitally Transformed Parliament

### Goal 1: Continue to advance our cyber security capabilities.

Cyber security remains a key focus for the Service. ICT Services have been essential to the Oireachtas for many years, and this dependency has increased since the 2020 pandemic and with the increase in remote working. Effective cyber security defences have become more critical to operations within the Oireachtas as the impact of cyber-attacks are increasing and becoming more sophisticated.

The Oireachtas Cyber Security Strategy and Roadmap have been developed with input and guidance from the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) and cyber security specialists and are supported by the results of the Oireachtas cyber security maturity assessment conducted in 2021. The strategy and roadmap are aligned with international security standards and best practices and comply with regulatory and legislative requirements. Initiatives have been and will continue to be developed that will ensure alignment with the NCSC baseline standards over a three-year period.

The overarching objectives of the Cyber Security Strategy and Roadmap are to:

- Increase the security and resilience of ICT services
- Successfully optimise and invest in technology and security resources
- Deliver services that will reduce the likelihood of damage from cyber security incidents to the Oireachtas by early detection and improved response

in an ever-changing threat landscape

- Ensure compliance with Public Service Baseline Standards.  
[Compliance with the Public Sector Cyber Security Baseline Standard will ensure the Oireachtas is moving towards a cyber security compliance driven model under the NIS2 Directive<sup>2</sup>, which will be enforced from 2024.]

These objectives will be achieved and measured over time during each of the key initiatives developed within the Cyber Security Strategy. These initiatives encompass:

- A Security Operations Centre
- Threat and Vulnerability Management
- ICT security and cultural awareness.

Changing cultural awareness and building cyber security knowledge among members and staff is an important part of supporting the organisation against cyber-attacks. To achieve this objective the Houses of the Oireachtas promotes an organisational culture that places importance on information security and protection. Furthermore, the initiatives within the Cyber Security Strategy incorporate the delivery of an awareness programme that effectively trains and engages with all staff regularly.

The Cyber Security Strategy is aligned with the Houses of the Oireachtas Strategic Plan 2022-2024. The Cyber Security Strategy's vision is "Supporting and enabling a Parliament working for the people with secure, trustworthy, and resilient ICT services". This vision is linked to the six

<sup>2</sup> On the 6 December 2022 the EU adopted a new cybersecurity directive NIS2 (it replaces the NIS Directive of 2018). NIS2 sets the baseline for cybersecurity risk management measures and reporting obligations across all sectors covered by the directive.

## CYBER SECURITY STRATEGY: VISION

SUPPORTING AND ENABLING A PARLIAMENT WORKING FOR THE PEOPLE WITH SECURE, TRUSTWORTHY, AND RESILIENT ICT SERVICES.

 <p><b>IMPARTIAL</b></p> <p>Security will implement policies and controls based on risks and threats and apply these in a neutral and transparent manner to all within the Houses of the Oireachtas.</p>	 <p><b>INCLUSIVE</b></p> <p>Access methods and other security controls should be inclusive and accessible with content and services designed for all.</p>	 <p><b>COLLEGIATE</b></p> <p>Security is the responsibility of all within the Houses of the Oireachtas to ensure it is fostered in a collaborative and collegiate approach.</p>
 <p><b>ACCOUNTABLE</b></p> <p>Entrusted with the security of public information and committed to alignment to a high standard of governance.</p>	 <p><b>PEOPLE-FOCUSED</b></p> <p>Recognise people are our greatest assets and front-line defence against cyber security attacks. Raise awareness of the responsibilities for security and support the organisation by means of information and training.</p>	 <p><b>INNOVATIVE</b></p> <p>Security for the Houses of the Oireachtas should built on solid foundations with a focus on innovation. Innovation should bring value for security and exploit it to assess risk and threat-based intelligence.</p>



Coimisiún Thithe  
an Oireachtais  
Houses of the  
Oireachtas Commission

## Strategic Outcome 4 – A Digitally Transformed Parliament

### Goal 2: Progress the implementation of the Digital Transformation Programme.

The Service's Digital Transformation Programme has been a key driver in transforming the way we work. Through this programme we have built resilience into our operating systems, enhanced public engagement and improved our efficiency and effectiveness. Prior investment under the Programme enabled the Service to transition rapidly to a blended working model at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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

Service Digital Transformation Survey results, published on the Plinth in December 2022 show that:

- **81%** of respondents believe they have the right tools and technologies to complete their jobs effectively.
- **80%** of respondents feel well informed about Digital Transformation.
- **83%** of respondents believe their day-to-day job will be positively impacted by Digital Transformation.
- **89%** of respondents feel they know how to keep the Houses of the Oireachtas cybersecure.

2022 is considered a building year for a lot of digital transformation projects. Below is a narrative of 2022 achievements – it lists the projects developed in 2022. These projects will not go live until 2023 as there are interdependencies with other projects.

### 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**

## 2022 ACHIEVEMENTS

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Development of the Chamber Business System, which included the following projects: Chamber Business Platform, Speakers List and Chamber Business Manager. Business process testing (BPT) of these projects will take place in 2023.</li> <li>● Completion of the SRA Upgrade Staff Attendance project.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Additional MS Teams features were introduced to assist remote and hybrid working by members and staff.</li> <li>● Áis-Linn Calendar project development completed. BPT will take place in 2023.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Analysis and design of the Committee Task Manager Work Items project was completed, development is due to begin in 2023.</li> <li>● Development and go live of the Áis-Linn Topical Issues and Commencement Matters project.</li> </ul> |
|--|---|--|

The development of the **Chamber Business Platform** provides the overall data model, architecture and core screens for the **Dáil Chamber Business System**. The **Speakers list** allows the staff of House Services and the Bills Office to create, update and manage all information relating to members speaking on any item of business in the Dáil chamber. The **Chamber Business Manager** provides access to the back office and in-chamber sub-modules needed to prepare and manage parliamentary business items to the staff of House Services and the Clerks in the chamber.

The completion of the **SRA Upgrade** staff attendance project introduces the latest version of FlexTime's SRA system that contains new features and functionality.

Additional MS Teams features introduced in 2022 include:

- audio conferencing which allows meeting participants to call into a Teams meeting from their mobile phone or landline.
- *Chat with Yourself*. (Send messages, files, notes and media to yourself to help you stay organised).

- Teams Shared Channels which is a place to collaborate with people who are not members of your Microsoft Team. For example, a shared channel can be used to collaborate with a group of people who are all members of different teams but working on the one project.

**Áis-Linn Parliamentary Business Calendar** is a bilingual bespoke portal which enhances service delivery to members by providing them with a single Parliamentary Business Calendar, covering the scheduling of all Dáil, Seanad and Committee business. The Parliamentary Business Calendar will be delivered containing the ability to display and filter up to 12 different types of information the working group of members have identified and requested.

The **Committee Task Manager**, once live, will enable users to capture the work of committees in the form of digital work items, arrange these work items into long-term plans that can be distributed to members, streamline the handling of witnesses for committee meetings, streamline the process of scrutinising EU legislative proposals, and assist with the storage and distribution of committee documents.



Phase 2 of **Áis-Linn** includes enhancements to **Topical Issues and Commencement Matters**.

- The System will have the ability to automatically flag any selected Topical Issues or Commencement Matters to the member's calendar.
- TDs will be able to enable or disable notifications regarding Topical Issues.
- Senators will be able to enable or disable notifications regarding Commencement Matters.

Overall, the enhanced functionality will provide members with important additional information.

In addition to these key achievements a Digital Team was established in 2022 to support business areas and to continue the progress of digital transformation across the Oireachtas Service through requirement gathering, development and particularly assisting with business process testing (BPT) of Digital Parliament modules. Furthermore, ICT and Rannóg an Aistriúcháin (RaA) hold monthly strategy sessions relating to an overall Electronic Systems Development Programme and bilingualism in the Oireachtas where RaA and ICT have worked together to deliver the **Bilingualism in Technology policy**. An integration system between translation software and the digital parliament platform has also been delivered for DocsLaid, the Statements module and the Motions module.

## What's planned for 2023



## Strategic Outcome 4 – A Digitally Transformed Parliament

### Goal 3: Continue to implement innovative solutions to modernise our technical infrastructure in the context of a blended working model.

The organisation's openness and drive to implement new technology has resulted in the completion of a substantial number of innovative digital projects and solutions to modernise our technical infrastructure over the last number of months and the ongoing development for more.

**Microsoft (MS) Teams** was introduced to the organisation in March 2020 at an accelerated pace to support staff working from home during Covid-19. It has now been widely adopted across the Oireachtas and has played a vital role in enabling and supporting remote working. The **MS Teams Mobile App** was also provided to all users.

In 2022 there were:

- 89,180 virtual meetings held on MS Teams; this compares to nearly 48,000 virtual meetings in 2021
- 174,288 Team calls, and overall, since MS Teams was introduced over 370,500 Teams calls have been made

- Over 1.5 million chat messages, and
- 380 private Committee meetings of which 323 (85%) had a virtual element.

Using MS Teams helped ensure that the business of the Houses could continue safely during the pandemic, and it now continues to support the parliamentary community in the context of a blended working model. ICT is now progressing a project to further harmonise the **voice over internet protocol (VOIP)** solutions for all users which will enhance the Service's ability to work as a blended workforce.



#### MS Teams

MS Teams Virtual Meetings	89,180
MS Teams Calls	174,288
MS Teams Chat Messages	1,594,579

The **ICT Service Desk** continue to support the day-to-day ICT operations and the roll out of digital transformation applications. Overall, the ICT Service Desk provided support for 18,573 calls in 2022, a decrease of 22 percent on calls in 2021. This decrease in calls can be attributed to the parliamentary community widely adopting and settling into a blended working model and changing work patterns.

Table 14: ICT Helpdesk Support	2022	2021	2020	2019
Support provided for calls from staff of the Service	11,565	13,105	9,655	8,711
Support provided for calls from members and their staff	7,013	10,604	13,164	11,217
<b>Total support provided for calls</b>	<b>18,578</b>	<b>23,709</b>	<b>22,819</b>	<b>19,928</b>

ICT has delivered a key project demonstrating how the Oireachtas campus can become a blended-ready workplace. Rooms 2 and 4 in historic Leinster House are now equipped

with state-of-the-art video conferencing and presenting equipment to facilitate in-person meetings and remote participation. Rooms 2 and 4 are primarily used for private meetings such as those held by the Committee on Parliamentary Privileges and Oversight (CPPO), the Dáil Reform and Business Committee in addition to interparliamentary and diplomatic meetings. The Hybrid Meeting Room technology is one element of the overall new *Technology in the Chambers* contract which commenced in January 2022 following a procurement process. Further projects designed to adapt meeting spaces and offices in this same way will be progressed in 2023 and 2024.

Modern ICT tools are continually being delivered to support members and their staff in carrying out their parliamentary duties under the 7 programmes of the Digital Transformation Strategy. **Bill and debate notifications** were introduced on the Oireachtas app on the 7 November. Notifications are issued once a day at 9.30am. When debate contributions by a member are published on the Oireachtas website the notification is issued the next morning at 9.30am on the app.



**Fios, the new Learning Management System** for the Houses of the Oireachtas Service went live in December 2022.

All training organised by the Training and Development Unit now appears on Fios. This includes classroom-based, Teams-based, and e-learning training.

There is also an MS Teams app which allows users to search for, enrol in and complete training from within Teams.

## Strategic Outcome 4 – A Digitally Transformed Parliament

### Goal 4: Provide effective and responsive technical supports to ensure resilience and continuity of service in our digital systems.

Given the Service's increased reliance on digital infrastructure to conduct business, the Oireachtas, during 2022, proceeded to plan for the migration to cloud services and storage and retrieval of data. Extensive consultation took place with the NCSC and with other Parliaments while also recognising the OGCI cloud computing advice. Furthermore, an extensive review of legal advice across multiple stakeholders and partners, to support the Houses of the Oireachtas in adhering to the principles of cloud services, was conducted.

A move to the use of cloud services, cloud data storage and cloud information protection services will improve the capability of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service to provide effective and responsive technical supports to the parliamentary community and will greatly enhance the Oireachtas's ability to prevent and respond to cyber-attacks or data breaches.

Significant work in terms of project planning, service delivery and change management will be required throughout this full transition. Behavioural change required of members and staff to ensure the success of this project is key.

The Oireachtas Service has gained substantial experience in managing such transitions for members and staff, most recently with the deployment of new services to facilitate hybrid working during the Covid-19 pandemic with minimal time to plan. Key points in terms of service delivery/impact for this change are the following:

- There will be a dedicated change management approach to help members and staff in the transition.
- There will be a phased approach in moving services to the cloud.
- There will be an assessment for each dataset on how it will move to the cloud. Different datasets will require different functionality and levels of protection.
- There will be additional information protection security measures.

### Information Protection | Principles



## Strategic Outcome 5 – Towards a Bilingual Parliament

**Goal 1:** Continue to implement the Rannóg 2024 Plan with the objective of publishing official translations of the Acts of the Oireachtas in a timely manner and clearing historic arrears.

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service is committed to growing its capacity to work through the first official language of the State, the Irish language. During 2022, implementation of the Rannóg 2024 Plan continued with the objective of publishing official translations of the Acts of the Oireachtas in a timely manner and clearing arrears of official translations.

The **Rannóg 2024 Steering Group** continued to meet monthly in 2022 to consider updates on:

- the publication of current official translations of the Acts and clearance of arrears Acts;
- upgrade and update of the [www.achtanna.ie](http://www.achtanna.ie) website<sup>3</sup>;

- the delivery of the Irish Language Scheme and *Straitéis na Gaeilge*; and
- relevant IT systems development.

The Steering Group held nine meetings in 2022 and provided an annual report to the Management Board.

### Publication of official translations

There are six stages in the process of publishing official translations of the Acts of the Oireachtas:

- Stage 1: translation
- Stage 2: first edit
- Stage 3: final edit
- Stage 4: proof
- Stage 5: final check
- Stage 6: publication

### Current Acts (2019-2022)

The position regarding the official translation of current Acts (Acts 2019-2022) is as follows:

Year	Passed	Translated	First Edit	Final Edit/Completion	At Proof Stage	Published
2019	53	53	0	1	0	52
2020	32	32	0	8	2	22
2021	50	50	4	34	1	11
2022	52	13	0	9	0	4
	<b>187</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>89</b>

Seventy-nine percent of all Acts (2019-2022) have been translated (Stage 1) and 48% published (Stage 6).

<sup>3</sup> This website contains the Acts of the Oireachtas in both official languages from 1922 to the present day. The enacted versions and the official translations of each Act are linked together so that it is possible to move from a particular section in an Act in one language to the same section of the Act in the other language.



### Arrears Acts (1992-2018)

The position regarding official translations of Arrears Acts is as follows:

Table 16: All Arrears Acts		
All Acts (511)	Acts %	Pages %
Stage 1: Translation	100	100
Stage 2: First Edit	41	48
Stage 3: Final Edit	1	1
Stage 4: Proof	27	20
Stage 5: Final Check	10	7
<b>Stage 6: Publication</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>24</b>

All Arrears' Acts have been translated (Stage 1) and 21% published (Stage 6). External resources are concentrated mainly on Stages 3 and 4.

### Rannóg 2024 Strategy

In late 2017, the Service employed the services of an external consultancy (PWC) to carry out a capacity review of Rannóg an Aistriúcháin. The Report was delivered in December 2018 and adopted by the Management Board. A Strategy to implement the Report "Rannóg 2024" was approved by the Management Board in early 2019. The Strategy sets out the services provided by Rannóg an Aistriúcháin and the resources needed (39 FTEs) to support service provision, including clearance of arrears Acts.

In 2019, a settlement was reached between the parties in the Ó Murchú Case, relating to the availability of official translations. This included a commitment by the Service to publish all listed arrears within a 5-year period commencing on 31 July 2019. The number of Arrears Acts listed was 511, ranging from 1992 to 2018. To date, 21% of the listed Acts have been published.

The Rannóg 2024 Strategy, including a plan for clearing the Arrears Acts, was approved by the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission in April 2019. Arrears clearance projections in the strategy were based on receiving 230 pages per month from an external editing framework and 120 pages per month from an external proofreading framework. For internal phases of the process, projections were based on the 39 FTE complement recommended by PWC.

Despite considerable efforts by the Service to recruit the required staff numbers to clear the backlog, the number of staff in Rannóg remains at 50% of the staff numbers required. The current external editing framework has concluded. More recent procurement exercises to create a new external editing framework have not yielded any responses. The current proofreading framework yields 120 pages per month.

Priority in the first three years of the strategy has been to focus on the most recent arrears, the 2014-2018 Acts. The Table below sets out the progress made. 49% are at final, pre-publication stages (Stages 4 and 5) and 44% have been published (Stage 6).

Table 17: 2014-2018 Arrears Acts		
2014-2018 Acts	Acts %	Pages %
Stage 1: Translation	100	100
Stage 2: First Edit	6	13
Stage 3: Final Edit	1	1
Stage 4: Proof	27	20
Stage 5: Final Check	22	14
<b>Stage 6: Publication</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>52</b>

## Strategic Outcome 5 – Towards a Bilingual Parliament

**Goal 2:** Conduct a comparative study of bilingual parliaments to enable us to progress towards a bilingual Oireachtas.

To inform this Strategic Outcome the Library and Research Service (L&RS) was commissioned to carry out a comparative study of bilingual parliaments. The L&RS worked with *Rannóg an Aistriúcháin* to scope and plan the study. During 2022 the work comprised of a literature review and **two surveys** of parliaments and legislative assemblies, including analysis of survey responses.

The study assumes that a state or region with more than one official language (or in which a second language is spoken by a considerable section of the population) may have a bilingual parliament (i.e., a parliament in which all activities are carried out in two or more languages).

For the study, six key criteria for a bilingual parliament were identified. These are based on the main activities carried out by parliaments, and the services provided to members of the houses and members of the public and are set out as follows:

Figure 11: Criteria for bilingual parliaments

<b>Legislation</b>	Legislation is processed in two or more languages
<b>Debates</b>	More than one language may be used in plenary debates and committee meetings
<b>Services to Members</b>	Services are provided for members in two or more languages
<b>Public Engagement</b>	Services are provided to members of the public in two or more languages
<b>Documentation</b>	Parliamentary documentation is produced in two or more languages
<b>Recruitment</b>	Parliamentary staff are required to have specific language skills or to be competent in more than one language

Source: Library & Research Service

The **first survey** was a screening survey. It was designed to identify parliaments and legislatures of interest based on their bilingual activities. It was circulated to the parliaments of members states of the Council of Europe via the European Centre for Parliamentary Research and Documentation (ECPRD), an inter-parliamentary network for knowledge sharing and information exchange. It was also sent to other parliaments and legislative assemblies identified through a literature review. Responses were received from 43 parliaments or legislative assemblies.

Based on the responses received, parliaments were categorised as being either:

- Fully bilingual/multilingual parliaments meeting all six criteria for a bilingual parliament (10);
- Parliaments where there is a second official or regional language and some bilingual activity (10); or
- Monolingual parliaments operating with one language (23).

The **second survey** was circulated to the ten bilingual or multilingual parliaments and legislative assemblies identified from the screening survey. The second survey covered the same topics as the first survey but in more detail. Responses were received from eight of those parliaments (response rate 80%). The analysis of responses to the second survey is due for completion in 2023.

This work will help chart a path towards functional bilingualism for the Houses of the Oireachtas.

## Strategic Outcome 5 – Towards a Bilingual Parliament

### Goal 3: Facilitate a progressive increase in the amount of Irish spoken in both Houses.

#### ‘An Ghaeilge sa Teach’ Steering Groups

Two steering groups, one for each House, were launched in 2022. The role of the steering groups is to make recommendations to further the following objective in **Straitéis na Gaeilge 2021**:

#### **An Ghaeilge sa Teach:**

*The Service will support greater use of the Irish language in both Houses through the provision of supports to TDs and Senators and will work towards facilitating a progressive increase in the amount of Irish spoken in both Houses. A Dáil Steering Group and a Seanad Steering Group, involving Members, will monitor this objective.*

The terms of reference of the Steering Groups require them to examine the present position in regard to the use of Irish in the Chambers and to make proposals on opportunities to increase the use of the language. Matters to be examined by the Steering Groups include:

- statistics on the current use of Irish in the Chamber;
- the structure of business;
- the identification of opportunities in the daily schedule of business;
- possible incentives and encouragements; and
- supports and facilitation.

Both groups had monthly meetings during 2022. The groups drew on the results of 2021 surveys of members and the Oireachtas press gallery regarding the use of Irish in the Houses to identify themes for their work. Final reports from the two Groups will be published in 2023.

#### Translation Services provided by Rannóg an Aistriúcháin

Rannóg an Aistriúcháin also provide a variety of **translation services** to the Houses of the Oireachtas Service, including:

- Interpretation for sittings of both Houses and, on request, for Committee meetings.
- Services for sittings include translating the daily sitting day Order Papers (agendas) for both Houses. This support is provided by a team of translators on a monthly rota basis.
- Services for Long and Short Titles for Bills on initiation.
- Translations of corporate documentation for the Houses of the Oireachtas Service, press releases and members' correspondence (Table 18).

**Table 18: Other Translation by Rannóg an Aistriúcháin 2022**

Pages of translation of corporate documentation	199
Pages of translation of Committee documentation	231
Pages of press releases translated	81
Pages of all other translation (Requests from members, OPLA)	103

*Note: The page counts are for English pages submitted to Rannóg an Aistriúcháin for translation into Irish.*

## Strategic Outcome 5 – Towards a Bilingual Parliament

### Goal 4: Progressively increase the cohort of bilingual staff in the Service.

#### Rannóg an Aistriúcháin Recruitment

As part of the 2018 PWC review, staffing levels of Rannóg an Aistriúcháin were benchmarked with similar translation services and with other parliaments and a recommendation was made to increase staffing levels to 39 translation staff.

Despite intensive recruitment efforts since mid-2018 (15 recruitment competitions held), the Service has not succeeded in increasing staff numbers in Rannóg an Aistriúcháin or even compensating for staff turnover. Staff numbers have fallen below their 2018 levels; in November 2022, the section had 19.6 translation staff compared to 21.7 in 2018. Following recent very low candidate applications from Public Appointment Service competitions, the Service has decided to run future campaigns in-house to facilitate a quick turnaround of the testing, interviews and clearance procedure, and more frequent competitions.

The current recruitment environment is a challenging one, as the Service is recruiting in direct competition with the EU institutions who – for the first time in 2020 – recruited a panel of translators to work in the Irish Language Unit of the European Commission's Directorate General for Translation based in Grange, Co. Meath. The Covid-19 pandemic also created an extra challenge in recruitment terms.

The recruitment challenges are exacerbated by increased demand on Rannóg to provide a range of other services. While outsourcing has yielded some additional capacity, this has been limited and is not sufficient to make up for the shortfall in internal resources.

#### Irish Language Generalist Grades

In order to meet the strategic objective to provide all parliamentary services bilingually, the Service continues to draw down generalist Irish language candidates from external PAS panels to fill roles in business units other than Rannóg an Aistriúcháin. HR is currently scoping the possibility of running biennial CO Irish language competitions. These will target early-career candidates with Irish language skills who can be supported to develop their civil service careers across all areas of the Parliament.

In spite of the challenges described above considerable progress has been made.

- **12 bilingual staff** were recruited in 2022.
- A new **Aistritheoir Grád III panel** has been established with a view to assigning these staff in 2023.
- A **Bilingual Recruitment Strategy** has been drafted and is being further developed to support this strategic outcome *Towards a Bilingual Parliament*.
- In keeping with the norms and standards agreed centrally between the Department of Public Expenditure, NPR Delivery and Reform and trade unions, the Service is working to:



- (i) develop a new paid **undergraduate internship programme** for several business units that regularly hire entry level specialist grades, including Rannóg an Aistriúcháin. Contacts are ongoing between Rannóg and third-level institutions on the best model for this programme. The initial focus will be on translator and interpreter internships in the Rannóg, with the potential to develop generalist bilingual internships for other business units in the future.
- (ii) scope the development of a paid **graduate programme** for translators and interpreters. This may take the form of a standard graduate internship, consisting of a fixed-term 1-2-year contract for a recent graduate with translator and/or interpreter qualifications. Alternatively, it may take the form of an **apprenticeship**, where the Service will offer a fixed-term contract to a candidate, pay for them to complete a specialist qualification during that period and offer them a permanent position at the end of the term, subject to success in a test and interview. As before, this process would be kept in line with the norms and standards referred to above.

A new draft **Houses of the Oireachtas Service Language Scheme** was finalised and distributed to heads of business areas in March. Consultation on this was deferred at the request of the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media pending the implementation of the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 2021; and further engagement will take place with the Department in 2023.

## Strategic Outcome 5 – Towards a Bilingual Parliament

### Goal 5: Develop initiatives to support members and staff in maintaining and improving their competence in spoken Irish.

In addition to recruitment initiatives, the Houses of the Oireachtas Service organises delivery of in-house Irish language classes for the parliamentary community. Classes are held at beginner and intermediate/advanced levels. Each class is 45 minutes' duration, and usually classes run from October to July with breaks at Christmas and Easter. Classes are held online via Microsoft Teams. Class levels are assigned on a self-assessment basis, i.e., each participant decides which class level they wish to attend. An online survey to ascertain interest in attending in-house Irish classes is issued on an annual basis.

A Certificate in Professional Irish is provided externally from Levels 3-6 through OneLearning for civil servants. Online Irish learning resources are also promoted.

Work progressed on the range of services that the Houses of the Oireachtas provides bilingually, building on *Straitéis na Gaeilge* and the *Oireachtas Language Scheme 2018*.

The Oireachtas Community Irish language engagement events which took place as part of as part of *Straitéis na Gaeilge* in 2022 were:

- **An Damhna Dorcha (Dark Matter):** An tOllamh Scott Oser  
Dé Luain, an 21 Samhain 2022
- **An Chaeilge sa Dlí:** Dáithí Mac Cárthaigh Dé Máirt, an 15 Samhain 2022
- **'Tadhg Ó Cianáin: Dialann Taistil nó Taisteal Anama?':** An Dr. Micheál Mac Craith Déardaoin, an 10 Samhain 2022

To celebrate Seachtain na Gaeilge the Houses of the Oireachtas welcomed a special lecture by Professor Regina O'Collathan on *Pearse and Irish Language Journalism: An Intellectual Journalist, Educator, and Revolutionary*.

**Table 19: Irish Language Staff Training**

	2022	2021	2020	2019
Classes Delivered	99	110	42	49
Service Staff attendees	269	256	149	125
Members' Staff attendees	37	229	111	36

Note: Staff who attended multiple classes are counted in each class they attended.

## Strategic Outcome 5 – Towards a Bilingual Parliament

### Goal 6: Adopt a ‘Bilingualism through Technology’ programme for the Service.

During 2022 work was ongoing on the development of the policy of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service on the use of bilingualism in IT systems and applications. Development work considered IT systems and applications designed by, or for, the Service and which are used by members, Departments and State agencies, and by the public. Following broad consultation, a number of issues were discussed with the Language Commissioner. These issues included definitions of bilingualism and the implications of the policy for ‘language specific’ applications.

*Straitéis na Gaeilge, 2021* states that it is the aim of the Service “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.” The **Bilingualism in Technology Policy** was approved in December by the Management Board and will ensure early analysis of projects to guarantee timely identification of bilingual requirements. Carrying out a Bilingual Scoping Analysis (BSA) is at the core of this new approach. The BSA will inform the functional design specification for the bilingual elements of the project. The cost effectiveness of planning the bilingual requirement in the early stages of digital project planning is also important.

The Service aims to apply bilingualism in the design of ICT systems and applications in such a manner as to encourage and facilitate the use of the Irish language in accessing these systems. This will include adopting an integrated bilingual approach in system design, where feasible. An integrated bilingual approach involves presenting both official languages in proximity, where the context or technology allows. This may include having both language versions in the same publication or in the same interface rather than as two separate language entities.

Rannóg an Aistriúcháin involvement and contribution to the Digital Parliament programme has been ongoing and all member and public-facing systems are being developed bilingually e.g., **Áis-Linn** and new **Digital Signage** which is in development for use throughout the Leinster House Campus.

Other system examples include:

- The **Houses of the Oireachtas bilingual app** which allows users to watch or listen to live proceedings from Leinster House, read Dáil, Seanad and Committee schedules and view press releases. Users of this app have a new bilingual feature, “Who are my TDs?”, available to them from 21 February. This feature allows app users to enter a postal address, identify the associated electoral constituency and view contact details for the TDs elected to that constituency. The bilingual Houses of the Oireachtas app is available for Android and iOS.

- In September the **DocsLaid application** became available in Irish, an important milestone for Parliamentary Library and Research Services. All functionalities of the application including registration (for departments and agencies), laying documents, email updates, user guides and help videos are now available bilingually. It was important to make this service available bilingually and it is further progress on the road to becoming a parliament in which the Irish language is used more often by staff and in our digital applications.

Future systems development such as Dáil Journals, Seanad systems and Committee portals will also include bilingualism.

## 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.

## Financial Performance over the Commission's Three-Year Budget Framework 2022-2024

The Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2021 provided funding of €462m to meet the costs associated with running the Houses of the Oireachtas for the three-year period 2022-2024. The table below summarises the financial position to date (June 2023).

Category	2022 Outturn €000	2023 Estimate €000	2024 Forecast* €000
Dáil Éireann	48,319	55,626	52,151
Seanad Éireann	9,744	10,657	11,252
Oireachtas Committees	125	540	537
European Parliament	764	769	769
Pensions and Redundancy	14,172	20,613	14,449
Administration – pay & pensions	41,211	48,742	45,587
Administration – non-pay	27,136	40,274	32,906
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>€141,471</b>	<b>€177,219</b>	<b>157,561</b>

\* Estimate 2024 will be published by October 2023



# HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION

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## ACCOUNTS OF THE HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION FOR THE PERIOD FROM 1 JANUARY TO 31 DECEMBER 2022

(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 2022 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 2022.

There was a surplus for the year of €18,445,827. There had been a significant 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 €12,901,426 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 Circular 22 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.

### 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.

### Procurement

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 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.

### 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 3 contracts (in excess of €25,000), totalling €384,113 (ex. VAT), details of which are set out below:

- 1 contract with a value of €300,359 was in relation to expenditure under an expired contract to allow for continuation of essential cleaning services during an ongoing procurement process;
- 1 contract with a value of €51,454 was in relation to the use of a short term bridging contract to continue services until a procurement process could be completed;
- 1 contract with a value of €32,300 was in relation to expenditure under a public sector contract which had expired without knowledge of such expiration by the Service.

All of the above contracts are being regularised with two ongoing procurement processes in 2023, and one completed process.

### 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 & 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.

### 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**

In 2022, there was an incident of theft of personal property by a staff member. The staff member in question was identified by the existing control structure and was reported to An Garda Síochána, with the case being successfully resolved in the year.

In 2018, a broadcasting project was commenced which involved the purchase and installation of hardware valued at €1.3 million. These assets were not included on the fixed asset register for the year and the mis-statement was identified in late 2022. This has now been corrected to include the historical cost of the assets of €1.3 million and depreciation in respect of these assets for the period to 31 December 2021 of €761,000, resulting in a net book value adjustment as at January 2022 of €566,000.

### **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 impact of which continued into 2022.

The catering and bar services continued 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 2022 of the 2021 Account, giving a reasonable level of assurance. Its recommendations were considered and implemented as appropriate during 2022.

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.

### **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;
- The organisation as a whole, under central Government guidance and in line with other public sector bodies, have moved to a Blended Working model, with a 91% take-up of Blended Working from eligible staff. eLearning modules on Remote Working, Remote Working for Managers, and Chairing Effective Virtual Meetings were provided by OneLearning and disseminated to staff. Each blended working application was discussed and reviewed by line managers as part of the blended working policy implementation, with specific challenges managed at a local level;
- 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 was an initial increase in expenditure (not originally anticipated in the Estimate for 2020) 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 & Safety experts, staff overtime etc.) and this was monitored closely by the CFO in consultation with all Business Managers and reported to the Management Board on a monthly basis. Such monthly expenditure reports continue to be provided to the management board on an ongoing basis. The Estimate for 2021, 2022, and 2023 has taken note of the changed environment and all costs anticipated have been provided for;
- 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

27 June 2023

## 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 2022.

### 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.

### Inventories

Consumables are stated at the lower of cost or Commission valuation (Note 2.3). High volume low value consumables are expensed at time of purchase. Consumables are generally expensed unless items have significant individual value or are subject to certain security considerations.

### Net Amount due from the Exchequer

The net amount due from the Exchequer note shows the funding position of the Commission at the year end, taking into account the issues from the Exchequer on a cumulative/rolling basis. The breakdown of that figure in terms of bank/cash balances, debtors' receipts due and current liabilities are also shown (Note 2.8).

### Commitments

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

A note provides figures for all (global) contractual commitments likely to materialise in subsequent years under (a) procurement and (b) grant subheads, excluding commitments under €10,000 (Note 2.10)

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

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## 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 2022, 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 2022, and
- has been prepared in the form prescribed by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform.

#### Basis of opinion

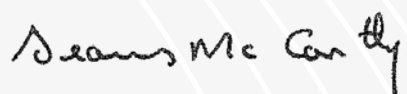
I conducted my audit of the appropriation account in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) as promulgated by the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions. My responsibilities under those standards are described in the appendix to this report. I am independent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

**28 June 2023**

### 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 2022

		2022 Estimate provision €000	2022 Outturn €000	2021 Outturn €000
<b>1</b>	<b>Administration</b>			
(a)	Salaries, wages and allowances in respect of staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service	41,626	39,102	34,574
(b)	Travel and subsistence	467	268	69
(c)	Training and development and incidental expenses	1,559	903	1,155
(d)	Postal and telecommunications services	599	599	277
(e)	Office equipment and external IT services	18,896	15,847	14,785
(f)	Office premises expenses	3,834	3,113	2,886
(g)	Consultancy services and value for money and policy review	4,637	714	281
(h)	Parliamentary printing	801	551	400
(i)	Library and research services	1,400	883	964
(j)	Public relations and communications	616	294	22
(k)	Single Public Service Pension Scheme for members of staff of the Commission	178	-	-
<b>2</b>	<b>Other services</b>			
(a)	Payment in respect of catering and bar staff	2,208	2,109	1,815
(b)	Expenses of delegates to other parliamentary assemblies	362	262	64
(c)	Televising of proceedings of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann and other services	3,829	3,404	4,698
(d)	Grant in respect of inter-parliamentary activities	430	169	78
(e)	Grant to British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly	116	116	-
(f)	North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association	36	-	-
(g)	Termination allowances to or in respect of former Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas	3,210	1	134
(h)	Grant to Irish Parliamentary (former Members) Society	14	14	-
(i)	Grant in Respect of "Ciste Pinsean Thithe an Oireachtais"	14,945	12,901	14,959
(j)	Pension scheme for secretarial assistants	1,148	1,241	1,156
(k)	Single Public Service Pension Scheme for Members	292	29	25
<b>3</b>	<b>Membership of Dáil Éireann</b>			
(a)	Salaries of Members (including Office Holders and Chairpersons of Committees)	16,826	17,216	16,442
(b)	Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for members	22,054	23,594	21,937
(c)	Travel and Accommodation Allowance	3,420	2,960	2,867
(d)	Public Representation Allowance	3,200	2,983	2,881
(e)	Other allowances	2,559	1,566	2,245



	2022 Estimate provision €000	2022 Outturn €000	2021 Outturn €000
<b>4 Membership of Seanad Éireann</b>			
(a) Salaries of Members (including Office Holders and Chairpersons of Committees)	4,445	4,552	4,353
(b) Payments in respect of secretarial assistance for members	3,409	3,296	2,856
(c) Travel and Accommodation Allowance	1,202	1,058	1,047
(d) Public Representation Allowance	750	645	629
(e) Other allowances	416	193	528
<b>5 Membership of Oireachtas Committees</b>			
(a) Travel expenses	160	113	25
(b) Other expenses relating to Committees	396	11	6
<b>6 Membership of European Parliament</b>			
(a) Salaries of members of the European Parliament	-	-	-
(b) Pensions of former members of the European Parliament	686	764	739
<b>Gross Expenditure</b>	<b>160,726</b>	<b>141,471</b>	<b>134,897</b>
<b>DEDUCT</b>			
Receipts of the Commission (Note 4.1)	(3,000)	(2,191)	(2,404)
<b>Net Expenditure</b>	<b>157,726</b>	<b>139,280</b>	<b>132,493</b>

### Surplus

In accordance with the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (Amendment) Act 2021, the Commission received a three year funding allocation of €462m for the years 2022, 2023 and 2024. Gross expenditure in 2022 was €141.5m. The unspent allocation for the year 2022 was €18.4m and is carried over.

	2022	2021
Surplus	€18,445,827	€19,031,254



**PETER FINNEGAN**  
Accounting Officer  
HOUSES OF THE OIREACHTAS COMMISSION

27 June 2023

## Notes to the Appropriation Account

### Note 1 Operating Cost Statement 2022

	Note 2022	€000	2022 €000	2021 €000
Pay			104,805	98,990
Non pay			36,666	35,907
<b>Gross expenditure</b>			141,471	134,897
<i>Deduct</i>				
<b>Appropriations-in-aid</b>			(2,191)	(2,404)
<b>Net expenditure</b>			139,280	132,493
<b>Changes in capital assets</b>	2.1			
Purchases cash		(2,983)		
Depreciation		5,070		
Adjustments		(1,399)		
Disposals cash (proceeds)		24		
Gain on disposals		(13)	699	1,632
<b>Changes in net current assets</b>				
Increase in closing accruals		(670)		
Decrease in stock	2.3	9	(661)	(230)
<b>Direct expenditure</b>			139,318	133,895
<b>Expenditure borne elsewhere</b>				
Net allied services expenditure (cash)	1.1		27,414	27,157
Notional rents (non-cash)	1.2		5,616	5,616
<b>Net programme cost</b>			172,348	166,668

### 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.

		2022 €000	2021 €000
Vote 9	Office of the Revenue Commissioners	103	75
Vote 12	Superannuation and Retired Allowances	6,345	5,970
Vote 13	Office of Public Works	5,426	4,734
Vote 43	Office of the Chief Information Officer	256	91
Central Fund:	Parliamentary Activities Allowances to Leaders	8,947	8,509
	Payments to qualified parties under the Electoral Acts 1992 to 2015	5,920	5,837
	Re-imbursements of Electoral Expenses	80	1,701
	Pensions in respect of former Cinn Comhairle (No. 38 of 1938, etc.)	337	240
		<b>27,414</b>	<b>27,157</b>

### 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 2022

	Note	2022 €000	2021 €000
<b>Capital assets</b>	2.1	12,543	13,242
<b>Current assets</b>			
Bank and cash	2.2	(1,834)	618
Stocks	2.3	197	206
Prepayments	2.4	4,262	3,327
Other debit balances	2.5	1,291	646
Accrued Income	2.6	735	442
Net funding due from the Exchequer	2.8	3,955	1,870
<b>Total current assets</b>		8,606	7,109
<b>Less current liabilities</b>			
Matured liabilities	2.11	2,615	2,057
Other credit balances	2.7	3,412	3,134
<b>Total current liabilities</b>		6,027	5,191
<b>Net current assets</b>		2,579	1,918
<b>Net assets</b>		15,122	15,160
<b>Represented by:</b>			
<b>State funding account</b>	2.9	15,122	15,160

## 2.1 Capital assets

	Equipment €000	Furniture and fittings €000	Office equipment €000	Assets under €000	Total €000
<b>Gross assets</b>					
Cost or valuation at 1 January 2022	25,046	2,589	4,929	2,340	34,904
Additions	65	-	346	2,572	2,983
Transfers	878	-	-	(878)	-
Disposals	(5)	(2)	(535)	(10)	(552)
Adjustments*	7	-	1,392	-	1,399
<b>Cost or valuation at 31 December 2022</b>	<b>25,991</b>	<b>2,587</b>	<b>6,132</b>	<b>4,024</b>	<b>38,734</b>
<b>Accumulated depreciation</b>					
Opening balance at 1 January 2022	15,062	2,402	4,198	-	21,662
Depreciation for the year	3,469	49	740	-	4,258
Depreciation for adjustments*	4	-	808	-	812
Depreciation on disposals	(5)	(1)	(535)	-	(541)
Cumulative depreciation at 31 December 2022	18,530	2,450	5,211	-	26,191
<b>Net assets at 31 December 2022</b>	<b>7,461</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>921</b>	<b>4,024</b>	<b>12,543</b>
<b>Net assets at 31 December 2021</b>	<b>9,984</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>2,340</b>	<b>13,242</b>

\*Adjustments refers to omissions relating to a broadcasting project and other cost adjustments in the fixed asset register from 2021 and prior years, corrected with an increase in net book value of €587,000.

## 2.2 Bank and cash

at 31 December	2022 €000	2021 €000
PMG Account*	(1,843)	-
Commercial bank accounts	7	610
Credit card	2	8
	(1,834)	618

\*All PMG accounts transferred to the commercial Bank 'Danske Bank' from 1st October 2018.

### Other Commercial Bank Accounts

The commercial bank accounts referred to above relate to appropriation account funds. In addition, the Oireachtas holds three 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 total amount held at the end of 2022 is €358,554 and is not included in the Note above (2021: €191,718). This amount is included in the account of the catering department, detailed at Note 7.3, each year.

## 2.3 Stocks

<b>at 31 December</b>	<b>2022 €000</b>	<b>2021 €000</b>
Stationery	19	23
IT consumables	149	144
Other	29	39
	197	206

## 2.4 Prepayments

	<b>2022 €000</b>	<b>2021 €000</b>
Software support	3,694	2,339
Broadcasting & Communications	187	618
Library & Research	255	271
Administration	70	81
Estate management	2	3
Other Prepayments	54	15
	4,262	3,327

## 2.5 Other debit balances

<b>at 31 December</b>	<b>2022 €000</b>	<b>2021 €000</b>
Recoupable salaries	-	-
Recoupable travel schemes	2	1
Recoupable travel pass scheme expenditure	44	46
Other debit suspense items	1,245	599
	1,291	646



## 2.6 Accrued Income

at 31 December	2022 €000	2021 €000
IT services and support	45	43
Specific programme accruals	3	3
Administration expenses	687	396
Other Accruals	-	-
	735	442

## 2.7 Other credit balances

at 31 December	2022 €000	2021 €000
<b>Amounts due to the State</b>		
Income Tax	1,475	1,302
Pay Related Social Insurance	828	723
Professional Services Withholding Tax	216	171
Value Added Tax	52	61
Pension contributions	288	263
Local Property Tax	7	6
Universal Social Charge	281	247
	3,147	2,773
Payroll deductions held in suspense	265	226
Other credit suspense items	-	135
	3,412	3,134

## 2.8 Net Exchequer funding

at 31 December		2022 €000	2021 €000
Surplus		18,446	19,031
Exchequer grant undrawn		(20,531)	(18,830)
Net Exchequer funding due		(2,085)	201
Balance brought forward at 1 January		(1,870)	(2,071)
<b>Net Exchequer funding</b>		<b>(3,955)</b>	<b>(1,870)</b>
<b>Represented by:</b>			
<b>Debtors</b>			
Bank and cash	2.2	(1,834)	618
Debit balances: suspense	2.5	1,291	646
		(543)	1,264
<b>Creditors</b>			
Due to State	2.7	(3,147)	(2,773)
Credit balances: suspense	2.7	(265)	(361)
		(3,412)	(3,134)
		(3,955)	(1,870)

## 2.9 State Funding Account

	Note	€000	2022 €000	2021 €000
Balance at 1 January			15,160	16,562
Disbursement by the Commission				
Estimate provision	Account*	157,726		
Surplus	Account*	(18,446)		
Net provision			139,280	132,493
Expenditure (cash) borne elsewhere	1.1		27,414	27,157
Non cash expenditure – notional rent	1.2		5,616	5,616
Net programme cost	1		(172,348)	(166,668)
<b>Balance at 31 December</b>			<b>15,122</b>	<b>15,160</b>

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

## 2.10 Commitments

at 31 December	2022 €000	2021 €000
<b>(a) Global commitments</b>		
Procurement subheads	-	-
Grant subheads	-	-
Multi-annual commitments*	9,474	6,373
<b>Closing balance</b>	9,474	6,373

\* The increase in multi-annual commitments relates to contractual commitments for digital transformation development expenditure.

## 2.11 Matured liabilities

at 31 December	2022 €000	2021 €000
Estimate of matured liabilities not discharged at year end	2,615	2,057

## 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.

Kerins v Dáil Éireann (module 2), which concerns the applicant's claim for damages, is ongoing. In 2022, the High Court heard and dismissed the applicant's motion for discovery that was brought in furtherance of this damages claim.

## Note 3 Analysis of administration expenditure

The final gross outturn in relation to the Commission was €19.3m 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 the underspend of (+/- 25% and €100,000).

#### 1(b) Travel and subsistence

Estimate provision: €0.467m, outturn: €0.268m

The underspend of €0.199m on expenditure on travel and subsistence was due to lower than anticipated travel activity resulting from the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic into the first half of the year.

#### 1(c) Training and Development and Incidental Expenses

Estimate provision: €1.559m, outturn: €0.903m

The underspend of €0.656m on expenditure on training and development was due to the increased popularity of e-learning and online and free courses since the COVID-19 pandemic, with associated reduction in cost.

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

Estimate provision: €4.6m, outturn: €0.714m

The underspend of €3.9m on expenditure arose due to unused contingency for legal costs and lower than anticipated requirement for consultancy services.

#### 1(h) Parliamentary printing

Estimate provision: €0.801m, outturn: €0.551m

The underspend of €0.25m on expenditure on parliamentary printing arose due to lower than anticipated demand for printing and graphic design.

#### 1(i) Library & Research Services

Estimate provision: €1.4m, outturn: €0.883m

The underspend of €0.517m on library and research services arose due to continuing COVID-19 impact on project work and reprioritisation.

#### 1(j) Public relations and communications

Estimate provision: €0.616m, outturn: €0.294m

The underspend of €0.322m on expenditure arose due to the fact that public events programming was scaled back slightly as we emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### 1(k) Single Public Service Pension Scheme for members of the staff of the Commission

Estimate provision: €0.178m, outturn: €0m

The underspend of €0.178m on expenditure was due to the requirement to make provision for staff retiring as part of the Single Public Service Pension Scheme. This provision is no longer required, as it was confirmed in 2023 that civil service pensions paid under this scheme will instead be funded under Vote 12.

#### 2(b) Expenses of delegates to other parliamentary assemblies

Estimate provision: €0.362m, outturn: €0.262m

The underspend of €0.1m was due to a reduction in travel undertaken because of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

#### 2(c) Televising of Proceedings of Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann and Other Services

Estimate provision: €3.829m, outturn: €3.404m

The underspend of €0.425m was due to the deferral of a specific project from 2022 into 2023.

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

Estimate provision: €0.430m, outturn: €0.169m

The underspend of €0.261m was due to a reduction in travel undertaken because of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

**2(f) North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association**

Estimate provision: €0.036m, outturn: €0m

There was no spend under this subhead because of a pause in Association work in 2022.

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

Estimate provision: €3.2m, outturn: €0m

The underspend of €3.2m 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: €14.9m, outturn: €12.9m

The underspend of €2m occurred because a provision for election related termination payments was not required

**2(k) Single Public Service Pension Scheme for Members**

Estimate provision: €0.292m, outturn: €0.029m

The underspend of €0.263m occurred because there was a lesser number of pensioner Members than was anticipated in the year

**3(c) Travel and Accommodation Allowance**

Estimate provision: €3.42m, outturn: €2.96m

The underspend of €0.460m arose due to reduced expenditure as a result of Members opting to take reduced amounts of TAA.

**3(d) Public Representation Allowance**

Estimate provision: €3.2m, outturn: €2.983m

The underspend of €0.217m 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: €2.6m, outturn: €1.6m

The underspend of €1m relates to a requirement to make a provision for full drawdown of allowances, some of which were not claimed.

**4(c) Travel and Accommodation Allowance**

Estimate provision: €1.202m, outturn: €1.058m

The underspend of €0.144m arose due to reduced expenditure as a result of Members opting to take reduced amounts of TAA.

**4(e) Other Allowances**

Estimate provision: €0.416m, outturn: €0.193m

The underspend of €0.223m relates to a requirement to make a provision for full drawdown of allowances, some of which were not claimed.

**5(b) Other expenses relating to Committees**

Estimate provision: €0.396m, outturn: €0.011m

The underspend of €0.385m was related to reduced Committee activity resulting from the continuation of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 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 2022 financial statements record total receipts of €2,190,577 retained by the Commission and offset against its gross expenditure. Receipts of €1,025 relate to Broadcasting services. The remainder of the receipts primarily comprised receipts of €2,169,091 relating to pension related deductions on public service remuneration and a receipt of €19,500 relating to the sale of an old printer. The remaining balance comprised of €500 relating to registration of a private bill, Freedom of Information income of €240, and €222 relating to dissolution Seanad election expenses.

	Estimated €000	2022 Realised €000	2021 Realised €000
1 Sales of services of Broadcasting Unit	-	1	-
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	2,190	2,404
<b>Receipts recognised in Appropriation Account</b>	<b>3,000</b>	<b>2,191</b>	<b>2,404</b>
4 Members contributions under the European Parliament (Irish Representatives) Pension Scheme, 1979	-	-	-
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>3,000</b>	<b>2,191</b>	<b>2,404</b>

#### Notes

*Members' contributions under the European Parliament (Irish Representatives) Pension Scheme, 1979 are not included as a receipt as it is offset against pensions paid to former Members of the European Parliament under subhead 6(b) of the account. Since the elections of 2019, there have been no contributions made under the 1979 scheme.*

### Significant variations

Overall, receipts by the Commission were €809,423 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: €2.2m

The variance arose due to lower than estimated receipts, particularly the Additional Superannuation Contribution in 2022.



## Note 5 Staffing and Remuneration

### 5.1 Employee Numbers

	2022	2021
<b>Number of staff at year end</b> (full time equivalents)		
Houses of the Oireachtas Service	674	637
Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members and Parties	461	451
<b>Total</b>	1,135	1,088

### 5.2 Pay – Houses of the Oireachtas Service

	2022 €000	2021 €000
Pay	35,635	31,797
Higher, special or additional duties allowance	171	192
Other allowances	226	255
Overtime	1,390	908
Shift and roster allowances	518	484
Employer's PRSI	3,404	2,917
<b>Total pay <sup>a</sup></b>	41,344	36,553

<sup>a</sup> The total pay figure is distributed across subheads 1(a) and 2(a).

### 5.2 Pay – Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members and Parties

	2022 €000	2021 €000
Pay	20,645	19,115
Redundancy payments <sup>b</sup>	15	93
Overtime and extra attendance	3,719	3,316
Employer's PRSI	2,591	2,386
<b>Total pay <sup>c</sup></b>	26,970	24,910

<sup>b</sup> See Note 5.6 Severance/Redundancy.

<sup>c</sup> 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 2022 €	Highest individual payment 2021 €
<b>Houses of the Oireachtas Service</b>				
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	39	4	22,806	21,699
Other allowances	96	1	66,356	65,178
Overtime	232	54	49,580	32,853
Shift and roster allowances	74	-	8,568	8,373
Number of individuals who received extra remuneration in more than one category	265	84	52,834	39,771
<b>Scheme for Secretarial Assistance for Members and Parties</b>				
Higher, special or additional duties allowances	-	-	-	-
Overtime and extra attendance	539	167	14,893	14,523
Number of individuals who received extra remuneration in more than one category	-	-	-	-

### 5.4 Employee pay bands

The number of Commission employees whose total employee benefits (including basic pay, allowances, overtime; excluding employer PRSA, employer pension costs) for the financial year fell between €20,000 and €59,999 and within each band of €10,000 from €60,000 upwards are as follows:

This table refers to actual amounts paid out in the year and may differ from the point on salary at year end.

Pay Band		Number of Employees Houses of the Oireachtas Service		Number of Employees Secretarial Assistance for Members and Parties	
From	To	2022	2021	2022	2021
€20,000	€59,999	436	398	413	438
€60,000	€69,999	63	83	87	43
€70,000	€79,999	70	57	6	3
€80,000	€89,999	41	23	1	1
€90,000	€99,999	29	24	3	2
€100,000	€109,999	12	12	0	0
€110,000	€119,999	9	3	0	0
€120,000	€129,999	1	0	0	0
€130,000	€139,999	0	0	0	0
€140,000	€149,999	0	0	0	0
€150,000	€159,999	0	4	0	0
€160,000	€169,999	2	0	0	0
€170,000	€179,999	3	1	0	0
€180,000	€189,999	0	0	0	0
€190,000	€199,999	0	1	0	0
€200,000	€209,999	1	0	0	0
€210,000+		0	0	0	0

## 5.5 Other remuneration arrangements

Payments totalling €159,895 were paid to retired civil servants whose services were employed on various interview boards, and 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 €102,134 in 46 instances.

This account includes expenditure of €180,998 in respect of 4 officers who were serving outside the Commission for all or part of 2022 and whose salary was paid by the Commission. This expenditure has been recouped by the Commission.

This account does not include expenditure in respect of 4 officers who were serving outside the Commission for all or part of 2022 in other Government Departments/Offices and whose salaries were not recouped by the Commission.

## 5.6 Payroll overpayments

	2022 €	2021 €
Overpayments	72,618	37,158
Number of recipients	24	13
Recovery Plans in place	13	4

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

## 5.7 Severance, Redundancy and Termination Payments

A total of €1,910 was paid out in 2022 in respect of severance payments and statutory redundancy to one staff member employed under the Scheme for Secretarial Assistance. Of this €1,003 related to a statutory redundancy payment, and €907 related to a Voluntary Early Retirement/severance package.

A voluntary early redundancy/ severance package of €736 was paid out to a member in 2022.

The Oireachtas had no staff receiving severance payments and enhancement to their pension arrangements in 2022.

A total of €12,639 was paid out in 2022 in respect of severance payments and statutory redundancy to two Civilian Drivers.

## 5.8 Salary of Accounting Officer

As at 31st December 2022 the Accounting Officers current salary is at the grade of Clerk of the Dáil, with an annual gross salary of €211,765. (As at 31st December 2021, €192,474).

## Note 6 Miscellaneous

### 6.1 Compensation and legal costs

#### 6.1(A) Payments/Costs paid by the Service in the year

	Claims by						Total 2022	Total 2021
	employees			members of the public				
	Personal injuries	Loss or damage	Other legal cases	Personal Injuries	Loss or damage	Other legal cases		
Number of cases	4	2	-	-	1	8	15	13
	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000
Department's own legal costs	-	31	-	-	-	110	141	73
Payments by/on behalf of Department								
Compensation	15	80	-	-	-	-	95	58
Other Legal costs	-	67	-	-	-	-	67	-
Other costs	12	11	-	-	3	1	27	29
2022 Total	27	189	-	-	3	111	330	160

#### 6.1(B) Cumulative Costs of cases completed in 2022

	Claims by						Total 2022	Total 2021
	employees			members of the public				
	Personal injuries	Loss or damage	Other legal cases	Personal Injuries	Loss or damage	Other legal cases		
Number of cases	1	2	1	-	-	10	14	8
	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000	€'000
Department's own legal costs	-	64	-	-	-	97	161	356
Payments by/on behalf of Department								
Compensation	15	80	-	-	-	-	95	58
Other Legal costs	-	67	-	-	-	-	67	-
Other costs	1	19	-	-	-	-	20	8
2022 Total	16	230	-	-	-	97	343	422

## 6.2 Fraud and suspected fraud

	Number of cases	2022 €000	2021 €000
Fraud	-	-	-
Suspected Fraud	-	-	-

## 6.3 Late Payment Interest and Compensation

	2022 €	2021 €
Total of interest and compensation paid	13,112	13,458

## 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 2022

	2022 €	2021 €
Balance at 1 January	12,980	21,414
Grant [subhead 2(e)]	116,000	-
Refunds	-	-
Miscellaneous	-	233
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>116,000</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>Payments</b>		
Plenary sessions	81,128	6,471
Committees	9,101	1,595
Miscellaneous	837	601
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>91,066</b>	<b>8,667</b>
<b>Balance as at 31 December</b>	<b>37,914</b>	<b>12,980</b>



## 7.2 CUMANN PARLAIMINTEACH NA hÉIREANN

### Grant in respect of inter-parliamentary activities

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

#### Account of receipts and payments for year ended 31 December 2022

	2022 €	2021 €
Balance at 1 January	11,343	10,349
Grant [subhead 2(d)]	168,932	77,589
Members Subscriptions	3,092	1,194
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>172,024</b>	<b>78,783</b>
<b>Payments</b>		
Expenses associated with Irish delegations on foreign visits	35,524	7,794
Expenses associated with foreign delegations visiting Ireland	40,895	-
Inter Parliamentary Union Conference expenses	35,282	14,138
Other expenses	58,155	55,857
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>169,856</b>	<b>77,789</b>
<b>Balance as at 31 December</b>	<b>13,511</b>	<b>11,343</b>

## 7.3 Accounts of the Catering and Bar Services

**Income and Expenditure Account**  
**For year ended 31st December 2022**

	2022 €	2021 €
Sales	1,134,928	402,686
Cost of sales	(707,711)	(286,302)
<b>Gross Surplus</b>	<b>427,217</b>	<b>116,384</b>
Expenses	(292,150)	(125,565)
<b>Net Surplus/(Deficit)</b>	<b>135,067</b>	<b>(9,181)</b>

**Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2022**

	2022 €	2021 €
<b>Fixed assets</b>	-	-
<b>Current assets</b>		
Stock	28,687	24,073
Debtors	79,234	16,322
VAT & Prepayments	17,606	20,185
Bank and cash	358,554	191,718
	<b>484,081</b>	<b>252,298</b>
<b>Current liabilities</b>		
Trade creditors	158,790	62,074
VAT	-	-
	<b>158,790</b>	<b>62,074</b>
<b>Total net assets</b>	<b>325,291</b>	<b>190,224</b>
<b>Financed by:</b>		
Cumulative surplus retained excluding subhead 2(a)	1,296,609	1,305,790
Surplus/(Deficit) current year excluding subhead 2(a)	135,067	(9,181)
Cumulative paid to date to Houses of the Oireachtas	(1,106,385)	(1,106,385)
	<b>325,291</b>	<b>190,224</b>

## 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 €2,108,547 (2021 €1,814,847)
- (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 2022 was Nil (2021 €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 2022 to 31 December 2022**

## 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 7,262 payments were processed with a total value of €30.7m. Of those payments 185 incurred penalties and interest under the Act totalling €13,112. 114 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 1,590 payments would have incurred prompt payment interest, representing 22% of the total number of commercial payments processed from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022.

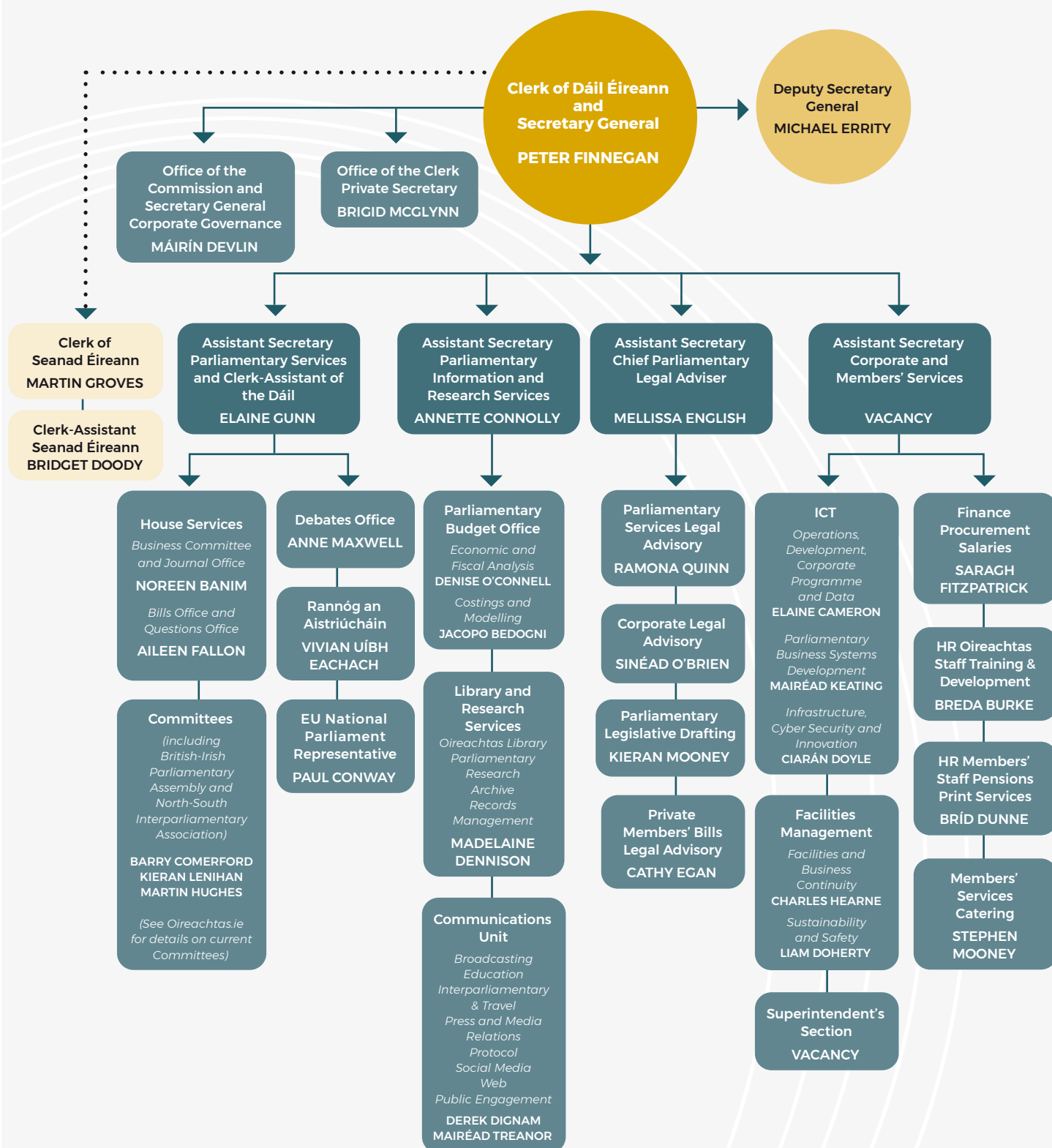


**Michael Errity,**  
**Deputy Secretary General,**  
Corporate and Members' Services

31 March 2023

## Appendix I:

### Houses of the Oireachtas Service Organisation Chart



## Appendix II:

### Statement of Resources 2022 (civil service staff)

Grades	Total Numbers in place December 2022 Sanctioned Numbers 675
Secretary General	1
Deputy Secretary General	1
Assistant Secretary	3
Principal Officer	31
Assistant Principal	87
Senior Clerk	79
Administrative Officer	27
Junior Clerk	100
Clerical Officer	82
Advisory Counsel	15
Assistant Parliamentary Counsel Grade II	3
Deputy Editor	3
Assistant Editor	7
Parliamentary Reporter	39
Reporter (Communications/Web)	1
Senior Researcher	20
Researcher	1
Senior Parliamentary Librarian	2
Assistant Librarian	4
Senior Sign Language Interpreter	1
Junior Sign Language Interpreter	1
Aistritheoir Grád 1	4
Aistritheoir Grád 2	8
Aistritheoir/Attengaire Grád 3	7
Usher Grade I	4
Usher Grade II	9
Usher Grade III	48
Head/Deputy Head Services Officer	3
Services Officer	18
Services Attendant	1
Parliamentary Porter	3
Telephonist (Relief)	1
Cleaner	7
Specialist, Temporary and Other Staff* (see below)	1
<b>Total Civil Service Staff **</b>	<b>622</b>

\* Senior Auditor

\*\* Numbers are rounded

## Appendix III:

### Annual Report of the Audit Committee of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission 2022



**Pat McLoughlin**  
Chair of Audit  
Committee

#### Chair of the Audit Committee's Statement

As Chair of the Audit Committee (the Committee) for the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (the Commission), I am pleased to present the Committee's annual report for 2022. The Committee reports annually to the Commission and its 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 annual report covers the period to 31 December 2022 and was submitted to the Accounting Officer and to the Commission in accordance with the Audit Committee Charter.

#### Audit Committee

The 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 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 2022, the Committee had five meetings, three virtually via Microsoft Teams and two in-person.

#### Internal Audit

The Internal Audit Unit continued to support the Committee during 2022. The internal audit function has further developed under the new in-house arrangements and provided the 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 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 (the Service). This has been achieved by providing appropriate training to staff and through the co-ordination of action and reporting on risk management performance.

#### Strategic Plan 2022-2024

At its meeting in May 2022, Peter Finnegan, Clerk of the Dáil and Secretary General of the Service, presented the Commission's new *Strategic Plan 2022-2024* to the Committee. I am grateful to the Secretary General for accepting the invitation to address the Committee on the objectives and priorities of the Service over the lifetime of its new statement of strategy.



### Looking ahead to 2023

The Committee will continue, during 2023, to provide advice to the Commission and to the Secretary General on matters relating to their respective functions.

A key outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic, from an operational perspective, is that remote and blended working arrangements have now become embedded within the Service. The Committee will continue to review the effectiveness of controls in this context. The Committee will also maintain its use of both virtual and in-person meetings, noting the efficiencies associated with this blended approach.

Progress on identifying, assessing and managing risks and uncertainties will continue to be an important part of the Committee's focus in 2023. In particular, the Committee will continue to monitor cyber security risks and the strategy being taken by the Houses of the Oireachtas to protect against cyber threats.

The Committee will continue to oversee the internal audit workplan for 2023 and review external auditor reports to give assurance on the adequacy and effectiveness of internal control systems.

### Acknowledgements

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



**Pat McLoughlin**  
**Chair of Audit Committee**

14 December 2022

## Annual Report of the Audit Committee of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission 2022

### 1. Establishment and Membership of the Audit Committee

The Committee was placed on a statutory footing in 2010 by virtue of 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 Commission, as follows:

- one member of the 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 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 Committee.

- Mr Pat McLoughlin: external member and Chair of the Committee
- Deputy Francis Noel Duffy: member of the 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 Service

### 2. Role of the Audit Committee

The role of the Committee is 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
- 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 2022 with which it is published.

### 4. Audit Committee Activities in 2022

The Committee for the 33rd Dáil and 26th Seanad met five times during 2022 (22 February, 11 May, 22 June, 16 November and 14 December). The agendas and minutes of the Committee meetings are published on the Oireachtas website. Attendance at meetings by members of the Committee, in 2022, is set out in the Appendix to this report.

#### *(a) Audit Committee – Periodic Review*

The Committee's authority is derived from its statutory terms of reference and its written charter, which reflect its responsibility to provide independent and objective advice to the Secretary General and to the Commission. In December 2022, the Committee conducted a self-assessment of its effectiveness, which included a review of its charter. The Committee was satisfied that the functions outlined in its charter were carried out in 2022 and proposed a number of changes to the charter to ensure that it remains current and relevant.

#### *(b) Review of Strategic Plan 2022-2024*

At its meeting in May 2022, Peter Finnegan, Clerk of the Dáil and Secretary General of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service, presented the Commission's new *Strategic Plan 2022-2024* to the Committee. This provided the Committee with the opportunity to better appreciate the objectives and priorities of the Service, noting the key risks and challenges involved in implementing the new statement of strategy.

#### *(c) External Quality Assessment on the Internal Audit Function*

The Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA) *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing* require that an external assessment of an Internal Audit function be conducted at least once every five years. An external quality assessment (EQA) of the Commission's Internal Audit function was carried out in 2019 and the report was presented to the 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.

***(d) Internal Audit Workplan 2022***

The Internal Audit Workplan 2022 was agreed by the Committee at its meeting in December 2021. 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 (IA) program of audits was selected using a risk-based approach agreed by the Secretary General and Committee and communicated to the Management Board. The risk-based approach assisted in targeting limited IA resources to areas where greatest benefit can be obtained.

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

***(e) Internal Audit Reports considered in 2022******(i) Report on ICT Asset Management (Office Equipment) for Staff***

The principal aim of this audit was to review and appraise the adequacy, reliability and effectiveness of the risk management, control and governance processes in relation to asset management of office equipment for staff.

The audit objective was to provide assurance that the overall framework and systems are effective and to provide recommendations on matters where it is apparent that enhancements may be made.

***(ii) Report on Broadcasting Unit Asset Management***

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 asset management of broadcasting equipment, systems and software within the Houses of the Oireachtas.

The audit objective was to provide assurance that the overall framework and systems are effective and to provide recommendations on matters where it is apparent that enhancements may be made.

***(f) Management of IA Reports and Recommendations***

In May 2022, the Committee agreed a revised policy for managing IA reports and recommendations to ensure that outstanding risk issues are being detected, controlled, and mitigated effectively by the Service. Under this policy, the Committee may recommend the transfer of outstanding IA recommendations to the Management Board for ongoing oversight and review.

***(i) Report on Implementation of Internal Audit Recommendations***

The Committee considered reports on the implementation of Internal Audit recommendations, incorporating management responses. Following a review and follow-up process with management, 27 IA report recommendations were approved for closure by the Committee.

In line with the revised policy for managing IA reports and recommendations, the Committee agreed to transfer 17 recommendations to the Management Board for oversight and review. The Committee agreed that the 12 remaining recommendations will continue to be monitored by the IA Unit, in conjunction with the relevant business owners, and progress reports will be submitted to the Committee as appropriate.

### (g) External Audit Reports considered in 2022

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

##### **1. Report from the C&AG on its annual audit of the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Appropriation Account for year ending 31st December 2021**

In November 2022, the Committee met a nominee of the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (OC&AG) and considered the 2021 OC&AG Report on the financial accounts of the Commission.

The 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 Committee also noted that on 24 June 2022, the OC&AG issued a clear audit opinion on its annual audit of the Commission's Appropriation Account for year ending 31 December 2021.

##### **2. Report of the C&AG on the Ciste Pinsean Thithe an Oireachtais (Comhaltai) Account for year ending 31st December 2021.**

The C&AG's Report on the Ciste Pinsean Thithe an Oireachtais (Comhaltai) Account, prepared by the Commission for the year ending 31 December 2021 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 2021, and the balance on the Fund at 31 December 2021. The auditor had no matter to report by exception.

#### ii) 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 December 2022, the Committee considered the Independent Auditor's Reports on the Public Representation Allowance (PRA) for 2021. This audit is conducted annually by an external auditor. The PRA is payable to all TDs, Ministers and Senators at rates applicable to each office.

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.

#### **h) Risk Management**

The Committee recognises the importance of risk management within the Houses of the Oireachtas Service. During 2022, 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 monitoring cyber security risks and the approaches being taken by the Houses of the Oireachtas to protect against cyber threats.

Progress made on the reporting of risk and on embedding a risk aware culture across the organisation is also recognised by the 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 OGCI 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 Committee is satisfied that progress was achieved in 2022 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.

### 6. Effective Discharge of Responsibilities in 2022

The Committee is satisfied that it has effectively discharged its statutory remit during 2022, pursuant to section 14A of the *Houses of the Oireachtas Commission Acts 2003-2021*.

#### Appendix: Attendance at meetings in 2022 by members of the Audit Committee

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



## Appendix IV:

### Bills Initiated in the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2022

No.	Bill Title
1	Higher Education Authority Bill 2022
2	Regulation of Providers of Building Works and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2022
3	Birth Information and Tracing Bill 2022
4	Redundancy Payments (Amendment) Bill 2022
5	Payment of Wages (Amendment) (Tips and Gratuities) Bill 2022
6	Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill 2022
7	Local Government (Surveillance Powers in Relation to Certain Offences) Bill 2022
8	Education (Inspection of Individual Education Plans for Children with Special Needs) Bill 2022
9	Coercion of a Minor (Misuse of Drugs Amendment) Bill 2022
10	Electricity Costs (Domestic Electricity Accounts) Emergency Measures Bill 2022
11	Criminal Law (Human Trafficking) (Amendment) Bill 2022
12	Competition (Amendment) Bill 2022
13	Personal Injuries Assessment Board (Amendment) Bill 2022
14	Child Trafficking and Child Sexual Exploitation Material (Amendment) Bill 2022
15	Healthcare (Transparent Payments) Bill 2022
16	Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2022
17	Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Bill 2022
18	Green Hydrogen Strategy Bill 2022
19	Planning and Development (Amendment) (Breach of Building Regulations) Bill 2022
20	Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2022
21	National Minimum Wage (Equal Pay for Young Workers) Bill 2022
22	Coroners (Provision for Jury Selection) (Amendment) Bill 2022
23	Institutional Burials Bill 2022
24	Criminal Justice (Amendment) Bill 2022
25	Planning and Development (Liquefied Natural Gas – LNG) (Amendment) Bill 2022
26	Finance (Covid-19 and Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2022
27	Consumer Credit (Amendment) Bill 2022
28	Ban on Sex for Rent Bill 2022
29	Health (Assisted Human Reproduction) Bill 2022
30	European Arrest Warrant (Amendment) Bill 2022
31	Education (Admission to Schools) (Co-Education) Bill 2022
32	Bretton Woods Agreements (Amendment) Bill 2022
33	Water Services (Amendment) Bill 2022
34	Thirty-Ninth Amendment of the Constitution (Neutrality) Bill 2022

No.	Bill Title
35	Circular Economy, Waste Management (Amendment) and Minerals Development (Amendment) Bill 2022
36	Responsibility of Social Media Platforms (Defamation Amendment) Bill 2022
37	Electoral Reform Bill 2022
38	Sick Leave Bill 2022
39	Planning and Development, Maritime and Valuation (Amendment) Bill 2022
40	Insurance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2022
41	Employment Equality (Abolition of Mandatory Retirement Age) Bill 2022
42	Judicial Appointments Commission Bill 2022
43	Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2022
44	Consumer Rights Bill 2022
45	Personal Protective Equipment (Covid-19) Bill 2022
46	Impaired Farm Credit Bill 2022
47	Commission of Investigation (Nursing Homes) Bill 2022
48	Local Government and Residential Tenancies (Amendment) (Carrigaline Rent Pressure Zone) Bill 2022
49	Safe Deposit Boxes and Related Deposits Bill 2022
50	Right to Flexible Work Bill 2022
51	Living Wage Bill 2022
52	Employment Equality (Pay Transparency) Bill 2022
53	Regulation of Display of Electoral and Polling Posters and Other Advertisements Bill 2022
54	Animal Health and Welfare (Dogs) Bill 2022
55	Short-term Lettings Enforcement Bill 2022
56	Planning and Development (Built Heritage Protection) Bill 2022
57	National Minimum Wage (Payment of Interns) Bill 2022
58	Dereliction and Building Regeneration Bill 2022
59	Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) (Amendment) Bill 2022
60	Planning and Development (Ministerial Guidelines) Bill 2022
61	Planning and Development Regulations (Amendment) (Solar Energy for Schools and Community Buildings) Bill 2022
62	Garda Síochána (Amendment) Bill 2022
63	EirGrid, Electricity and Turf (Amendment) Bill 2022
64	Litter Pollution (Amendment) Bill 2022
65	Autism Bill 2022
66	Remediation of Dwellings Damaged By the Use of Defective Concrete Blocks Bill 2022
67	Education (Provision in Respect of Children with Special Educational Needs) Bill 2022
68	Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Bill 2022
69	Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2022
70	Central Bank (Variable Rate Mortgages) Bill 2022

No.	Bill Title
71	Rent Reduction Bill 2022
72	Communications (Retention of Data) (Amendment) Bill 2022
73	Education (Affordable School Uniforms) Bill 2022
74	Protection of Accident Victims from Non-Consensual Recording of Images Bill 2022
75	Central Bank (Individual Accountability Framework) Bill 2022
76	National Cultural Institutions (National Concert Hall) (Amendment) Bill 2022
77	Screening of Third Country Transactions Bill 2022
78	Personal Injuries Resolution Board Bill 2022
79	Garda Síochána (Recording Devices) Bill 2022
80	Regulated Professions (Health and Social Care) (Amendment) Bill 2022
81	Water Services (Amendment) (No. 2) Bill 2022
82	Tailte Éireann Bill 2022
83	Criminal Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2022
84	Courts and Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2022
85	Regulation of Lobbying (Amendment) Bill 2022
86	Communications Regulation and Digital Hub Development Agency (Amendment) Bill 2022
87	Water Environment (Abstractions and Associated Impoundments) Bill 2022
88	National Tourism Development Authority (Amendment) Bill 2022
89	Institutional Burials (Amendment) Bill 2022
90	Broadcasting (Gender, Cultural and Other Diversities) Bill 2022
91	Employment Permits Bill 2022
92	Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2022
93	Electricity Costs (Domestic Electricity Accounts) Emergency Measures and Miscellaneous Provisions Bill 2022
94	Derelict Sites (Amendment) Bill 2022
95	National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) (Amendment) Bill 2022
96	Civil Registration (Amendment) (Certificate of Life) Bill 2022
97	Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme Bill 2022
98	Central Bank (Amendment) Bill 2022
99	Development (Emergency Electricity Generation) Bill 2022
100	Residential Tenancies (Deferment of Termination Dates of Certain Tenancies) Bill 2022
101	Finance Bill 2022
102	Eviction Ban Bill 2022
103	Credit Guarantee (Amendment) Bill 2022
104	Ban on Dumping New Products Bill 2022
105	Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill 2022
106	Curragh of Kildare (Amendment) Bill 2022
107	Social Welfare Bill 2022
108	Education (Relationships and Sexuality Education) (Amendment) Bill 2022

No.	Bill Title
109	Health Insurance (Amendment) Bill 2022
110	Local Government (Maternity Protection and Other Measures for Members of Local Authorities) Bill 2022
111	Misuse of Drugs (Cannabis Regulation) Bill 2022
112	Credit Union (Amendment) Bill 2022
113	Family Courts Bill 2022
114	Gambling Regulation Bill 2022
115	Planning and Development and Foreshore (Amendment) Bill 2022
116	Appropriation Bill 2022
117	Ukraine Solidarity Bill 2022
118	Cost of Renewables Taskforce Bill 2022
119	Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) (Amendment) Bill 2022
120	Agricultural and Food Supply Chain Bill 2022
121	Human Tissue (Transplantation, Post-Mortem, Anatomical Examination and Public Display) Bill 2022

## Appendix V:

### Bills Passed by the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2022

No.	Bill Title
1	Electricity Costs (Domestic Electricity Accounts) Emergency Measures Act 2022
2	Sea Fisheries (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2022
3	Redundancy Payments (Amendment) Act 2022
4	Animal Health and Welfare and Forestry (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2022
5	Consumer Protection (Regulation of Retail Credit and Credit Servicing Firms) Act 2022
6	Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2022
7	Garda Síochána (Functions and Operational Areas) Act 2022
8	Merchant Shipping (Investigation of Marine Casualties) (Amendment) Act 2022
9	Finance (Covid-19 and Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2022
10	Garda Síochána (Amendment) Act 2022
11	Insurance (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2022
12	Competition (Amendment) Act 2022
13	Consumer Credit (Amendment) Act 2022
14	Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022
15	Regulation of Providers of Building Works and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022
16	Defence Forces (Evidence) Act 2022
17	Eirgrid, Electricity and Turf (Amendment) Act 2022
18	Institutional Burials Act 2022
19	Civil Law (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2022
20	Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) (No. 2) Act 2022
21	Child Care (Amendment) Act 2022
22	Education (Provision in Respect of Children with Special Needs) Act 2022
23	Payment of Wages (Amendment) (Tips and Gratuities) Act 2022
24	Sick Leave Act 2022
25	Communications (Retention of Data) (Amendment) Act 2022
26	Circular Economy and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022
27	Protected Disclosures (Amendment) Act 2022
28	Remediation of Dwellings Damaged by the use of Defective Concrete Blocks Act 2022
29	Planning and Development, Maritime and Valuation (Amendment) Act 2022
30	Electoral Reform Act 2022
31	Higher Education Authority Act 2022
32	Electricity Costs (Domestic Electricity Accounts) Emergency Measures and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2022
33	Garda Síochána (Compensation) Act 2022
34	Residential Tenancies (Deferment of Termination Dates of Certain Tenancies) Act 2022

No.	Bill Title
35	Development (Emergency Electricity Generation) Act 2022
36	Bretton Woods Agreements (Amendment) Act 2022
37	Consumer Rights Act 2022
38	Credit Guarantee (Amendment) Act 2022
39	Water Services (Amendment) Act 2022
40	Air Navigation and Transport Act 2022
41	Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022
42	Personal Injuries Resolution Board Act 2022
43	Social Welfare Act 2022
44	Finance Act 2022
45	Appropriation Act 2022
46	Assisted Decision-Making (Capacity) (Amendment) Act 2022
47	Planning and Development and Foreshore (Amendment) Act 2022
48	Water Environment (Abstractions and Associated Impoundments) Act 2022
49	Health Insurance (Amendment) Act 2022
50	Tailte Éireann Act 2022
51	National Tourism Development Authority (Amendment) Act 2022
52	Local Government (Maternity Protection and Other Measures for Members of Local Authorities) Act 2022



## Appendix VI:

### Meetings and Reports of Parliamentary Committees in 2022

Joint Committees of Both Houses		
Committee	Number of meetings held	Number of reports presented to the Houses
Joint Committee on Agriculture, and the Marine	67	4
Joint Committee on Children, Disability, Equality and Integration	34	5
Joint Committee on Environment and Climate Action	68	3
Joint Committee on Disability Matters	61	3
Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science	36	5
Joint Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment	32	6
Joint Committee on European Union Affairs	29	1
Joint Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach	34	4
Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence	29	0
Joint Committee on Gender Equality	39	3
Joint Committee on Health (including 15 meetings of Sub-Committee on Mental Health)	85	2
Joint Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage	55	5
Joint Committee on Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement	31	0
Joint Committee on Justice	30	10
Joint Committee Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media	25	4
Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands	35	4
Joint Committee on Transport, and Communications Networks	68	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>758</b>	<b>61</b>

Select Committees of Dáil Éireann		
Committee	Number of meetings held	Number of reports presented to the Houses
Select Committee on Agriculture, and the Marine	3	0
Select Committee on Children, Disability, Equality, and Integration	9	0
Select Committee on Environment and Climate Action	5	0
Select Committee on Disability Matters	0	0
Select Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science	6	0
Select Committee on Enterprise, Trade and Employment	7	0
Select Committee on European Union Affairs	0	0
Select Committee on Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, and Taoiseach	16	0
Select Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence	5	0
Select Committee on Health	5	0
Select Committee on Housing, Local Government and Heritage	9	0
Select Committee on Justice	9	0
Select Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media	5	0
Select Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands	3	0
Select Committee on Transport, and Communications Networks	6	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>0</b>

Standing Committees		
Committee	Number of meetings held	Number of reports presented to the Houses
Committee on Budgetary Oversight (Dáil)	45	5
Comhchoiste na Gaeilge, na Gaeltachta agus Phobal Labhartha na Gaeilge	43	1
Select Committee on Members' Interests of Dáil Éireann	4	0
Select Committee on Members' Interests of Seanad Éireann	5	0
Committee of Public Accounts (Dáil)	35	0
Joint Committee on Public Petitions	35	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>6</b>

<b>Special Committees</b>		
<b>Committee</b>	<b>Number of meetings held</b>	<b>Number of reports presented to the Houses</b>
Joint Committee on Autism	26	1
Joint Committee on International Surrogacy	26	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>2</b>

### Notes

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Appendix VII:

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### Annual Report under the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 (as amended)

Section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act 2014 (as amended) requires the publication of a report each year relating to the number of protected disclosures made in the preceding year and also for the publication of information with regard to any actions taken in response to protected disclosures made. This report must not result in persons making disclosures being identifiable.

The Houses of the Oireachtas Service is committed to achieving 'An Inclusive and Well Supported Parliamentary Community' (Strategic Outcome 2 of Strategic Plan 2022-2024). The Service promotes a supportive environment for our staff to raise concerns relating to wrongdoing or potential wrongdoing in the workplace and we provide the necessary supports for staff who raise concerns.

Pursuant to Section 22 of the Protected Disclosures Act, 2014 (as amended), it is confirmed that no protected disclosures were received by the Houses of the Oireachtas Service in the reporting period 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022.

## Appendix VIII:

### Commission Meetings and Attendance in 2022

The table shows the number of meetings held by the Commission, its Finance Committee and attendance at meetings in 2022.

January - December 2022		
Members	Meetings	
	Commission	Finance Committee
Deputy Seán Ó Fearghaíl, Ceann Comhairle (Chairperson)	11/11	-
Senator Mark Daly Cathaoirleach of Seanad Éireann (Deputy Chairperson)	11/11	5/5
Deputy Joe Carey	11/11	3/5
Deputy Francis Noel Duffy	9/11	-
Mr. Peter Finnegan, Secretary General (Chief Executive)	11/11	-
Senator Seán Kyne	11/11	-
Deputy Jennifer Murnane O'Connor	10/11	-
Deputy Louise O'Reilly	9/11	2/5
Senator Lynn Ruane	9/11	
Senator Ned O'Sullivan	11/11	5/5
Deputy Seán Sherlock	8/11	4/5

## 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.

**Committees** – The Parliamentary Committees fall into four broad categories as follows:

**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).

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

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

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



**Management Board (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.

**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.