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Minute of the Minister for Finance in response to the Sixth Interim Report of the Committee of Public Accounts for 2002 - Reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General 2002 and 2003 - Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism; and Sport

A Chara

I am directed by the Minister for Finance to enclose for your information and guidance a copy of the Minute of the Minister for Finance in response to the Sixth Interim Report of the Committee of Public Accounts for 2002 – Reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General 2002 and 2003 – Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism; and Sport.

Mise le Meas

David Doyle
Secretary General

To: All Accounting Officers

Minute of the Minister for Finance
on the Sixth Interim Report of the Committee of Public Accounts for 2002 -
Reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General 2002 and 2003 - Department of
Arts, Sport and Tourism; and Sport

The Minister for Finance has examined the Committee's Report and has taken account of its findings. In relation to its recommendations, his response is as follows:

1. Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism – Vote 35

- **Greater efforts should be made by Departments and implementing agencies for the orderly administrative processing of applications to minimize the delay in the receipt of available EU moneys.**

This recommendation is accepted and the Minister has been advised by the Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism that all available EU monies have been received. The Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism was due various sums under the URBAN (ESF), Local Urban and Rural Development - LURD (ESF and ERDF) and PEACE (ESF) Operational Programmes of the 1994-1999 CSF – a total of €9.85m since 2003. The Department recouped the majority of these monies over the years 2003-2005 with the final element of PEACE recoupments being provided for in the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism Vote for 2006.

- **There should be greater co-ordination among Departments and between the central and local sectors to facilitate the spending of available Departmental moneys for much needed projects without unnecessary delay.**

This recommendation is accepted.

The Minister is advised by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism that, as part of their ongoing operations, both the Department and its agencies engage in a continuous review of processes and procedures to facilitate the funding of approved projects without delay. However, as many of the grant schemes operated by the Department and its agencies are demand-led and payments are made only when the grantee has complied with all of the requirements for drawdown of the grant, it is not always possible to profile expenditure with complete accuracy. The Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism notes that the PAC Report acknowledges that the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism is not prepared to release funds until all conditions applying to the relevant grant scheme have been complied with by the grantee.

2. Capital Grants for Sports and Recreational Facilities – Vote 35; and The Irish Sports Council – 2002 Accounts.

- **The ISC should consider the development of quantitative and qualitative performance indicators to support a rational performance evaluation of the investment of State money in sport.**

This recommendation is accepted.

The Minister is advised by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism that the Irish Sports Council has developed criteria, terms and conditions under its grant schemes against which funding allocations are determined. The Council monitors grantee performance against these factors as part of its ongoing operations. Accordingly, while performance indicators, quantitative and qualitative, are already in place, which assist the Council in assessing its efforts in relation to the objectives of increased participation, improved capability and excellence, the Minister is advised that the Council recognises the need to further refine and develop its indicators in line with the Committee's recommendation for a stronger evaluation framework for the State's investment in sport.

- **The Department and the ISC should occasionally review their administrative procedures to simplify the process for small agencies and communities to access available funding. However, this should not be at the expense of proper administrative and financial control of State funds.**

This recommendation is accepted.

The Minister is advised by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism that, as part of their ongoing operations, both the Department and the relevant sectors have engaged in a continuous review of processes and procedures to facilitate the funding of projects. The most significant changes have been made in relation to the National Governing Bodies of Sport Scheme where a more 'proportionate' approach has been taken. The Minister is informed by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism that forms are more user-friendly; shorter grant forms have been developed for the smaller National Governing Bodies (NGBs); compliance and reporting requirements vary depending on the size of the grantee, the scale of the grant and the nature of the organisation and payment arrangements have been adjusted. He has also been advised that, for smaller NGBs, grants are distributed in one tranche rather than two, as is the case for larger organisations.

The Minister is further advised that the Council is trying, in this way, to ensure that the correct balance exists between the need to have appropriate controls which safeguard the State's investment while delivering on the Government's policy objective of better regulation.

3. The Irish Sports Council: Presentation on the Genesis Report

- **The Irish Sports Council should encourage bodies to whom it gives financial assistance to put in place satisfactory performance criteria.**

This recommendation is accepted.

The Minister is advised by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism that the Council has encouraged and facilitated the development of a strategic planning process within its main grantee organisations – National Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships. The Minister is informed that the annual grant applications are prepared by these organisations in line with those strategic plans and include an assessment of progress against objectives/targets for the previous year, details of objectives/targets for the forthcoming year and financial and other relevant information. The Minister is advised that this provides a clear framework for the Council in determining the funding levels and assessing grantee progress in meeting objectives. He is informed that grantees report to the Council on a periodic basis against these plans and the Council also meets grantees at least once a year to review progress.

The Minister understands that the Council has worked closely with grantee organisations in developing and agreeing performance criteria in relation to a number of sports schemes and that the Council intends to continue to work with these organisations to refine performance parameters as these schemes develop and evolve.

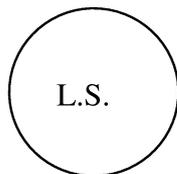
5. Board na gCon – 2002 Accounts

- **The Board should endeavour to enter into written agreements with all bodies involved in greyhound sports in these islands to ensure that there is a common stand on all regulations across all organisations.**

This recommendation is accepted.

The Minister is advised by the Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism that Bord na gCon, which is the statutory body responsible for the greyhound industry in Ireland, agrees that there is significant merit in the adoption of a common stand on all greyhound racing regulations in these islands and is continuing to work with all bodies involved in greyhound racing to that end.

Given under the Official Seal of
the Minister for Finance this
20th day of December, 2006



David Doyle
Secretary General
Department of Finance