An Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí agus Athchóirithe
Department of Public Expenditure and Reform

DPE 022/002/2018

26th October 2018

To: Accounting Officers

DPER Circular: 19/2018

Minute of the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform in response to the Committee of Public Accounts Periodic Report No. 3 January - May 2018

A Dhuine Uasail,

I am directed by the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform to circulate, for your attention, guidance and any necessary follow up actions a copy of the Minute of the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform in response to the Committee of Public Accounts Periodic Report Number 3, published in July 2018.

Issues raised

The PAC Report contains 40 recommendations relating to a range of topics including issues regarding the national property revaluation programme, management of salary overpayments, dormant account funds, local government funding and road maintenance, housing, the Galway Art House Cinema, fiscal reporting, harmonising accounting practices across public bodies, and governance failures in relation to IT Projects.

Enquiries

Enquiries in relation to this Circular can be addressed to Government Accounting Unit, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, telephone: +353 1 6767571 or email: govacc@per.gov.ie.

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Minute of the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform in response to the Committee of Public Accounts Periodic Report No. 3, July 2018

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform has examined the Committee's Report and has taken account of its recommendations and conclusions.

The Committee's recommendations, which are outlined below, have been grouped with regard to the organisations the Committee met between January and May, 2018, following up on matters arising from previous meetings and examining issues emerging from financial statements audited and matters reported on, by the Office Of The Comptroller & Auditor General. The Minister's response is as follows:

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation A.1

Business cases for the expenditure of sizeable sums of public funds are not made publicly available as a matter of course. During a number of its engagements, the Committee has had to request business cases from government departments and agencies. The Committee recommends that the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform requires that business cases relating to proposed expenditure above an appropriate threshold are published once approved.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform accepts this recommendation.

A review of the Public Spending Code (PSC) is currently in train and, as part of this review, the new Investment Projects and Programmes Office established within the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform is redesigning the requirements in relation to the different stages involved in the process of selection, appraisal, approval and delivery of capital investment projects. The updated guidance will be included in the revised PSC. A requirement to publish the business case for capital projects above an appropriate threshold will be one of the changes to be introduced in the revised PSC guidance.

Recommendation A.2

The failure of government departments and agencies to comply with the government's policy in relation to public procurement is a recurring theme. The Committee recommends that the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform examines the imposition of appropriate sanctions for public bodies that do not adhere to public procurement policy. The issue of compliance with public procurement policy is a matter to which the Committee intends to return.

The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform notes this recommendation and would point out that Public Procurement is governed by EU legislation and National rules and guidelines. The aim of these rules is to promote an open, competitive and non-discriminatory public procurement regime which delivers best value for money.

The Office of Government Procurement (OGP) has responsibility for developing and setting out the overarching policy framework for public procurement in Ireland. The OGP supports compliance by putting in place compliant procurement solutions, publishing guidelines and template documentation and proactive engagement with our sourcing partners in the Health, Education, Defence and Local Government Sectors through the OGP Board and Procurement Executive. It is through the provision of such guidance that the framework facilitates a more consistent approach to public procurement across the public sector. Thus, public bodies should, therefore, be in a better position to adopt procedures that meet their Public Procurement requirements and meet compliance with EU and National Procurement Rules. However, it is important to note that whilst the OGP facilitates and enables compliance, it is the responsibility of the each Contracting Authority to ensure they adhere to the procurement rules. Indeed, this is a requirement of the EU Directives on public procurement.

In this regard, under Section 19 of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act, 1993, each Accounting Officer is personally responsible for the safeguarding of public funds and property under his or her control; for the regularity and propriety of all the transactions in each Appropriation Account bearing his or her signature; and for the efficiency and economy of administration in his or her Department. Public procurement practices are subject to audit and scrutiny under the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act 1993, and the Local Government Reform Act 2014. Individual contracting authorities are, therefore, responsible for establishing arrangements for ensuring the proper conduct of their affairs, including conformance to standards of good governance and accountability with regard to procurement.

THE NATIONAL PROPERTY REVALUATION PROGRAMME

Recommendation B.1

The Valuation Office's progress on the national property revaluation programme has been unacceptably slow. In some cases, there will be more than ten years between the first revaluations in different local authorities, which has led to significant discrepancies in the commercial rates charged by local authorities. The Committee is dissatisfied with the performance of the Office in relation to the national property revaluation programme, and recommends that the Office ensures the programme is completed by 2021.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Valuation Office that it accepts this recommendation.

The Minister is further informed by that Office that its Strategic Plan 2018-2021 envisages completion of the National Revaluation Programme by 2021.

Recommendation B.2

The fact that properties have not been revalued since 1988 has led to spikes in some commercial rates bills, which can have a significant impact on businesses, particularly small and medium enterprises. The Committee recommends that the Office ensures it complies with its statutory duty to conduct revaluations every five to ten years to minimise the potential for further spikes in commercial rates.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Valuation Office that it accepts this recommendation.

The Minister is further informed by that Office that it will comply with its statutory requirements to conduct revaluations every five to ten years on an ongoing basis.

Recommendation B.3

In order to reduce the need for local authorities to increase commercial rates, the Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government should ensure that forthcoming legislation – the Commercial Rates Bill 2017 - includes a variety of payment methods and supports to facilitate the effective collection of rates, which currently stands at 84%.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government that it accepts this recommendation.

The Minister is further informed by the Department that the Government recently approved the publication of the Local Government (Rates) Bill 2018. Included in the provisions are:

- the removal of the requirement for ratepayers to pay their annual rate bills in two instalments (moieties) and allowing ratepayers to pay rates by instalments or a payment plan agreed with the local authority;
- improved enforcement powers for local authorities to collect rates to ensure that all ratepayers are compliant with the charge;
- the levying of interest on overdue rates;
- unpaid rates to be a charge on relevant property;
- schemes for the abatement of rates on vacant properties; and

- the introduction of a power for local authorities to introduce rates waiver or alleviation schemes to support national and local policy objectives.

Recommendation B.4
Coherent justification for the order in which local authorities have been revalued is lacking. The Committee recommends that future revaluations are structured to allow for greater transparency, and to ensure the approach is as fair as possible.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Valuation Office that it accepts this recommendation.

The Minister is further informed by that Office that future revaluations will be conducted on a rolling basis of 5 to 10 year timelines in accordance with statutory provisions.

Recommendation B.5
Given that the Office now has a number of options open to it to conduct revaluations, it is imperative that the Office has an ICT system capable of recording the time spent on each revaluation. The Committee recommends that the implementation of the system is expedited to allow the Office to identify the most cost-effective revaluation process, whether it is in-house, external, or occupier assisted revaluation.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Valuation Office that it accepts this recommendation. The Minister has been informed by that Office that it has made a Business case to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. Funding for the new system will have to be considered in the context of the overall funding allocation for the Housing, Planning and Local Government Vote Group.

Recommendation B.6
It is not clear how the revaluations conducted by the Office compare with revaluations it outsourced to the private company CBRE. The external independent review of the Office's and CBRE's revaluations should remain a priority for the Office.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Valuation Office that it accepts this recommendation.

The Minister is further informed by that Office that the external independent review of the Office's and CBRE's revaluations remains a priority and that the review is currently underway.

SHARED SERVICES – MANAGEMENT OF SALARY OVERPAYMENTS

Recommendation B.7
Given the complexity involved in the National Shared Services Office's administration of €3.24 billion in payments to over 100,000 payees, and the fact that payrolls are run in advance of payday, some salary overpayments are inevitable. This, however, does not account for the number of overpayments, or the extent of delays in their calculation and recoupment. The Committee recommends that the National Shared Services Office focuses on addressing the incidence of overpayments, and delays in their calculation and recoupment. Particular attention should be given to streamlining notification procedures and minimising internal errors.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the National Shared Services Office that it accepts this recommendation.

The Minister is further informed by that Office that a programme of continuous improvement on the management of salary overpayments is in progress. Reduction in the root cause of overpayment through error or delay in the identification of overpayments by the National Shared Services Office (NSSO) is being targeted with increased process automation. A root cause of overpayments is payment continuing to employees who are absent from work. This will be the subject of an intensive awareness campaign across civil service Departments and Offices, planned to commence shortly and on a rolling basis to year end. A working group comprising a representative number of Departments and Offices has been established by the NSSO with specific terms of reference to assist, advise and work with it in the management of salary overpayments. A dedicated team has also been assigned in the NSSO to address the calculation of overpayment values to clear backlogs in the recoupment process as well as automation in the process of notification procedures.

Recommendation B.8
While it appears that the National Shared Services Office has undertaken considerable work to address the shortcomings identified in the C&AG's 2016 report, the Committee recommends that the Office now ensures that its service improvement priorities are aligned with the issues identified by its service users.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the National Shared Services Office that it accepts this recommendation.

The Minister is further informed by that Office that a full review of the key performance measures in the Service Management Agreement between the NSSO and its client Departments has been undertaken this year by the NSSO through engagement with its standing customer service group; the reporting on revised service measures, as agreed, will be provided on a monthly basis to each Department and a customer engagement survey is also planned, commencing in the third quarter with a survey of service levels to all HR units, followed by a survey at individual service user level in Quarter 1 2019. A Steering Group has been established to oversee the conduct of the engagement surveys, with senior representation from client Departments and union officials. The committee will shortly agree the content of the first survey of retained HR functions in the Departments and Offices served by the NSSO and it is expected that the survey will be issued later in October with an action plan to be agreed following analysis of results.

Recommendation B.9
The extent of savings derived from the implementation of the Shared Services model are not clear. The Committee recommends that an independent evaluation of savings generated is commissioned at the end of 2018, to assess whether it is providing value for money to the taxpayer.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the National Shared Services Office that it accepts this recommendation.

The Minister is further informed by that Office that the process for planning the evaluation of savings from the implementation of the Shared Services model has commenced.

THE DORMANT ACCOUNTS FUND

Recommendation B.10
The Dormant Accounts Fund was designed to assist vulnerable sections of society, but due to administrative failures, it is not getting to them. On the basis of the evidence presented to the Committee, the dissolution of the Dormant Accounts Board, and the accompanying transfer of statutory responsibility for the Fund to Government Departments, has coincided with a serious decline in the effective administration of the Fund. The Committee recommends that the mechanisms employed by the dissolved Dormant Accounts Board, and other Government models that effectively disburse funds, are examined by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in order to help address the failures of the current system.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Department of Rural and Community Development, whose Minister has statutory responsibility for the Dormant Accounts Disbursement Scheme, that it accepts this recommendation.

The Minister is further informed by that Department that:

- It accepted the recommendation of the Comptroller and Auditor General's 2016 report that the statutory review of the 2013 disbursement scheme should be carried out to identify how well the scheme was implemented and how future schemes can be designed to ensure that the scheme's objectives are met.
- The review of the Dormant Accounts Disbursement Scheme has made specific recommendations to improve the administration of the fund, which the Department is committed to implementing.
- A key issue which emerged from the review was the absence of ongoing administrative oversight by the lead Department (which was previously the role of the Dormant Accounts Board). The recommendations seek to address this issue and include the establishment of a single database of funded measures and an ongoing inter-departmental group to ensure more regular and co-ordinated oversight. This will also allow knowledge sharing between Departments on the most effective processes within Departments for management of measures.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform notes that the review was published on 31 July 2018. The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform provided significant inputs into this review which investigates the mechanics of the Disbursement Schemes, examines the under-spends to date, makes recommendations regarding improving disbursement levels and the effectiveness of the spending under the scheme.

It is intended that the recommendations of the review will be implemented by the Department of Rural and Community Development, in co-operation with the inter-departmental group set up on foot of this review, and other bodies such as the National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA), as appropriate.

Recommendation B.11
Over €70 million is committed to projects and programmes under the Dormant Accounts Fund, €12 million of which was committed prior to 2012. The Committee recommends that the Department of Rural and Community Development prioritises its review of these commitments, and includes a provision to decommit funds in future arrangements.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Department of Rural and Community Development that it accepts this recommendation.

The Minister is further informed by that Department that:

- In line with this recommendation the review of the Dormant Accounts Disbursement Scheme highlighted the need for decommital of funds for such projects and the importance of ongoing decommital processes being in place to ensure effective administration of the fund.

- To address these issues, as part of the development of the Dormant Accounts Action Plan 2018, Departments were asked to decommit moneys where measures had been run and not used their full allocation or in instances where they had been superseded or discontinued.
- This has resulted in decommittals totalling just over €16.5m and these moneys are now available to fund new measures in future action plans. The 2018 Action Plan, launched in July 2018, has also set out that decommittals will now occur on a periodic basis where funding remains on completion of a measure or in instances where the Department approved for funding no longer wishes to run a particular measure.
- In addition, all measures which were previously allocated funding from the Dormant Accounts Fund were also collated and published in the Action Plan 2018, thereby setting out a full overview of all liabilities remaining in relation to the Fund.

Recommendation B.12
There has been a distinct lack of continuity regarding responsibility for disbursement of the Dormant Accounts Fund. The Committee recommends that responsibility for the Fund is maintained by one body to provide a stable platform for the effective administration of the Fund.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure is informed by the Department of Rural and Community Development that it notes this recommendation.

The Minister is further informed by that Department that:

- Since July 2017, it has statutory responsibility for functions and decisions relating to the disbursement of moneys from the Dormant Accounts Fund. This role had previously been held by the Minister for Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs (June 2016 to July 2017) and the Minister for Environment, Community and Local Government/Housing, Planning, Community and Local Government (December 2012 to June 2016).
- While the assignment of responsibilities regarding the fund is a matter for Government, the Department of Rural and Community Development is committed to effectively managing this fund and the implementation of the recommendations of the review of the Dormant Accounts Disbursement Scheme.
- It should be noted that ultimately the implementation of measures by each Department remains the responsibility of the relevant Department. However, the improved administration and establishment of an interdepartmental group will facilitate the Department to effectively manage the fund at a central level.

Recommendation B.13
The Dormant Accounts Fund is insufficiently publicised and there is a lack of proactive engagement with organisations eligible to avail of funding. The Committee recommends that greater effort should be put into publicising the Fund, and proactively engaging with organisations that are actively seeking funding, and are eligible to avail of Dormant Accounts Funds.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Department of Rural and Community Development that it accepts this recommendation.

The Minister is further informed by that Department that:

- Considering the status of these funds and the fact they remain the property of their legal owners, makes it of vital importance that the funding is used efficiently and effectively and reaches and assists the target groups to the greatest extent possible.
- The publication of action plans and reports, such as the well-publicised launch of the 2018 Action Plan in July, which included presentations and case studies, are of key importance in this regard.
- In order that funding is visible in the communities it reaches, it is a condition of funding that Departments note the use of Dormant Accounts funding in press releases and other promotional documentation relating to funded measures. In addition, buildings, vehicles and other equipment sourced using Dormant Accounts funding must display the logo of the Fund on the asset.
- The Department of Rural and Community Development is committed to better communicating the achievements of the Fund, through wider use of case studies, greater engagement with local media and other measures to enhance its visibility
- While there is good engagement with local community organisations in relation to accessing support under certain Dormant Accounts Funds measures, the Department will seek to ensure that this happens more widely. The Department will progress this issue through the interdepartmental group to ensure all Departments best facilitate funding applications from eligible organisations for relevant measures.
- The Department, in consultation with the inter-departmental group, will also actively consider additional means of publicising the availability of funding under Action Plan measures.

Recommendation B.14
The Dormant Accounts Fund application process is too complex, and has the potential to discourage applications for funding. The Committee recommends that the Department reviews the Dormant Accounts Fund application process.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Department of Rural and Community Development that it accepts this recommendation.

The Minister is further informed by that Department that:

- The Dormant Accounts Fund Disbursement Schemes sets out implementation principles covering application procedures and assessment/selection procedures, for Departments to adhere to in implementing measures using Dormant Accounts funding.
- The aforementioned review of the Disbursement Scheme has concluded that these principles add a further level of complexity to the Disbursement Scheme and in many instances set out principles that are already covered by public expenditure guidelines. The assessment and selection procedures in particular would appear to be superfluous and, in relation to criteria which go beyond the Public Spending Code or Circular 13/2014 'Management of and Accountability for Grants from Exchequer Funds', needlessly restrictive. The review recommended that future Disbursement Schemes simplify these principles for application processes and the Department is committed to acting on this recommendation.
- As previously noted each Department remains responsible for how they implement their own measures and so the interdepartmental group will have an important role in ensuring that processes across Departments are simplified insofar as possible.

Recommendation B.15
Between 2012 and 2016, €143 million was transferred to the Dormant Accounts Fund. The Committee finds it unacceptable that just €29 million was disbursed during this period, and that:

- **the statutory requirement to conduct a review of the 2013 – 2016 disbursement scheme by end December 2016 was not met; and**
- **the statutory requirement to produce an action plan for the implementation of the disbursement scheme was not met in 2015.**

The Committee recommends that the statutory review of the 2013 – 2016 Dormant Accounts Fund disbursement scheme be completed by July 2018, as stated by the Secretary General, and that the Department of Rural and Community Development complies with its statutory responsibilities to produce an action plan in relation to the Dormant Accounts Fund every year.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Department of Rural and Community Development that it accepts this recommendation.

The Minister is further informed by that Department that:

- it accepted the recommendation of the Comptroller and Auditor General's 2016 report that the statutory review of the 2013 disbursement scheme should be carried out to identify how well the scheme was implemented and how future schemes can be designed to ensure that the scheme's objectives are met.
- The Review of the Disbursement Schemes 2013-2016 and 2017-2019 and the general administration of the fund has been completed, in co-operation with other Government Departments.
- The Department of Rural and Community Development is committed to meeting its statutory responsibilities regarding the production of yearly Action Plans, having already produced the 2018 Action Plan in July 2018 and ensured greater engagement by Departments in the production of that plan.

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING, PLANNING, AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

> **Recommendation B.16**
> **Central government funding of local government is overly complicated and disjointed, making it difficult to follow, and difficult to determine if value for money is being achieved. The Committee recommends that the flows of funds from central government to local government are reviewed to simplify the process.**

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government that it notes this recommendation and would point out that:

- the position regarding responsibilities of Central Government Departments and other central agencies in respect of functions for which local authorities have responsibility at local level reflects Government policy of greater devolution of power to local level as decided in the context of the 2012 Action Programme for Effective Local Government: *Putting People First*;
- as local authorities now perform functions across a wide range of sectors which come within the remit of a number of different Departments and central agencies, a consequence of that devolution is that funding to local authorities is now derived from multiple Departments and agencies;
- notwithstanding this, each individual programme through which funding is provided to local authorities incorporates appropriate requirements, including compliance with the Public Spending Code, to support the achievement of value for money;
- the Local Government Audit Service (both through its audit of individual local authorities and through specific value for money analyses) and the National Oversight and Audit Commission are the two primary mechanisms for general central Government oversight of local authority expenditure;

- the Comptroller and Auditor General publishes a chapter on Central Government Funding of Local Authorities as part of the annual Report on the Accounts of the Public Services which comprehensively sets out the flows of funding from central government to local authorities; from 2018 onwards, this chapter will benefit from the additional clarity that will arise from the rationalisation of certain funding arrangements as between the Vote of the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government and the Local Government Fund.

Recommendation B.17
The fragmented nature of the funding of local authorities means that they do not have certainty regarding the overall levels of central government funding they will receive from year to year. This makes it difficult to effectively plan and administer the funding. The Committee recommends that central government bodies proactively engage with local authorities to ensure they are aware of planned funding provision.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government that it notes this recommendation and would point out that:

- the democratically elected Councillors are responsible for running the local authority in conjunction with the Chief Executive. This includes direct responsibility in law for the adoption of an annual budget which is sufficient to meet the expenditure arising in the year. It is a matter for each local authority to determine its own spending priorities in the context of the annual budgetary process having regard to both needs and available resources;
- it is important to bear in mind that approximately two-thirds of the revenue funding of local authorities is derived from local sources rather than central government;
- in general, the allocation of central government funding to local authorities from central government Departments is subject to, and follows, the finalisation of the annual Budgetary and Estimates process, and is therefore contingent on the completion of this process before allocations can be finally confirmed. Proactive and early engagement by central government bodies with local authorities during this process would assist the overall effective planning and administration of central government funding.

Recommendation B.18
The distribution of local government funding requires further examination. Funding baselines are outdated and there is significant overreliance on commercial rates. The Committee recommends that the review of the local government funding distribution model by the Department of Housing, Planning, and Local Government ensures a more equitable, holistic, and transparent method of distributing funding to local authorities is devised. The Committee will monitor the progress of the review process.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government that it accepts this recommendation insofar as funding baselines are concerned.

The Minister is further informed by the Department that:

- the review group (established by the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government) is developing a methodology which will aim to bring a greater balance and equity of funding for local authorities, in the context of the wide range of issues faced by local authorities and their diverse nature;
- as part of the process, the review group consulted with relevant stakeholders (local authorities, Oireachtas Members etc.);
- the work of the review group is progressing well and, when completed, will be submitted to the Minister for Housing, Planning and Local Government for consideration.

Recommendation B.19
The collapse of funding for road maintenance from 2010 has led to a significant deterioration in the quality of local and national roads across the country. Failure to maintain roads results in unnecessary loss to the Exchequer as road repair is more expensive than road maintenance. In order to safeguard public funds, the Committee recommends that roads are maintained to a high standard. In the interests of road safety, there should be a particular focus on identified accident black spots.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport that it notes this recommendation.

There are two parts to this recommendation road safety and road maintenance. With regard to road safety targeted funding is already provided by the Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport to address "black spots" on both the national road network and on the regional and local road network and this part of the recommendation is accepted.

The IMF's PIMA report points to the need to prioritise spending on the maintenance of infrastructural assets. This is also referenced in the recently published NDP for 2018 – 2027 which states that protecting the quality and value of the capital stock through appropriate levels of expenditure for maintenance and renewal purposes is a high priority.

The Committee should be aware that an additional €7m has been allocated for road maintenance in Budget 2019.

Recommendation B.20
The current system for motor taxation unduly penalises those who cannot afford to pay their motor tax in a single annual transaction. Motor tax is most expensive when paid on a quarterly or half-yearly basis, as the associated additional charges are significantly in excess of the cost of the additional transactions (estimated to be €5 per online transaction). The Committee recommends that the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport replaces these additional quarterly and half-yearly charges with a processing fee, which should be limited to a maximum of €5 per transaction.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport that it notes this recommendation.

The Minister is further informed by the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport that the cost of abolishing the surcharge associated with half-yearly and quarterly motor tax discs has been estimated at some €52.7m. This is based on the number of discs issued in 2017, as set out in the table below.

Annual discs	1,728,669
Half-yearly discs	689,871
Quarterly discs	2,608,056
Total	**5,026,596**

Applying a charge of €5 on half-yearly and quarterly transactions would generate in the order of €16.5m. The change would represent a loss to the Exchequer of some €36.5m.

It should be noted that the level of charge proposed does not cover the administrative cost of processing a motor tax application in a motor tax office. As indicated by the Comptroller and Auditor General in the Special Report on the Administration and Collection of motor tax, the cost of processing a transaction in a motor tax office is €10. Of the half-yearly and quarterly applications for motor tax discs issued in 2017, some 875,000 were processed in motor tax offices, representing a cost of administration to the local authority system of €8.75m.

Moreover, if the cost of the half-yearly and quarterly options is heavily reduced, those currently paying annually may be more likely to switch to the non-annual options, with the additional transaction volumes potentially adding to both fixed and variable costs. This may consequently necessitate an increase in any processing charge introduced.

The foregoing financial considerations, which would be borne by the taxpayer generally, would need to be factored into the setting of an appropriate flat rate charge. Some 12,000 replacement tax discs are also issued annually. The current charge for replacing a tax disc is €6, the proportionality of which would also require to be reviewed if a flat charge were applied. This is provided for in secondary legislation.

However, the substantive change proposed would require an amendment to primary legislation. The current basis in legislation is section 1(2)(b) of the Finance (Excise Duties)(Vehicles) Act 1952 ("the 1952 Act"), which provides motor tax can be paid for such periods of the year and on payment of such rates of duty as the Minister may prescribe, but provides that the rate of duty is prescribed as a proportion of the annual charge. Any proposal to move from a proportional charge to a flat rate charge for non-annual discs will require an amendment to this section of the 1952 Act.

Recommendation B.21
The underspend of €53.3 million represents almost a third of the Department's 2016 provision for voluntary and cooperative housing. The Committee recommends that the Department ensures capacity is scaled up sufficiently to deliver on its housing targets. The Committee intends to return to the matter in the autumn.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government that it notes this recommendation.

The Minister is further informed by that Department that:

- in addition to exchequer expenditure of €100.657 million under the voluntary and cooperative housing subhead in 2016, a further €40.578 million was expended for this purpose from surplus Local Property Tax (LPT) receipts;
- the main area of underspend related to the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS) which provides capital funding to local authorities to enable them to advance loans to approved housing bodies (AHBs) providing housing for older people, homeless or people with a disability;
- in order to increase housing output and delivery under CAS, the Department is closely monitoring project activity and working with the local authorities and the Irish Council for Social Housing (an umbrella body for AHBs) to support and accelerate project advancement and to assist, where possible, smaller AHBs where there are capacity issues;
- in September 2018, the Department hosted a Housing Summit for AHBs to support increased and accelerated AHB housing delivery and a key focus will be to address any remaining technical and capacity issues that arise for AHBs;

- within the overall expenditure for the subhead, there was expenditure under CAS in 2016 of €37.033 million (comprising exchequer expenditure of €28.09m and LPT expenditure of €8.943m) which supported the delivery of 331 units of accommodation (54 construction and 277 acquisitions);
- output under CAS is increasing, with expenditure in 2017 amounting to almost €55 million which delivered 427 units. A budgetary provision of €88.8 million is available in 2018, which will deliver a further increase in the CAS construction and acquisition programme.

Recommendation B.22
€153 million was paid to private landlords under the Housing Assistance Payment scheme in 2017. This is set to rise to over €300 million in 2018. The Committee finds it unacceptable that no data is available regarding the level of inspection of HAP properties, and that significant sums of public money are being paid to landlords that might be providing substandard or dangerous accommodation to vulnerable tenants. The Committee recommends that local authorities carry out inspections of properties in line with their obligations under relevant legislation.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government that it accepts the recommendation that local authorities carry out inspections of properties in line with their obligations under the legislation.

The Minister is further informed by that Department that:

- while it is accepted that centralised data on inspection levels is not currently available, local authorities are actively working to fulfil their legislative obligations. The Department is working with local authorities to ensure that such centralised data will be available to ensure that there is transparency in relation to inspections of properties under the HAP scheme;
- HAP is underpinned by the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2014. Under section 41 of the 2014 Act, local authorities are required to commence the inspection process within 8 months of the commencement of HAP support being provided in relation to a particular dwelling if not already inspected within the previous 12 months;
- full national roll-out of HAP was completed in March 2017. The HAP Shared Services Centre (SSC) operated by Limerick City and County Council has provided local authorities with an inspection module as part of a central information management system in order to record inspection data related to HAP supported tenancies;
- while inspections are being undertaken widely by local authorities, not every local authority is recording data in respect of every HAP tenancy on the dedicated HAP

system. Some local authorities have signalled that their inspections of HAP-related properties form part of wider programmes of inspection of private rented accommodation, which were established before HAP commenced, and are recorded separately;

- the Department is working with the SSC, the Housing Agency and HAP practitioners to identify a streamlined process, which would minimise duplication of effort for local authorities across their inspection programmes, centralising all HAP related data, and, ultimately, facilitating more robust and reliable analysis and reporting of inspection-related data;
- It is expected that, by end 2018, sufficient progress will have been made to integrate the recording systems and provide the inspection status of all active HAP tenancies on an ongoing basis.

GALWAY ART HOUSE CINEMA AND VOTE 33 – ARTS, HERITAGE, REGIONAL, RURAL AND GAELTACHT AFFAIRS

Recommendation B.23

The extent of the issues with the site on which Galway Art House Cinema was constructed were not identified until the fourth site survey, three years after the initial funding application. In order to safeguard public funds, the Committee recommends that approval of applications for funding that involve construction on brownfield sites requires the completion of comprehensive site examinations in advance of construction commencing.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform accepts this recommendation. The Minister is advised by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht that, having due regard to the size, scale and complexity of the proposed project and the requirements of the Public Spending Code, site surveys / examinations are considered by them as part of the overall award, management and oversight of grants in relation to capital projects involving construction on brown field sites.

In addition, the provisions of the Public Spending Code require that projects are continuously reappraised throughout the project life-cycle. A key precept of the Code is that as developments occur in project planning, design and implementation, a project must be reassessed to ensure that it continues to represent value for money.

The Minister is further advised by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht that a number of surveys were carried out in relation to the project site, but for differing purposes e.g. an archaeological assessment to assess archaeological risk well above bedrock; a report on construction methods with specific reference to the site's location; and a level and elevation survey. The fourth report was a more detailed ground survey which did identify the more extensive challenges associated with the site which was undertaken after initial construction difficulties were encountered.

Recommendation B.24
While the extent of the issues with the site on which Galway Art House Cinema was constructed did not become apparent until the fourth site survey was completed, the difficulties might have been dealt with more effectively had effective project management structures been in place. The Committee recommends that public bodies ensure that applications for public funding are accompanied by evidence of sufficient project management expertise.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform accepts this recommendation.

The Public Spending Code, Stage B02 – Planning Stage, sets out 7 steps involved in planning projects, the first of which is the establishment of the project management structure. The PSC provides that "*The scale and complexity of the project should be reflected in its management structure and information system. Unless it already exists (e.g. for ongoing capital programmes) the management structure should always be identified and established once approval in principle has been obtained. In some cases, it may be possible to outline the proposed structure, filling some of the roles immediately and leaving others to be filled later on, as appropriate. However, the senior decision-makers for the project, and the senior managers should all be identified clearly at the outset, and their involvement and relative role clearly agreed.*"

The Minister is advised by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht that project management expertise is considered by them in their assessment of grant applications for capital projects having due regard to the size, scale and complexity of the proposed project and as laid down in the Public Spending Code.

Recommendation B.25
The Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht did not provide sufficient oversight of the project, and did not effectively deal with the project management failures that characterised the project. The Committee recommends that the Department assumes a more proactive role in the oversight of projects which it funds, including regular reporting and site visits.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is advised by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht that the recommendation is accepted.

The Department is fully committed to ensuring that all projects are effectively managed in accordance with the Public Spending Code and relevant Grant Circulars. Measures are in place to ensure that staff are appropriately trained and supported in the appraisal and oversight of grant-aided projects as part of the Department's annual quality assurance process and training provided to staff emphasises the importance of the early establishment of performance metrics to be used as a signal for action during the implementation phase, the need for regular management reports to be provided and reviewed, and how best to deal with project challenges as and when they emerge.

The Minister is further advised that the Department recognises that it may not always have the required technical expertise in relation to particular capital projects and schemes and, as such, engages experts to provide the necessary technical advice to ensure the proper appraisal and management of the project.

Recommendation B.26
The Committee recommends that the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht conducts a post-project evaluation of the Galway Art House Cinema project to see what can be learned from the project, and to ensure public accountability. The report should be completed and published within the timeframe outlined to the Committee by the Secretary General.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is advised by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht that this recommendation is accepted and work on the post project review of the Galway Art House Cinema project will commence in quarter one of 2019 and will be delivered within a six month timeframe.

The Minister is further advised that this timeframe is determined by the need to have adequate operational data available for the analysis in accordance with the Public Spending Code which provides that such reviews should be undertaken once sufficient time has elapsed to allow the project to be properly evaluated with sufficient evidence of the flow of benefits/costs from it.

Recommendation B.27
The business case for the relocation of Foras na Gaeilge to its new headquarters on Amiens Street identified the purchase of a building as the better financial option, but this option was not pursued. Ongoing rental costs will result in significant financial loss to the State in the long term. The Committee recommends that the Department pursues such options fully in the future, and that capital support be made available where the purchase of a building is the most cost effective solution.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is advised by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht that this recommendation is noted.

The Office of Public Works is responsible for the management and maintenance of the State's property portfolio and as such, the consideration of the purchase of a building is a matter more appropriate to that Office. Should such a scenario arise in the future where the purchase of a building could be considered, the Department will discuss the matter with OPW.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC EXPENDITURE AND REFORM

Recommendation B.28
Fiscal reporting is fragmented. There is no report that gives a complete picture of the public sector's net worth. This lack of clarity makes it difficult to follow the flow of public funds, and impedes accountability. The Committee recommends that the Department prioritises the production of a consolidated central government financial statement.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform accepts this recommendation.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has requested support from European Commission under the Structural Reform Support Programme (SRSP) to advance central Government financial reporting reforms. The OECD have been commissioned to conduct an assessment of the central Government Accounting Framework and to identify a road map for implementation of financial reporting reforms. The OECD review will include a gap analysis between the central Government existing accounting framework and international best practice and accounting standards.

The purpose of the review is to modernize central government financial reporting and to examine the feasibility of a transition from cash to accrual accounting for central Government Departments and Offices. As part of the development of the road map we will include the production of a consolidated central government financial statement which would provide a comprehensive report of overall central Government income and expenditure.

Recommendation B.29
Harmonising accounting practices across public bodies would allow for increased clarity, transparency, and coherence in government accounting. The Committee recommends that the Department brings forward proposals to improve co-ordination in government accounting.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform accepts this recommendation.

As set out in the response to recommendation B28 the OECD have been commissioned to conduct an assessment of the central Government Accounting Framework and to identify a road map for implementation of financial reporting reforms. Part of this review will include an examination of the accounting practices across Government Departments and Offices and recommendations as to how the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform could harmonise accounting practices across Government Departments and Offices.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

Recommendation B.30
Established macroeconomic indicators have become unreliable in the Irish context. The distorted picture they provide overstates debt sustainability, and is costing the State hundreds of millions of euro each year in EU budget contributions. The Committee recommends that the Minister continues to pursue a legal basis for the adoption of alternative economic indicators in the State's reporting at EU level. The Minister should endeavour to make progress on the issue sooner than the two to three year timeframe indicated by the Secretary General of the Department of Finance. This issue should also be highlighted in the context of the potential increase in Ireland's EU budget contributions in the aftermath of Brexit.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform notes this recommendation. The Committee will be aware, notwithstanding statistical innovations, Ireland's legal obligations (in the area of fiscal rules, for instance and indeed, in relation to Ireland's EU Budget contributions) are assessed on the internationally-agreed methodologies and there is little prospect of any change to this in the immediate future. Having said this the Department of Finance would point out the following:

- National contributions to the EU budget are outlined in detail in the Own Resources Decision (ORD) 2014 which was adopted by all 28 EU Member States. The largest part of those contributions come through the element assessed on the basis of Gross National Income (GNI) from all Member States. Any changes to the ORD would need the consent of all Member States. [As referenced elsewhere, GNI is defined within the European System of National Accounts 2010 (ESA 2010) while GNI* is purely a domestic measure of economic activity which is not defined in ESA 2010]. In May 2018 the Commission released its proposal for the next Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF), including proposals for changing Own Resources. The Minister for Finance will consider any changes to Own Resources in the context of these negotiations – but it is not expected that the measure for assessing the GNI based contribution will form part of these discussions.
- Similarly, in relation to the fiscal rules, compliance with the *Stability and Growth Pact* is assessed on the basis of GDP which is prepared in accordance with the European System of National Account standard (ESA 2010). There is no legal basis for GNI* as it is purely a domestic measure which is not defined in the European System of Accounts (ESA 2010).

- The Department of Finance will continue to use GNI* for domestic purposes as it is a more appropriate indicator to assess fiscal sustainability. The Department will also continue to include assessments of debt sustainability on the basis of GNI* in Ireland's Draft Budgetary Plan and Stability Programme Update which are submitted annually to the European Commission.
- While the fiscal rules will continue to be assessed using GDP, the Commission also acknowledge, in their assessment of Ireland's 2018 Stability Programme, that GNI* more accurately reflects the income standards of Irish residents and that public debt sustainability also needs to be assessed against complimentary indicators, such as debt-to-GNI*.
- In relation to the harmonised methodology for calculating potential output, a key element in assessing compliance with the fiscal rules, the Department of Finance will continue to seek amendments to this methodology as appropriate, though the relevant channels, to better reflect the unique features of the Irish economy.

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Recommendation B.31
€3.89 million of public funds was lost on the lease of a building on Wolfe Tone Street in Dublin by the Probation Service. It was never occupied and provided no benefit whatsoever to the taxpayer. On the basis of the evidence presented to the Committee, the Chief State Solicitor's Office complete reliance on established practice, and failure to take action when it was made aware of the expiration of planning permission are the primary causes of the loss. The Committee recommends that the Chief State Solicitor's Office ensures its oversight mechanisms are sufficient to prevent reoccurrence of this unacceptable waste of taxpayers' money.

The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform is informed that the Chief State Solicitor's Office accepts this recommendation.

The Minister is further informed by that Office that additional oversight measures were introduced in 2014 to mitigate risk in this area. These measures comprised the introduction in the State Property Division of a Planning Protocol, providing for additional managerial oversight of consideration of Architects' Opinions on Compliance, together with the inclusion of this Protocol in the Division's Risk Identification Document.

Recommendation B.32

When asked to provide detail on its role in the loss of €3.89 million of public funds, the Chief State Solicitor's Office cited "legal professional privilege." This prevented the Committee fully scrutinising the matter. The Committee recommends that the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform examines barriers presented by claims of legal professional privilege that might prevent full accountability for the use of public funds.

The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform accepts this recommendation.

The Department of Public Expenditure and Reform will commence a process with relevant law officers to examine how legal professional privilege will be protected in future in a manner which is, so far as possible, consistent with the accountability role of the PAC. The Minister is informed that the AGO/CSSO have committed to assisting with this task as appropriate, and look forward to early engagement with a view to progressing the matter with the Department.

Recommendation B.33

The Toland Report's examination of the functionality of the Department of Justice and Equality was carried out by an Independent Review Group. The Group offered to review the implementation of the report's recommendations but this offer was not availed of. The Group was ideally placed to monitor the recommendations and provide advice and assistance in their implementation, and the offer should have been availed of.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform has been informed by the Department of Justice and Equality that it accepts the view of the Committee on this matter.

The Minister has been further informed by that Department of Justice and Equality that following publication of the Toland Report in 2014, the Department of Justice and Equality developed a Programme for Change and a delivery plan to implement the recommendations following that review. Considerable progress was made on the delivery of that Programme, including but not limited to, reforming the organisational culture, leadership and management of the Department. Implementation of these recommendations was externally reviewed in 2017 and addressed most recently by the Effectiveness and Renewal Group in its first report published in July 2018.

The Toland Group had stated in its Report that, "The Review Group is prepared to meet twice yearly, if required by the Minister, over the next two years to review progress made in implementing these recommendations." As part of the engagement process with key stakeholders the then Minister Frances Fitzgerald hosted a roundtable meeting with all of the

Justice and Equality organisations in November 2014 in which Mr. Kevin Toland and some other group members participated.

Over the past three years progress on implementation has been monitored regularly by the Minister as well as by the Department's Management Board and by its independent Audit Committee. A progress report was sent to the Justice Committee in December 2015 with the Committee acknowledging the "significant progress" which had been made to that point in implementing the report. The Department contracted management consultants in 2017 to do a stocktake of progress on implementation to date and assist the Department's Management Board in prioritising further reform measures for the next three years.

The Effectiveness and Renewal Group (ERG) appointed by the Taoiseach at the end of 2017, reported to Government in July 2018 and the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform has been informed by the Department of Justice and Equality that it is working with the ERG to implement the recommendations set out in that Report.

Recommendation B.34
There were significant governance failures relating to the three ICT projects undertaken by the Department of Justice and Equality on behalf of agencies under its remit. The Department has taken a number of steps to address these failures, and the Committee recommends that the Department monitors and follows through on the changes to ensure the mistakes are not repeated.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform has been informed by the Department of Justice and Equality that it accepts the Committee's recommendations. The Department has revised the Terms of Reference of the ICT Project Governance Group considerably to strengthen its role and has expanded the membership of that Group to include external subject matter experts. The Department has also implemented a more structured approach to business case approval and ongoing project management. Detailed business case templates have been developed and increased project management training has been carried out throughout the ICT division.

In addition, the Department of Justice and Equality is setting up a separate Project and Portfolio management process as part of a new Governance Application that will review every inflight project on a monthly basis, in detail, from a delivery and financial perspective and will report directly to the Governance Group meetings. Project and Portfolio management ensures a more formal approach to the drafting of business cases and the approval of these by an expanded Governance Group. The business cases must have clarity over responsibilities and deliverables prior to approval. For cases that are approved, the Governance Group reviews the current list of active projects and any that are deviating from the scheduled delivery criteria for either cost or timelines are followed up on. This review process is currently being expanded to ensure more frequent and detailed reporting by ICT division with all project managers. A detailed dashboard will subsequently be reported at each governance group meeting.

The ICT Governance Group which is chaired by the Assistant Secretary for Corporate Services and Group Internal Audit will ensure that the all the relevant C&AG recommendations are followed up on and implemented.

THE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS UNIT AND THE DEPARTMENT OF THE TAOISEACH

Recommendation B.35

There is a legitimate need to rationalise and streamline government communications in order to avoid duplication, ensure a whole of government perspective, and safeguard public funds. The Committee recommends that this process should proceed in the manner outlined by the Secretary General of the Department of the Taoiseach in his review of the operation of the Strategic Communications Unit.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Department of the Taoiseach that this recommendation is accepted.

The Minister is further informed by that Department that:

- The newly reformed Government Information Service (GIS) is now in place as per the recommendation of the Secretary General in his review of the operation of the Strategic Communications Unit.
- This section is responsible for the co-ordination of the communications reform programme across Government to ensure value for money, professionalization and modernisation in Government communications activity.
- This section is now engaged in a number of activities in this regard, including the following:
    - Providing central communications support services for other Departments
    - Implementing efficiency measures
    - Continuing to implement the unified Government of Ireland identity programme
    - Working in partnership with the Office of the Government Chief Information Officer (OGCIO) to migrate Department websites to a single web portal (gov.ie).
    - Building Communications capacity, skills and professionalization across Government Departments.
- This programme of work is part of the Civil Service Renewal Programme and is therefore overseen by the Civil Service Management Board (CSMB). An Assistant

Secretary Delivery Team, comprising representatives across Government Departments, is in place to oversee the implementation of the programme.

Recommendation B.36
Had the Strategic Communications Unit retained final editorial control, or 'sign off', of the Project 2040 advertorials, much of the associated controversy might have been avoided. The Committee recommends that public bodies should always ensure that they retain the right to sign off on content paid for by the State, so that they can ensure that public funds are spent on content that is accurate and unbiased.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Department of the Taoiseach that this recommendation is accepted.

The Minister is further informed by that Department that the following guidelines concerning paid content are now in place and are being rolled out through the governance structure for the communications reform programme:

(1) Any sponsored or paid-for feature articles should continue to be clearly identifiable. This is best done by including the Government of Ireland (Rialtas na hEireann) logo and they should state clearly that the copy is 'advertorial', 'advertisement', 'sponsored' or a 'commercial feature'

(2) Where media partnerships or agencies (third parties) are used, final editorial control or 'sign-off' must be by the relevant Department

(3) Should anyone be interviewed for an advertorial or infomercial, they should be informed of the purpose and their permission sought

(4) Politicians and public representatives should not feature in any paid-for content by Government other than relevant office-holders (Ministers).

RAIDIÓ TEILIFÍS ÉIREANN (RTÉ)

Recommendation B.37
The level of TV license evasion (15% in 2016) is contributing to RTÉ's difficulties in delivering on its obligations as a public service broadcaster. It is also endangering the development of creative Irish talent, and associated independent industries. The Committee recommends that the current television licensing system is reviewed as a matter of urgency with a view to decreasing evasion rates.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment that this recommendation is accepted. Government approval was received on 9th May 2017 to draft a number of legislative amendments to the Broadcasting Act 2009, including amendments relating to the collection of the TV licence fee. The proposed amendments have been considered under pre-legislative scrutiny by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment and are currently being considered by both the Department and the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel in the drafting process.

At the Minister's request, the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Communications, Climate Action and Environment also examined the issue of the Future Funding of Public Service Broadcasting and the Committee published their report on 28th November 2017. Following consideration of the recommendations made in this report, Government approval was received on 24th July 2018 to establish a Working Group to examine possible options to reform the collection of the TV Licence fee.

The Working Group will consider a number of options for the reform of TV licence fee collection including collection of the licence fee by the Revenue Commissioners; contracting externally for licence fee collection as provided for in the Broadcasting Amendment Bill; and the introduction of different categories of licence fees for the business sector. The Working Group will also consider the merit of a Broadcasting Charge given the changing nature of media consumption. It is intended that the group will report by Q1 2019 and its recommendations will be brought to Government at that stage.

Recommendation B.38

The Eversheds Sutherland report into the use of contracts for services by RTÉ has recommended that RTÉ introduce a clear policy and guidelines regarding the use of contracts for services, and that it reviews 157 of the 433 contracts examined by Eversheds Sutherland. The Committee welcomes the fact that RTÉ has accepted the report's recommendations, and it is the intention of the Committee to seek updates on their implementation.

The Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform is informed by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment that it notes that the Committee welcomes the fact that RTÉ has accepted the recommendations made in the Eversheds Sutherland Report and that they intend to seek updates from RTÉ on the implementation of these recommendations.

Given under the Official Seal of the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform on this the 24th day of October, 2018.

L.S.

Robert Watt

Robert Watt

Secretary General

Department of Public Expenditure and Reform