

Minutes of Irish Fiscal Advisory Council (IFAC) Meeting

ESRI Boardroom (5th floor),
9:00am–3:30pm, Friday 13th July 2018

Present

- Mr Seamus Coffey (Chairperson)
- Mr Sebastian Barnes
- Dr Íde Kearney
- Mr Michael G. Tutty
- Dr Martina Lawless

Attending

- Mr Eddie Casey
- Mr Niall Conroy
- Mr Alan Dalton (for item N^o 1)
- Ms Kate Ivory
- Ms Ainhoa Osés Arranz
- Mr Kevin Timoney
- Ms Ciara Reid (for items N^o 2–9)
- Ms Jigisha Verma (for items N^o 2–9)

Proceedings

1. Admin/Financial

- The Council **approved the minutes** of the previous meeting (**13th–14th June** 2018). Michael **proposed** and Sebastian **seconded**.
- The Council **approved the minutes** of their conference call on **29th March**, in which they reviewed the effectiveness of the internal controls for 2017. Michael **proposed** and Sebastian **seconded**.
- **Matters arising:** none.
- The Council reviewed their **Service Level Agreement** with the ESRI. The ESRI have proposed a new cost basis for the agreement. The Council reviewed comparable costs for the necessary services (office space, accounting, HR advice, and IT support) and feel they have a strong case for procuring those services in one bundle, and consider the current arrangement sensible. The Council

asked the Secretariat to continue negotiating this agreement.

- The **Council approved the draft Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2017** subject to no material changes. The Council asked the Secretariat to reword the text about the weakness in internal control to clarify that the weakness is the lack of documenting decisions (the Council regularly review the services and their associated costs), and not the procurement of those services. The Secretariat will email any further changes to the Council.
- The **Council approved the draft Annual Report for 2017** subject to no material changes. The Secretariat will email any further changes to the Council.
- The Council considered the letter from the Department of the Taoiseach to all Secretaries General in February 2018 regarding the Reform of Government Strategic Communications. The Council are happy for the **Gov.ie** website to continue linking to the Council's website. The Council feel that their work falls outside the scope of the Reform of Government Strategic Communications, and so wish to keep their website separate from the Gov.ie website, and keep their identity distinct from the proposed single unified identity. The Council should write to the Department of the Taoiseach to explain this decision.
- Standing items:
 - The Council reviewed the **Purchases and Receipts Book** (June 2018).
 - The Council reviewed the **Management Accounts** (Q2 2018).
 - **Recruitment:** The Council will need to recruit a new Research Assistant to fill a soon-to-be vacated existing Research Assistant position. The two summer internships have begun.

- The Council received three **Parliamentary Questions** since the last meeting.
- The Council received no **Freedom of Information** requests since the last meeting.
- The Council discussed item Nº 3 (Governance and Structure) from their **Risk Register**. The Secretariat will look into using the Office of Government Procurement's contract for Travel Management Services to free up admin resources. The Council also recommended selecting a single, reasonably-priced hotel for members to use, instead of using admin resources to regularly compare hotels for lower prices. (Only two members of the Council will need accommodation in Dublin for the remaining meetings in 2018.) The Secretariat will contact the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) about the development of their draft mandate.
- The Council discussed **recent meetings**:
 - Seamus presented at the ESRI's "Budget Perspectives 2018" conference on 9th June.
 - Seamus attended the third International Conference of Councils on Economic Policy on 22nd June in The Hague.
 - Seamus participated in the 2018 National Economic Dialogue on 27th–28th June in Dublin Castle.
 - Seamus attended the 10th Annual Meeting of the OECD Network of Parliamentary Budget Officials and Independent Fiscal Institutions in Seoul on 2nd–4th July. Seamus also attended a meeting of the EU Network of Independent Fiscal Institutions (EUNIFI) while there.
 - Eddie presented at the European Commission DG Economic and Financial Affairs Stakeholders' Workshop on the Suitability Review of the

Budgetary Frameworks Directive on 4th July
in Brussels.

- The Secretariat met with staff at the Office of Pearse Doherty TD and Jonathan O'Brien TD to discuss fiscal space calculations.
- The Council discussed **forthcoming meetings**:
 - Seamus will attend the CSO's National Accounts event on 19th July.

2. Long-Term Sustainability Report Update

- The Council discussed this report.

3. COSMO Work

- The Council discussed their work with COSMO (Core Structural Model of the Irish Economy).

4. Multipliers Paper

- The Council discussed this paper.

5. Nowcasting & Data Revisions Paper

- The Council discussed this paper.

6. Macroeconomic Imbalance Indicators Summary

- The Council discussed potential changes to how these indicators are presented in its reports.

7. SES Review and Pre-Budget Statement Plans

- The Council discussed these plans.

8. Update on Other Summer Work

- The Council discussed their work.

9. AOB

None.

Signed:

Seamus Coffey (Chairperson)