

Minutes of Irish Fiscal Advisory Council Meeting (24th July 2023)

Online

9.00am-12.30pm, Monday 24th July 2023

Present

Dr Michael McMahon (Acting Chair)

Ms Dawn Holland

Dr Adele Bergin

Mr Alessandro Giustiniani

Attending

Dr Eddie Casey

Mr Kevin Timoney

Mr Niall Conroy

Mr Killian Carroll

Mr Brian Cronin

Ms Karen Bonner

Mr Cian Hennigan

Ms Áine Stokes

Proceedings

Michael McMahon was congratulated on his Ministerial appointment as Acting Chairperson of the Fiscal Council.

1. Admin/Financial

- **Declarations of interest:**

There were no declarations of interest.

- Noting that the Council meeting was re-scheduled to 24 July, the Council **approved the minutes** of the meeting of the Council held on 21st and 22nd June 2023. Adele proposed and Dawn seconded them.

- **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

- **For Approval**

The Council reviewed and approved for signature by the Chairperson the new CEPS EU IFI Agreement, effective 1 January 2024, in respect of an annual fee for the Fiscal

Council of €5,745 in 2024 and 2025. This is an updated multi-party agreement, in respect of the joint funding of a Brussels based Secretariat between CEPS and the EU IFI Network, with each member country paying a fee relative to its size and importance.

- **Standing items:**

- **Purchases and Receipts book:** The Council reviewed the Purchases and Receipts book for June 2023.

- **Recruitment Update:**

Fee structure payment arrangements are being finalised with the University and the student in respect of the partial PhD Scholarship Programme.

- The Council received six **Parliamentary Questions** since the last meeting.

- **FOI Update:** The Council received two FOI requests since the last meeting.

- **Audit and Risk Committee Minutes**

Dawn, Chairperson of the A&RC, reported on the meeting held on 13 July 2023.

- The A&RC concluded its annual Self-Evaluation for 2022 which identified three key areas of focus – to annually self-evaluate; potential training needs and succession planning;
- Reviewed and recommend to the Council the Management Accounts for Q2 2023;
- Four policies were reviewed and are recommended to the Council and were agreed and actioned by the Council as follows:

Policy on Gifts and Hospitality - the Council reviewed and agreed the unchanged policy;

Social Media Policy – the Council reviewed and agreed and agreed the unchanged policy;

Process for Setting Strategy – the Council reviewed and agreed the unchanged policy;

Media Relations Policy – the Council discussed this policy under agenda item 2.

- The A&RC reviewed and discussed Section 3 (Financial) of the Risk Register and recommend expanding 3.1 current controls to include A&RC meetings and removing a duplication in 3.4.
- The external C&AG audit and internal Mazars audit are ongoing and will be reported on when concluded at a future meeting.
- The Council agreed to re-appoint Dawn Holland as a Member and Chairperson of the A&RC for the period 16th July 2023 to 31st December 2023 to coincide with the end of her Council term.
- **Management Accounts:** The management accounts for Q2 (April – June 2023) as reviewed and recommended by the A&RC, were reviewed and approved by the Council.
- The Council reviewed Section 3 (Financial) of the **Risk Register** and agreed the updates as recommended by the A&RC.
- **Info Security/GDPR:** All devices have been migrated to an enhanced O365 infrastructure.
- **EU IFIs**
An update was provided in respect of recent EU IFI activity.
- **Recent and Forthcoming Meetings:**
Recent:
 - Oireachtas appearance before the Joint Committee on Budgetary Oversight on 22 June
 - There were presentations by Kevin on GNI* and Eddie on MDD at the Council’s hybrid seminar Demystifying Ireland's national accounts on 27 June

- Eddie presented at the Department of Finance’s “Annual Policy Conference” on 11 July
- Audit and Risk Committee meeting on 13 July

Forthcoming:

- The proposed date for the Council appearance before the Oireachtas Budgetary Oversight Committee is 20 September 2023 @ 5.30pm.
- Forthcoming Council meetings 2023: 22 August (remote @ 9am); and the draft September dates regarding the endorsement process include 12 (benchmark call), 22 (remote) and 26 (in person with representatives from the Department of Finance).
- Forthcoming Audit and Risk Committee meeting 2023 @ 9.30am: late-August/early-September to coincide with completion of audits and 15 November.

Communications

An update was provided in respect of recent communication activity. Items of discussion included Michael McMahon’s Irish Times opinion piece and Business Post article. The timings of potential communication surrounding the Council’s Pre-Budget Statement were discussed.

2. [Structural aspects of how Council works](#)

An update was provided on the OECD review recommendations implementation plan particularly those requiring legislation change. There has been ongoing communication with the Department in this regard, with additional information requested in respect of staffing grades and resourcing the position of chair on an up to half time basis to facilitate drafting the heads of bills.

The Council discussed the Media Policy and agreed to task the A&RC to look at potential revisions regarding possibly defining request types to include setting

parameters and streamlining the approval process for certain scenarios in respect of media requests and responses.

The Council discussed and suggested that when setting out the annual budget that key events, conferences, seminars and potential attendees (Council/Secretariat) are set out so that there is an adequate budget provision for both Council travel and Secretariat travel.

3. Summer Work Plans

An update was provided in respect of Summer Work Plans.

The 'Demystifying Ireland's national income: a bottom-up analysis of GNI* and productivity' working paper was published to coincide with the Council's hybrid seminar on 27 June. The seminar 'Demystifying Ireland's national accounts: a seminar on GNI* and MDD' was an initiative of and arranged by Kevin, who also presented on the GNI* paper and included a presentation by Eddie on the MDD analytical note. The seminar was very well attended both in person and online.

Eddie and Killian provided an update on the climate paper which is well progressed with plans to issue a draft for review shortly.

It is planned to shortly publish the 2020 Summer Internship General Government Universe project.

Niall presented on an approach in respect of disaggregating tax elasticities.

Áine and Cian presented on the Summer Internship project developing output on the health section for future updates of the Council's Long-term Sustainability Report.

4. Macro Fiscal Update

The Secretariat gave a macro-fiscal update presentation, which was reviewed and discussed by the Council. The

Council discussed proposed content and timelines for the Pre-Budget Statement.

5. AOB

There was no other business.

The Council will meet remotely on Tuesday 22 August (09:00-13:00).