

Minutes of Irish Fiscal Advisory Council Meeting (23rd September 2024)

ESRI Ground Floor Conference Room
09.00am-2.00pm, Monday 23rd September 2024

Present

Mr Seamus Coffey (Chairperson)
Dr Michael McMahon
Dr Adele Bergin
Mr Alessandro Giustiniani
Prof Stephen Millard

Attending

Dr Eddie Casey
Mr Niall Conroy
Mr Killian Carroll
Mr Brian Cronin
Ms Karen Bonner

Attending (for item N^o 2 only)

Representatives Department of Finance,
Economic and Budget Division

Proceedings

Seamus Coffey was congratulated on his Ministerial appointment on 22 August as a Member of the Fiscal Council and as the Council Chairperson, effective 23 August, and warmly welcomed to the meeting.

Thanks were expressed to Michael McMahon who served as Acting Chairperson since 1 July 2023.

- **Declarations of interest:**

There were no declarations of interest

1. Pre-Endorsement

The Council prepared for the forthcoming endorsement discussion. The Council discussed the draft Budget 2025 forecasts received from the Department of Finance. As part of its decision-making process, it compared the Department's macroeconomic forecasts to the Council's Benchmark projections and other agencies forecasts; it

considered the methodology used to produce the forecasts; and it reviewed past forecast errors for evidence of systematic bias.

2. Department of Finance presents its forecasts

John McCarthy, Chief Economist/Assistant Secretary General and colleague(s) from Department of Finance's Economic and Budget Division joined the meeting and presented its draft Budget 2025 forecasts and responded to questions raised by the Council. The Council thanked the Department of Finance representatives who then left the meeting.

3. Council discussion on endorsement decision

The Council held further discussions related to the Department of Finance's forecasts in the context of a decision regarding endorsement. In this regard, the Council drafted the text for the endorsement letter which it agreed and approved.

The Council is satisfied that the final forecasts are within an endorsable range, taking into account the methodologies used and the plausibility of the judgements made. The Council endorsed as within the range of appropriate forecasts the set of macroeconomic projections prepared by the Department of Finance for Budget 2025 covering the years 2024 and 2025

The Council will discuss the endorsement process and assess the macroeconomic projections in its forthcoming FAR.

4. Flash Release for Budget Day

The Council discussed plans for its release of a visual summary of Budget 2025 shortly after the publication of the budget.

5. Upcoming Communications Plans

The timings of potential upcoming communication opportunities were discussed. The Council's Budget Flash Release will be published on budget day 1 October with the release forming the main media messaging and points of discussion. In addition, it is planned to finalise

the Infrastructure paper and Corporation Tax work for publication in the autumn. The new "Budgetary Resources" Calculator is currently being finalised with a view to having this online tool available to assist in framing discussion around the budgetary resources available over a defined period.

6. The Admin/Financial

- The Council **approved the minutes** of the meeting of the Council held on 2 August 2024. Stephen proposed and Adele seconded them.

- **Matters arising**

It was noted that the 2023 Chairperson's Comprehensive Report and the 2023 Annual Report, to include the Audited Financial Statements, were submitted to the Department.

- **For approval**

The Council agreed to appoint Michael McMahon as Vice-Chairperson to the Council effective 23 September 2024.

Thanks were expressed to Adele Bergin who served as Vice-Chairperson since 1 July 2023.

- **Standing items:**

- **Purchases and Receipts book:** The Council reviewed the Purchases and Receipts book August 2024
- **Recruitment Update:** The recruitment campaign in respect of an Economist (to fill the recent Research Assistant vacancy) commenced on 31 July and ran until 23 August. Arrangements are currently being finalised with the preferred candidate.
- The next **Audit & Risk Committee** (A&RC) meeting is scheduled for 17 October 2024.
- **Management Accounts:** The management accounts for Q3 2024 will be available in mid-October.
- The A&RC will review further section(s) of the **Risk Register** at its next meeting for subsequent review by the Council.

- The Council received one **Parliamentary Question** since the last meeting.
- **AIE/FOI Update:** The Council received no AIE requests since the last meeting. The Council received two FOI requests since the last meeting.
- **Info Security/GDPR:** There were no matters to report.
- **EU IFIs**
An update was provided in respect of recent EU IFI activity.
- **Recent and Forthcoming Meetings:**
 - Recent:**
 - Council appearance before the Oireachtas Budgetary Oversight Committee 18 September
 - Forthcoming:**
 - Budget Day: 1 October
 - Forthcoming Council meetings 2023 @ 9.00am: 24 October, FAR calls 4 November and a tentative date of 2 December for an in-person meeting.
 - Forthcoming Audit and Risk Committee meetings 2024 @ 9.30am: 17 October
- An update was provided in respect of recent **communication** activity.

7. AOB

There was no other business. The next meeting of the Council will take place on 24 October @ 9am.

Signed:

Seamus Coffey (Chairperson)

Dated: _____