

Minutes of Irish Fiscal Advisory Council Meeting (3rd March 2025)

Hybrid

2.00pm-4.00pm, Monday 3rd March 2025

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 Nara Gómez

Ms Karen Bonner

Proceedings

1. Admin/Financial

- **Declarations of interest:**

There were no declarations of interest

- The Council **approved the minutes** of the meeting of the Council held on 29 January 2025. Michael proposed and Stephen seconded them.

- **Matters arising**

There were no matters arising.

- **Update on OECD recommendations**

The Department has reverted with an indexing approach to the Council's funding structure as part of draft legislation regarding proposed amendments to the Fiscal Responsibility Act which is progressing. The Council reviewed and welcomes the Department's new approach to indexation and to the contingency.

- **For approval**

The Council reviewed and approved the first draft of its **2024 Annual Report** for submission to the C&AG at audit stage. A finalised copy will be reviewed and approved when the audit is concluded.

- **Standing items:**

- The A&RC meeting held on 18 February 2025 was reported on as follows:-
 - Reviewed the Charter and TORs of the A&RC, as updated by the Council in December 2024, and recommend the unchanged document which was reviewed and agreed by the Council.
 - The summary of the A&RC board evaluation was discussed outlining some potential improvements, to include a membership rotation and an update will be provided to the Council at one of its future meetings.
 - Forvis Mazars attended and presented to the A&RC on the annual **Internal Audit Report** on the Systems of Internal Control (SIFC) and Internal Financial Control (IFC). Overall the audit findings indicate a substantial level of assurance with no finding in respect of the SIFC and no observations raised in respect of the high-level comprehensive IFC questionnaire.

The Council relies on the internal audit report(s) in respect of assurance regarding the systems of both internal control and financial control. It was noted that the current contract with Mazars expires mid-year and it was agreed to commence the process in respect of Procurement for Internal Audit services via the OGP shortly.

- The A&RC reviewed the **2024 draft unaudited Financial Statements** including the draft Governance Statement and the draft Statement on Internal Control (SIC) for the year ended 31st December 2024 and recommended these to the

Council. The Council, at its meeting on 29 January 2025, agreed to subsequently review and approve the 2024 draft unaudited financial statements, to include the draft Governance Statement and draft SIC, prior to its next scheduled meeting as it is a requirement that these are submitted to the C&AG by no later than 28 February 2025. It was noted that these were circulated to the Council on 24 February 2025 and were reviewed and approved for submission to the C&AG by the deadline.

- The A&RC also reviewed the **Risk Policy** and recommend the unchanged document, which was reviewed and agreed by the Council.
- Section 1 (Reputation and Role) of the **Risk Register** was reviewed and updates recommended to 1.1 and 1.3 regarding current controls and mitigating actions in place to reflect the actual practice and process regarding proof reading are recommended, which was reviewed and agreed by the Council.
- Seven **policies** were reviewed and are recommended to the Council and were agreed and actioned by the Council as follows:

Anti-Fraud Policy - the Council reviewed and agreed the changed policy.

Banking Policy - the Council reviewed and agreed the changed policy.

Fixed Assets Policy - the Council reviewed and agreed the unchanged policy.

Income Policy - the Council reviewed and agreed the unchanged policy.

Payment Policy – the Council reviewed and agreed the changed policy, with updates in respect of Circular 04/2025 (domestic subsistence increases) and the Appendix (travel and subsistence rates).

Procurement Policy – the Council reviewed and agreed the changed policy.

Travel Policy – the Council reviewed and agreed the changed policy, with updates in respect of Circular 04/2025 and the Appendix (travel and subsistence rates).

- The next meeting of the A&RC is scheduled for 1 May 2025.
- The Q1 2025 **Management Accounts** will be available in mid-April.
- The Council received twelve **Parliamentary Questions** since the last meeting.
- **AIE/FOI Update:** The Council received no AIE requests since the last meeting. The Council received no FOI requests since the last meeting.
- **Info Security/GDPR:** The Secretariat Wellbeing week took place 4-7 Feb. This included the Annual workshop on risks, cyber security and climate action and the NTA presentation of smarter travel mark silver certification.
- **Recruitment Update:** The Summer Internship Programme 2025 recruitment campaign commenced on 17 February with complete applications required on or before 3 March.
- **Purchases and Receipts book:** The Council reviewed the Purchases and Receipts book January 2025.
- **EU IFIs**
An update was provided in respect of EU IFI activity. Niall attended and presented at the EU IFI Network meeting and attended the EFC alternates meeting in Brussels on 18-19 February.
- **Recent and Forthcoming Meetings:**
Recent:
 - Niall presented at an EU IFI Network meeting and attending EFC alternates meeting: Brussels 18-19 Feb 2025.

- 2025 Path for the Public Finances Conference: Thu 20 Feb

Forthcoming:

- Forthcoming Council meetings 2025: endorsement meeting 27 March @ 9am.
- Forthcoming Audit and Risk Committee meetings 2025 @ 9.30am: 1 May

2. Communications update

The Council reviewed its Annual Path for the Public Finances Conference: Bridging gaps and building for our future held in the RIA on 20 February which covered the topic of addressing infrastructure deficits.

The Council held a joint hybrid press conference, which was well attended, in advance of the release on 4 March of a collaborative publication with the Climate Change Advisory Council regarding Ireland's climate action and the potential costs of missing targets.

3. Next and Ongoing Work

A Research Strategy was outlined which aims to ensure a consistent approach is applied, aligning with the Council's research priorities, when the Secretariat is considering undertaking new analysis, modelling or research ideas, to include a checklist and pitching potential work.

An update was provided on current work plans to include: A draft of the BEPS paper is almost finalised and will be circulated for review with plans to publish by the end of March. It is hoped to present on progress on the VAT pass-through paper at a future Council meeting. A few considerations and steps have to be worked into the draft paper on Revenue and expenditure comparisons with a view to having a fuller draft later in the month. There are also plans for work on an updated climate paper.

The Summer Internship project will collaborate on part of the Council's next long-term sustainability report

exploring existing work in this space, and help commence new demographic and population projections.

The process surrounding the upcoming endorsement process to include the potential timings and key dates were outlined.

4. AOB

There was no other business. The Council will have a number of meetings in March as part of the endorsement process to include a benchmarks call 13 March, call 21 March and an in-person endorsement meeting with DFin attending on 27 March @ 9am.

Signed:

Seamus Coffey (Chairperson)

Dated: _____