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Lúnasa 2022

Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands

Report: Pre-Budget Submission to the
Department of Rural and Community Development

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- Charles Flanagan T.D., FG
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- Senator Mark Wall, LAB

Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands



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Independent
Cathaoirleach



Marc Ó Cathasaigh T.D.
Green Party



Éamon Ó Cuív T.D.
Fianna Fáil



Sen. Mark Wall
Labour

Cathaoirleachs Foreword



The Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands today publishes its Pre – Budget Submission to the Minister for Rural and Community Development to assist their deliberations during the negotiations for Budget 2023. The Committee publishes its report alongside a similar report submitted to the Minister for Social Protection. The Committee is of the opinion that Oireachtas Committees should have the ability to inform and partake in the pre – budget process and publishes this report to that effect.

During its investigation of the pre – budget, the Committee placed a public call for submissions. Many of the recommendations from the Pre – Budget submission 2021 are still relevant and the Committee felt that it was vital that these be brought forward to this pre – budget process. Based on this the Committee have made 20 recommendations and are committed to ensuring these are implemented to ensure the continued development of rural Ireland and local communities through Budget 2023.

The Joint Committee will continue to engage with both the Minister and the Department of Rural and Community Development and seek regular updates on the implementation of the recommendations set out in this report.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Denis Naughten", followed by a horizontal line.

Denis Naughten T.D.

Cathaoirleach

29 August 2022.

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Recommendations

Adequate and Sustainable Support for the Charitable and Voluntary Sector

1. The Committee recommends that The Wheel's multi – annual (three to five year) funding arrangements are established to facilitate and better enable long – term planning, assist effective staff recruitment and retention, and thereby deliver better and more sustainable services.
2. The Committee recommends funding for The Wheel's services and supports on a full – cost – recovery basis, to fund core costs, provide adequate employee remuneration, to train and develop staff, and make provision for pension contributions where appropriate.

Develop a Framework for Collaborative Working and provide Resources and Supports for Mergers

3. The Committee recommends that a dedicated fund of €2 million is provided for in Budget 2023 that is earmarked for mergers between organisations.

Local Improvement Scheme

4. The Committee recommends that the Department of Rural and Community Development increases funding for improving local infrastructure with regards to the Local Improvement Scheme, the Walks Scheme, the Mountain Access Scheme, and an expansion of the Elder Home Share.

Community Services Programme

5. The Committee recommends that an extra 100 places are provided through new projects under the Community Services Programme in 2023 with up to 25 projects being supported.

6. The Committee recommends the restoration of the refund from the Department of Rural and Community Development to schemes to pay for the full minimum wage and employers PRSI as pertained up until 2012.
7. The Committee recommends that an extra allowance be payable to schemes on the Islands to cover the difficulties of Community Service Programmes on islands earning other income.

Islands

8. The Committee recommends that €10 million be put in place annually to provide direct funding for major and minor capital development works on the islands as well as providing funding to co – finance or provide leverage funding with other State Bodies and local authorities in providing vital infrastructure on the islands. This would help islands overcome the delay in prioritising projects due to cost benefit analysis favouring projects on the mainland, this would include piers, roads, costal protection, water, telecoms, health, community, education, etc.,.
9. The Committee recommends that current funding for the Islands air and ferry services are increased by €1.5m to cover increased costs and develop new and improved services to the islands.
10. The Committee recommends that a new air service initially three days a week to Inisbofin is funded in Budget 2023, particularly as Inisbofin already has an airstrip.
11. The Committee recommends that increased funding is provided for Community Development Projects on the islands in Budget 2023.

Community Enhancement Fund

12. The Committee recommends that the Community Enhancement Fund is increased to €20 million to provide inter alia for the capital development of new and major refurbishment of existing community facilities around the country.

CLÁR

13. The Committee recommends that the CLÁR fund is increased by €10 million in Budget 2023 and continues to increase over the next four years so that it can make a significant impact on the capital deficits of infrastructure in CLÁR areas.

Rural Recreation

14. The Committee recommends that extra funding is provided for the continued expansion of the Walks Scheme.
15. The Committee recommends that after 14 years of a pilot scheme the Mountain Access Scheme to be extended throughout the state over the next four years and that funding be provided to do so.

LEADER

16. The Committee recommends that the new LEADER programme would commence forthwith.
17. The Committee recommends that an island based Local Action Group is established to administer the LEADER programme on the Country's off – shore islands.
18. The Committee recommends that grant aid on the islands for private individual projects increases from 50% to 85% and community projects from 75% to 85%.

Rural Regeneration and Development Fund

19. The Committee recommends that the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund is used as a vehicle to develop rail projects in rural areas.

Supporting and Connecting Communities

20. The Committee recommends that funding for Age Action groups and Mens and Womens Sheds should increase by €5 million.

Introduction

The Joint Committee on Social Protection, Community and Rural Development and the Islands (the Committee) publishes this pre-budget submission with the aim of informing and effecting the Budget 2023 process in a way that is beneficial for the State and its citizens.

In quarter two 2022, the Committee published a public call for submissions from interested individuals and organisations to inform its pre-budget scrutiny. The Committee received 0 submissions from interested parties. The Committee has published the following report based on its own knowledge and information received previously. This report is submitted to the Department of Community and Rural Development and the Committee has made 20 recommendations regarding Budget 2023.

Department of Rural and Community Development

In 2022 the Department of Rural and Community Development (DRCD) had an allocated budget of €378.6 million. The Department is responsible for Rural Development, Regional Improvement, the Charitable Sector and the Island Community. The Committee focused specifically on the following topics:

1. Adequate and Sustainable Support for the Charitable and Voluntary Sector,
2. The Cost of Compliance,
3. Comprehensively Resource new strategies for the community and voluntary sectors and Social Enterprise,
4. Implement the Recommendations of the Independent Review Group on the role of voluntary providers in publicly funded services,
5. Develop a framework for collaborative working and provide resources and supports for mergers,
6. Regional Job Creation,
7. Rural Enterprise,
8. Local Improvement Scheme,
9. Community Services Programme,
10. The Islands,
11. Community Enhancement Programme,
12. CLÁR,
13. Rural Recreation,
14. LEADER,
15. The Rural Regeneration and Development Fund,
16. Renewing Towns and Villages,
17. Supporting and Connecting Communities,
18. Tackling Rural Poverty and Isolation, and
19. Community Emergency Response Systems.

The recommendations in this report are based around the areas above and will be submitted to the Department of Rural and Community Development for consideration during discussions regarding Budget 2023.

The recommendations put forward in this report are based on the Pre – Budget Submission published by the Committee in 2022 as the Committee did not receive any submissions from interested parties for this process. Each recommendation brought forward from 2022 is still valid in 2023 and the Committee is of the opinion that the Department of Rural and Community Development should take these recommendations on board throughout their discussions regarding Budget 2023.

APPENDIX 1 – Terms of Reference

Scope and context of activities of Select Committees (DSO 94 and SSO 70)

DSO 94

- 1) The Dáil may appoint a Select Committee to consider and, if so permitted, to take evidence upon any Bill, Estimate or matter, and to report its opinion for the information and assistance of the Dáil. Such motion shall specifically state the orders of reference of the Committee, define the powers devolved upon it, fix the number of members to serve on it, state the quorum, and may appoint a date upon which the Committee shall report back to the Dáil.

- 2) It shall be an instruction to each Select Committee that –
 - a) It may only consider such matters, engage in such activities, exercise such powers and discharge such functions as are specifically authorised under its orders of reference and under Standing Orders;
 - b) Such matters, activities, powers and functions shall be relevant to, and shall arise only in the context of, the preparation of a report to the Dáil;
 - c) It shall not consider any matter which is being considered, or of which notice has been given of a proposal to consider, by the Joint Committee on Public Petitions in the exercise of its functions under Standing Order 125(1); and
 - d) It shall refrain from inquiring into in public session or publishing confidential information regarding any matter if so requested, for stated reasons given in writing, by –
 - i. A member of the Government or a Minister of State, or
 - ii. The principal office – holder of a state body within the responsibility of a Government Department or
 - iii. The principal officer – holder of a non – State body which is partly funded by the State,

Provided that the Committee may appeal any such request made to the Ceann Comhairle, whose decision shall be final.

- 3) It shall be an instruction to all Select Committees to which Bills are referred that they shall ensure that not more than two Select Committees shall meet to consider a Bill on any given day, unless the Dáil after due notice to the Business Committee by a Chairman of one of the Select Committees concerned, waives this instruction.

SSO 70

- 1) The Seanad may appoint a Select Committee to consider any Bill or matter and to report its opinion for the information and assistance of the Seanad and, in the case of a Bill, whether or not it has amended the Bill. Such motion shall specifically state the orders of reference of the Committee, define the powers devolved upon it, fix the number of members to serve on it, state the quorum thereof, and may appoint a date upon which the Committee shall report back to the Seanad.
- 2) It shall be an instruction to each Select Committee that –
 - a) It may only consider such matters, engage in such activities, exercise such powers and discharge such functions as are specifically authorised under its orders of reference and under Standing Orders;
 - b) Such matters, activities, powers and functions shall be relevant to, and shall arise only in the context of, the preparation of a report to the Seanad;
 - c) It shall not consider any matter which is being considered, or of which notice has been given of a proposal to consider, by the Joint Committee on Public Petitions in the exercise of its functions under Standing Order 108 (1); and
 - d) It shall refrain from inquiring into in public session or publishing confidential information regarding any matter if so requested, for stated reasons given in writing, by –

- i. A member of the Government or a Minister of State, or
- ii. The principal officeholder of a State body within the responsibility of a Government Department, or
- iii. The principal officeholder of a non-State body which is partly funded by the State,

Provided that the Committee may appeal any such request made to the Cathaoirleach, whose decision shall be final.

Functions of Departmental Select Committees (DSO 95 and SSO 71)

DSO 95

- 1) The Dáil may appoint a Departmental Select Committee to consider and, unless otherwise provided for in these Standing Orders or by order, to report to the Dáil on any matter relating to—
 - a) legislation, policy, governance, expenditure and administration of—
 - i. a Government Department, and
 - ii. State bodies within the responsibility of such Department, and
 - b) That performance of a non – State body in relation to an agreement for the provision of services that it has entered into with any such Government Department or State body.

- 2) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall also consider such other matters which –
 - a) Stand referred to the Committee by virtue of these Standing Orders or statute law, or
 - b) Shall be referred to the Committee by order of the Dáil.

- 3) The principal purpose of Committee consideration of matters of policy, governance, expenditure and administration under paragraph (1) shall be –
 - a) For the accountability of the relevant Minister or Minister of State, and
 - b) To assess the performance of the relevant Government Department or of a State body within the responsibility of the relevant Department, in delivering public services while achieving intended outcomes, including value for money.

- 4) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall not consider any matter relating to accounts audited by, or reports of, the Comptroller and Auditor General unless the Committee of Public Accounts –

- a) Consents to such consideration, or
 - b) Has reported on such accounts or reports.

- 5) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may be joined with a Select Committee appointed by Seanad Éireann to be and act as a Joint Committee for the purposes of paragraph (1) and such other purposes as may be specified in these Standing Orders or by order of the Dáil: provided that the Joint Committee shall not consider –
 - a) The Committee Stage of a Bill,
 - b) Estimates for Public Services, or
 - c) A proposal contained in a motion for the approval of an international agreement involving a charge upon public funds referred to the Committee by order of the Dáil.

- 6) Any report that the Joint Committee proposes to make shall, on adoption by the Joint Committee, be made to both Houses of the Oireachtas.

- 7) The Chairman of the Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall also be Chairman of the Joint Committee.

- 8) Where a Select Committee proposes to consider –
 - a) EU draft legislative acts standing referred to the Select Committee under Standing Order 133, including the compliance of such acts with the principle of subsidiarity,
 - b) Other proposals for EU legislation and related policy issues, including programmes, and guidelines prepared by the European Commission as a basis of possible legislative action,
 - c) Non-legislative documents published by any EU institution in relation to EU policy matters, or

- d) Matters listed for consideration on the agenda for meetings of the relevant Council (of Ministers) of the European Union and the outcome of such meetings,

The following may be notified accordingly and shall have the right to attend and take part in such consideration without having a right to move motions or amendments or the right to vote:

- i. Members of the European Parliament elected from constituencies in Ireland,
- ii. Members of the Irish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and
- iii. At the invitation of the Committee, other members of the European Parliament.

- 9) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may, in respect of any Ombudsman charged with oversight of public services within the policy remit of the relevant Department consider –

- a) Such motions relating to the appointment of an Ombudsman as may be referred to the Committee, and
- b) Such Ombudsman reports laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas as the Committee may select: Provided that the provisions of Standing Order 130 apply where the Select Committee has not considered the Ombudsman report, or a portion or portions thereof, within two months (excluding Christmas, Easter or summer recess periods) of the report being laid before either of both Houses of the Oireachtas.

SSO 71

- 1) The Seanad may appoint a Departmental Select Committee to consider and, unless otherwise provided for in these Standing Orders or by order, to report to the Seanad on any matter relating to –
 - a) Legislation, policy, governance, expenditure and administration of –
 - i. A Government Department, and
 - ii. State bodies within the responsibility of such Department, and
 - b) The performance of a non – State body in relation to an agreement for the provision of services that it has entered into with any such Government Department or State body.

- 2) A select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall also consider such other matters which –
 - a) Stand referred to the Committee by virtue of these Standing Orders or statute law, or
 - b) Shall be referred to the Committee by order of the Seanad.

- 3) The principal purpose of Committee consideration of matters of policy, governance expenditure and administration under paragraph (1) shall be –
 - a) For the accountability of the relevant Minister or Minister of State, and
 - b) To assess the performance of the relevant Department, in delivering public services while achieving intended outcomes, including value for money.

- 4) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order shall not consider any matter relating to accounts audited by, or reports of, the Comptroller and Auditor General unless the Committee of Public Accounts –
 - a) Consents to such consideration, or
 - b) Has reported on such accounts or reports

- 5) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may be joined with a Select Committee appointed by Dáil Éireann to be and act as a Joint Committee for the purposes of paragraph (1) and such other purposes as may be specified in these Standing Orders or by order of the Seanad: provided that the Joint Committee shall not consider –
 - a) The Committee Stage of a Bill,
 - b) Estimate for Public Services, or
 - c) A proposal contained in a motion for the approval of an international agreement involving a charge upon public funds referred to the Committee by order of the Dáil.
- 6) Any report that the Joint Committee proposes to make shall, on adoption by the Joint Committee, be made to both Houses of the Oireachtas.
- 7) The Chairman of a Joint Committee pursuant to this Standing Order shall be a member of Dáil Éireann.
- 8) Where a Select Committee proposes to consider –
 - a) EU draft legislative acts standing referred to the Select Committee under Standing Order 116, including the compliance of such acts with the principle of subsidiarity,
 - b) Other proposals for EU legislation and related policy issues, including programmes and guidelines prepared by the European Commission as a basis of possible legislative action,
 - c) Non-legislative documents published by any EU institution in relation to EU policy matters, or
 - d) Matters listed for consideration on the agenda for meetings of the relevant EC Council (of Ministers) of the European Union and the outcome of such meetings,

The following may be notified accordingly and shall have the right to attend and take part in such consideration without having a right to move motions or amendments or the right to vote:

- i. Members of the European Parliament elected from constituencies in Ireland,
- ii. Members of the Irish delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and
- iii. At the invitation of the Committee, other members of the European Parliament.

9) A Select Committee appointed pursuant to this Standing Order may, in respect of any Ombudsman charged with oversight of public services within the policy remit of the relevant Department consider –

- a) Such motions relating to the appointment of an Ombudsman as may be referred to the Committee, and
- b) Such Ombudsman reported laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas as the Committee may select: Provided that the provisions of Standing Order 113 apply where the Select Committee has not considered the Ombudsman report, or a portion or portions thereof, within two months (excluding Christmas, Easter or summer recess periods) of the report being laid before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas.

Powers of Select Committees (DSO 96 and SSO 72)

Unless the Dáil shall otherwise order, a Committee appointed pursuant to these Standing Orders shall have the following powers:

- 1) Power to invite and receive oral and written evidence and to print and publish from time to time –
 - a) Minutes of such evidence as was heard in public, and
 - b) Such evidence in writing as the Committee thinks fit;
- 2) Power to appoint sub-Committees and to refer to such sub-Committees any matter comprehended by its orders of reference and to delegate any of its powers to such sub-Committees, including power to report directly to the Dáil/Seanad;
- 3) Power to draft recommendations for legislative change and for new legislation;
- 4) In relation to any statutory instrument, including those laid or laid in draft before either or both Houses of the Oireachtas, power to –
 - a) Require any Government Department or other instrument-making authority concerned to –
 - i. Submit a memorandum to the Select Committee explaining the statutory instrument, or
 - ii. Attend a meeting of the Select Committee to explain any such statutory instrument: Provided that the authority concerned may decline to attend for reasons given in writing to the Select Committee, which may report thereon to the Dáil/Seanad, and
 - b) Recommend, where it considers that such action is warranted, that the instrument should be annulled or amended;
- 5) Power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State shall attend before the Select Committee to discuss –

- a) Policy, or
- b) Proposed primary or secondary legislation (prior to such legislation being published),

For which he or she is officially responsible: Provided that a member of the Government or Minister of State may decline to attend for stated reasons given in writing to the Select Committee, which may report thereon to the Dáil: and provided further that a member of the Government or Minister of State may request to attend a meeting of the Select Committee to enable him or her to discuss such policy or proposed legislation;

- 6) Power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State shall attend before the Select Committee and provide, in private session if so requested by the attendee, oral briefings in advance of meetings of the relevant EC Council (of Ministers) of the European Union to enable the Select Committee to make known its views: Provided that the Committee may also require such attendance following such meetings;
- 7) Power to require that the Chairperson designate of a body or agency under the aegis of a Department shall, prior to his or her appointment, attend before the Select Committee to discuss his or her strategic priorities for the role;
- 8) Power to require that a member of the Government or Minister of State who is officially responsible for the implementation of an Act shall attend before a Select Committee in relation to the consideration of a report under DSO 197/ SSO 168;
- 9) Subject to any constraints otherwise prescribed by law, power, to require that principal officeholders of a –
 - a) State body within the responsibility of a Government Department or
 - b) Non-State body, which is partly funded by the State,

Shall attend meetings of the Select Committee, as appropriate, to discuss issues for which they are officially responsible: Provided that such an office-

holder may decline to attend for stated reasons given in writing to the Select Committee, which may report thereon to the Dáil/Seanad; and

10) Power to –

- a) Engage the services of persons with specialist or technical knowledge, to assist it or any of its sub-Committees in considering particular matters; and
- b) Undertake travel;

Provided that the powers under this paragraph are subject to such recommendations as may be made by the Working Group of Committee Chairmen under DSO 120 (4)(a)/SSO 107 (4)(a).

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