



Irish Language Services Advisory Committee

Minutes – Meeting 7 – 28 April 2023

LOCATION: Held Virtually Through Zoom

DATE: Friday, 28 April 2023

TIME: 10:00 – 11:30

PRESENT:

Name	Organisation	Role
Dr. Aodhán Mac Cormaic	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media	Chairperson
Sinéad Coleman	Public Appointments Service	Member
John Howlin	Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform	Member
Superintendent Seán Glynn	An Garda Síochána	Member
Mags Campbell	Department of Education	Member
*Breandán Mac Craith	Foras na Gaeilge	Member
John Prendergast	Gaeltacht Communities	Member
Mairéad Ní Ghabháin	Irish Speaking Communities Outside of the Gaeltacht	Member
Jim Molloy	Local Government Management Agency	Member
Niamh Kenny	Department of Social Protection	Member
Emily Maloney	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media	Secretary
Sadhbh Ó Cinnseala	Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media	Assistant Principal Officer of the relevant section

*Breandán Mac Craith joined the meeting during item 7.

ABSENT WITH APOLOGIES:

- Eithne Fox, the representative of the Health Service Executive, was unable to attend the meeting.

KEY DECISIONS MADE:

- The minutes of the previous meeting of 27 February 2023 were agreed;
- It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee would be expected to take place on Friday, 26 May 2023, in the Foras na Gaeilge building 63-66 Amiens Street, Dublin 1;
- It was agreed that Cumann na nOifigeach Forbartha (“COFG”) would be invited to attend one of the meetings of the Committee in the near future to present to the Committee its views and recommendations.

FULL AGENDA ITEMS DISCUSSED:

1. Welcome from the Chairperson:

- The meeting began with an opening from the Chairperson, Dr. Aodhán Mac Cormaic;
- He gave a special welcome to Mags Campbell and Niamh Kenny – the new representatives of the Departments of Education and Social Protection respectively on the Committee.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting:

- The minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee held on Monday, 27 February 2023 were agreed.

3. Terms of Reference and Procedures of the Committee:

- Both Mags Campbell and Niamh Kenny confirmed their agreement with the terms of reference and procedures of the Committee;
- The Chairperson stated:
 - that it was intended to amend the frequency of the meetings from what is set out in the procedures, in order to hold meetings in parallel with the research for the National Plan;
 - that they were to be arranged when the research team was in situ and a timeframe for the research was agreed;
 - that this would be discussed further under items 5 and 8, respectively.

4. Matters Arising:

The Department gave an overview of the initiatives it has in hand in relation to the implementation of the Act. In that context the following was mentioned:

- Survey for the Awareness Campaign –
 - that Behaviour & Attitudes ("B&A") has been contracted by the Department to carry out research on the attitudes of young people towards careers with Irish and in the public sector;
 - that a sample of participants had been identified to carry out the survey and that that work is currently underway;

- that the survey would give an insight into the views and behaviours of young people towards the language, especially in the work context and that this would provide a basis for the awareness campaign before it is rolled out;
 - that various groups were consulted - Black and Irish, the travelling community, the Department of Education, and the Public Appointments Service, for example - so that the survey is representative of contemporary Irish society;
 - that the sample has been given an extension of time to undertake the survey in order to provide an appropriate opportunity to complete it and for the appropriate data to be collected;
 - that the number of responses received was low due to the Easter break between 3-15 April 2023;
 - that there was a preliminary meeting between the business unit and Javelin and PHD respectively, who are under contract with Government for creative design and media buying, and that it was indicated that September would be advisable in terms of rolling out the campaign;
 - that Committee members would be kept informed of the progress being made, especially as it relates to the results of the survey.
- National Clerical Officer Competition –
 - that a new national clerical officer competition was announced on Friday, 14 April 2023;
 - that there was specific reference to the Act and a new item - roles requiring specialist Irish language skills - had been included in the information booklet in relation to vacancies where it is necessary to provide a full range of services through Irish;
 - that this is a very positive development which is the result of ongoing collaboration between the Department and the Public Appointments Service;
 - that there are ongoing discussions between the Department and the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform in relation to Higher Executive Officer competitions with Irish;
 - the representative of the Public Appointments Service stated that discussions are underway between it and Maynooth University regarding Teastas Eorpach na Gaeilge (“TEG”) proficiency testing but that these are preliminary discussions at the moment.
- Irish Language Communications Internship Scheme –
 - That the business case for this was being looked at.
- The floor was opened for Committee members to share their views on those measures. During that discussion, the following was mentioned/agreed:
 - that Sligo County Council recently undertook a recruitment process for an Irish language and Data Protection Officer, at grade vii with TEG B2

competency and that applications were received locally - which is very positive given that it is not a Gaeltacht Language Planning Area;

- that the Department of Social Protection undertook a survey to identify a baseline for the level of Irish language proficiency of the 6,500 staff members working in that Department in its various locations;
- that the Committee would have sight of that survey issued by the Department of Social Protection to see if it could be drawn upon in the context of the one to be carried out by the Advisory Committee regarding the level of competence in Irish of staff of public bodies;
- that the Public Appointments Service had also undertaken such a survey and would be happy to share it with the members of the Committee.

5. Update: Research Contract for the National Plan:

- The Department informed the Committee that:
 - the questions around the research contract with the University of Galway were resolved;
 - a process was announced to recruit the research team - one Research Fellow and two Research Associates;
 - the Department would meet with the research team in order to agree the methodology of the project;
 - the University would present its work plan for the research - which will include the steps, goals, actions, and the specific timeline of the research together with the interested parties who will be involved - to the Committee at its next meeting (details under Item 8).

6. Development of the National Plan:

- The floor was given to the representative for Gaeltacht communities to discuss his proposal on placing a fixed item on the agenda of the meetings of the Committee. This proposal was accepted by the Committee. It was agreed that the concept of putting together a subgroup to advise on this matter would be revisited later this year.

7. Commentary regarding the Committee in the Media:

- It was stated that various relevant articles appeared in the media since the last meeting, as follows:
 - An article dated 14 March 2023 on Tuairisc.ie in relation to criticism made by the board of Foras na Gaeilge on the State's approach to the language in the education system;
 - An article dated 28 March 2023 on Tuairisc.ie regarding the changing of RTÉ Raidió na Gaeltachta's policy of prohibiting paid advertisements;
 - An article dated 30 March 2023 on Tuairisc.ie regarding a competition launched by saoloibre.ie with the support of AIB and COGG ("An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta"), the aim of which was to make school going students aware of the advantages of the Irish language

in working life. COGG and Saolobre.ie were followed up with since then to ascertain the success of the competition, and that it was clear that there had been an increase in the number of applications received from previous years;

- An article dated 4 April 2023 on Tuairisc.ie regarding the number of senior officials in the civil and public service who can work through the medium of Irish;
- Articles dated 20 and 21 April 2023 on Tuairisc.ie regarding the annual report of An Coimisinéir Teanga for 2022;
- Following the discussion of these articles, the Chairperson stated that different ways of embedding the TEG system into the education system for teachers and students alike are being explored;
- The representative for the Department of Education stated that the issue of the Irish language curriculum is being considered by that Department, and that the Committee would be kept apprised of this;
- The representatives for Gaeltacht communities mentioned that a pilot scheme was run with transition year students in Kerry undertaking TEG exams and that a similar scheme could be rolled out nationally.

8. Date of Next Meeting:

- It was agreed that the next meeting of the Committee would be expected to take place on Friday, 26 May 2023, in the Foras na Gaeilge building 63-66 Amiens Street, Dublin 1.

9. Any Other Business:

- It was mentioned that the Department and the Local Government Management Agency had received a request from Cumann na nOifigeach Forbartha ("COFG") to put its comments and recommendations before the Committee;
- The Department had told COFG that it would be asked to do so by way of a presentation to the Committee at the earliest opportunity.



Secretary

30 June 2023

Date of Approval