

ICT Steering Group

Telephony costs

1. Decision Required

a. What is the **decision now being sought?**

ICTSG is asked to recommend to MAC that

- the policy of permitting unlimited phone calls by Members and their staff should be reviewed, with a view to introducing cost thresholds, above which charges will be automatically queried, and to introducing a policy restriction so that telephony facilities may be used exclusively for purposes related to or arising from parliamentary duties, and for 'reasonable personal use';
- the practice of permitting international direct dial outward calls be ceased, and that all international calls be placed via the telephonists, with an exception for Interparliamentary and Travel Sections;
- in the interests of openness, transparency and accountability, the Commission be asked to modify current practice so that all handsets connected to the Oireachtas PABX be ticketed in future, unless an alternative method of effectively regulating costs and preventing potential abuse can be implemented, and
- calls to directory enquiry services (DQ services) from the Oireachtas phone system be blocked, with an exception for telephonists.

b. Provide **background and description of the proposal, including reference to the relevant elements of the Strategic Plan, Corporate Business Plan or ICT Strategy Implementation Plan.**

Background

Outbound voice calls from the Oireachtas PABX are allocated among various carriers in a manner which generally minimises cost to the Commission. Thus calls to mobile and landlines are carried by different carriers, depending on the number dialled.

Since 2009, the carrier of first choice for most outbound calls, excluding Irish mobile phones, has been BT Ireland. Outbound calls to landlines are carried by Eircom when capacity issues arise on our BT Ireland circuits. Thus monthly phone bills are received from all of the carriers to which the Service has direct connections - Eircom, BT Ireland, O2 and Vodafone.

In the absence of any data regarding calls made by Members and their staff, and in an ongoing review of telecoms costs, the ICT Unit sought a call analysis from BT Ireland (who carry the majority of outbound calls to landlines). What was sought was an analysis showing the total number of minutes to landlines, mobiles, premium rate numbers, UK, Europe, North America, Far East etc. What was received was precisely such an analysis, but it was also accompanied by an itemised list of outbound calls during the period 01/01/2010 to 31/07/2010. Provision of such an analysis to all customers is standard practice in BT Ireland. The analysis and itemised list for the first seven months, combined with a similar analysis in respect of August 2010 identify the following issues of interest. All charges listed below include VAT.

Charges attributable exclusively to staff or contractors of the Service

Annual charges for calls to a single mobile number in the UK currently run to €370 (based on costs in the first seven months). A payment has since been received in respect of all of these calls.

Charges shared among all users of the Oireachtas phone system.

Annual charges for calls to directory enquiries services are costing approximately €16,000 per annum. On-line (web-based) directory enquiry services are free.

Charges attributable exclusively to Members, Member' staff, party staff, journalists

Annual charges for calls to a single mobile number in Australia currently run to €1,249 (based on costs in the first seven months)

Annual charges for calls to a single number in Barbados currently run to €140 (based on costs in the first seven months)

Annual charges for calls to a single number in Belarus currently run to €285 (based on costs in the first seven months)

Charges for calls to a single number in Cyprus **during August alone** run to €331 These calls accounted for nine of the ten most expensive calls during August, and ranged in cost from €25 to €53.

Annual charges for calls to a single mobile number in Lithuania currently run to €561 (based on costs in the first seven months).

Annual charges for calls to a single mobile number in Malta currently run to €381 (based on costs in the first seven months)

Annual charges for calls to a single mobile number in Pakistan currently run to €1,621 (based on costs in the first seven months)

Annual charges for calls to a single number in South Africa currently run to €366 (based on costs in the first seven months)

Annual charges for calls to a single mobile number in Spain currently run to €251 (based on costs in the first seven months)

Annual charges for calls to a single mobile number in Turkey currently run to €191 (based on costs in the first seven months)

Annual charges for calls to a single mobile number in the UK currently run to €238 (based on costs in the first seven months)

Annual charges for calls to another single mobile number in the UK currently run to €179 (based on costs in the first seven months)

Charges for calls to a single number in Kenya **during June alone** run €134

These multiple examples are based on call records which exclude calls costing less than €6.05.

Proposal

The proposal has three elements. It is intended to help the Service manage the risk that the Commission is paying for inappropriate use of telecoms facilities, notwithstanding the fact that no specific misuse can be attributed to any identifiable individual.

The **first element of the proposal** “the policy of permitting unlimited phone calls by Members should be reviewed, with a view to introducing cost thresholds, above which charges will be automatically queried, and to introducing a policy restriction so that telephony facilities may be used exclusively for purposes arising from parliamentary duties, and for ‘reasonable personal use’ seeks to remove the current concept that ‘*all calls made from a designated number are free*’, and to introduce a restriction providing that all calls related to or arising from parliamentary duties, together with calls which fall into the category of ‘reasonable personal use’, are free.

The current statutory basis for provision of free telephone calls from Leinster House is in Regulation 7 of SI 84 of 2010, which was made under section 2(1) (inserted by section 11 of the Oireachtas (Allowances to Members) and Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices (Amendment) Act 1992 (No. 3 of 1992)) of the Oireachtas (Allowances to Members) Act 1962 (No. 32 of 1962) made under Section 2 of Oireachtas (Allowances to Members) Act 1962, as amended by Section 11 of the Oireachtas (Allowances to Members) and Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices (Amendment) Act 1992.

That Regulation provides that

“Free telephone calls — restrictions and conditions

7. (1) The facility of free telephone calls from Leinster House granted to a member shall not commence until the member first becomes, by compliance with Standing Orders of the House of the Oireachtas of which he or she is a member, entitled, under the Standing Orders of that House, to sit in the House as a member of the House.

(2) The availability of the facility does not preclude a member transmitting facsimile documents by means of the telephone facilities provided to members on a communal basis for the transmission and receipt of such documents.”

The predecessor of Regulation 7 of SI 84/2010 was Regulation 3 of SI 99 of 1998, which provided that

“3. The facility of free telephone calls from Leinster House granted to a member shall be subject to the following exceptions, restrictions and conditions:

- a. the facility shall not commence until the member first becomes, by compliance with the Standing Orders of the House of the Oireachtas of which he or she is a member, entitled, under the Standing Orders of that House, to sit in that House as a member thereof,
- b. the facility shall not be availed of except by means of a direct dial telephone,
- c. subject to paragraph (d), the availing of the facility by a member shall be limited to the making of calls from a particular telephone number that is designated by the appropriate authority for use by the member concerned and so adapted as to prevent its use by other persons,
- d. the provisions of paragraph (c) shall not preclude a member from transmitting facsimile documents by means of the telephone facilities provided to members on a communal basis for the transmission and receipt of such documents, and

- e. the facility may be availed of by a member for the purpose of transmitting telemessages subject to an annual limit of £750 on the cost of the telemessages that may be so transmitted by the member.

In any amendment to the SI, two changes should be made –

- the old restriction (c) {immediately above} should be reinstated, as it was this restriction which enabled control of extensions which were not in a Member's office, and
- a new restriction, providing that 'the facility of free telephone calls may be used only for calls connected with or arising from parliamentary duties or calls which fall within the category of "reasonable personal use"' should be introduced.

The **second element of the proposal**, that "the practice of permitting international direct dial outward calls be ceased, and that all international calls be placed via the telephonists, with an exception for Interparliamentary and Travel Sections" is intended to address the significant issue of apparent abuse. It may be the case that this element should be deferred, in order to review the effect of implementing the third element.

The **third element of the proposal**, that "in the interests of openness, transparency and accountability, the Commission be asked to modify current practice so that all handsets connected to the Oireachtas PABX be ticketed in future, unless an alternative method of effectively regulating costs and preventing potential abuse can be implemented" would enable the Service to identify the handsets from which unreasonable use of the facility is being made. The simple change of logging calls may be enough to eliminate excessive use / misuse. Ticketing also places the staff who are asked to certify invoices in a better position, as they will then have access to the data from which individual charges can be queried, rather than the current situation in which they are expected to certify invoices as being in order for payment, without knowing that the charges were in fact necessarily incurred in the conduct of official duties (or that they arose from reasonable personal use – which would not cover most of the traffic described in the background section above).

The **fourth element of the proposal**, that "calls to directory enquiry services (DQ services) from the Oireachtas phone system be blocked, with an exception for telephonists" is based on the fact that such calls are estimated to cost €16,000 in 2010 and these costs are generally avoidable and therefore fail the 'necessarily incurred in the conduct of public business' test.

Context

National Economic context.

In the current economic climate, it is appropriate to review all expenditure and the current practice of providing Members and their support staff with unlimited, unticketed free calls from Leinster House as the data above shows that the facility is not adequately regulated. If only a small percentage of the calls detailed above are 'personal' and unrelated to parliamentary business, significant savings could be made by introducing some restrictions in this area. In Scotland, use of ICT facilities is permitted exclusively for parliamentary business

These proposals arise in the context of the Croke Park Agreement and the need to control expenditure. They are not based specifically on the Strategic Plan, Corporate Business Plan or ICT Strategy Implementation Plan, but proposals are relevant to the themes of ensuring value for money, improving corporate governance and doing more with less, which run through those plans.

The administrative requirement that calls to and from the handsets of Members and their support staff, and the handsets of Officers of the Houses not be ticketed (logged) leaves the Commission significantly exposed to the risk of incurring inappropriate costs. As far as can be established, the practice does not apply anywhere else in the public sector – even in the Departments of Finance and An Taoiseach, handsets and mobile phones used by cabinet members are subject to standard ticketing arrangements, and relevant civil servants have access to call details as part of normal invoicing arrangements. The C&AG has often identified weaknesses in telecoms cost controls - the most recent high profile example was in the HSE - see media report at <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/health/2010/0824/1224277437587.html>

In certifying that an invoice is in order for payment, a civil servant is confirming that the goods or services were received, and that the charges are in order for payment from public funds. Being in order for payment from the budget of the Commission clearly implies that the charges arose from Members' duties, or the duties of staff in supporting them, or the duties of civil servants in administering the Service. The absence of call records in relation to calls from the majority of handsets makes it impossible for any civil servant to properly comply with that process.

In the event that any issues arise from the nature of call charges, all Members are exposed by the lack of records. In effect, we are in a 'non-repudiation' situation (we cannot confirm that any Member is innocent of abuse of telephone facilities, and, based on the data listed above, there is an extremely high likelihood that some abuse is occurring). If the media decide to portray any of our call charges as excessive, all politicians will be 'tarred with the same brush'.

- a. Provide detail and date of **Phase 1 approval** from MAC/Director/ Other? If approval was granted more than 6 months ago, provide details as to why Phase 2 approval is only now being sought.

Options/alternatives available and recommendation

Provide costs and benefits of all options considered.

The status quo can be maintained. Costs are outlined in the background above, but the details there are based only on a seven month analysis, and also exclude non-official calls which were of less than 30 minutes duration, or cost less than €6.05, or were carried by O2, Vodafone or Eircom. Production of more detailed analysis is not possible within existing resources, and in light of the detail provided in the 'background' section above, should not be necessary.

No other alternatives have been considered.

3. Recommended Option

- 3.1 Quantify the **expected benefits**, for year 1 and beyond

(a) Financial

Financial benefits are likely to be a reduction of about

(b) Non-financial

Non-financial benefits are improved cost management, improved governance, and improved risk management.

3.2 **Improvement in Services**

- a. Outline what improvement in services can be expected from the recommended option and for whom these benefits are intended?

The proposals are expected to deliver reduced costs, but not improved services

- b. How is it intended that this improvement be measured?

Reduced phone charges will show that savings have arisen.

- c. Can the expected improvement be measured against an existing standard of performance?

Measurement against performance does not arise, as these proposals address costs issues. Measurement can be effected only against phone bills.

3. Quantify the **expected savings, increased output or greater efficiencies** that will arise from successful implementation.

Cost reductions of about €30,000 per annum are likely, based on the call patterns identified above.

4. **Consultation**

- (a) Have **external consultants** or external advice (e.g. CMOD) been involved in the process to date? If so, please attach report or executive summary. No.

- (b) What are the **implications for**

- i. Members: Those members (or their staff) who make 'exceptional' calls (exceptional by reference to all other calls, i.e., the most expensive calls) may be asked to account for, and possibly also pay for those calls. Members would also lose the ability to make DQ calls.
- ii. Staff: As staff handsets are already ticketed, it is likely that the only implications for staff would be loss of ability to make DQ calls.
- iii. other sections
- iv. other stakeholders: Taxpayers benefit. Improved corporate governance, Improved risk management.

and how are these being/to be managed?

This paper seeks ICTSG approval to refer to MAC a proposal to ask the Commission to agree revised arrangements and restriction on free telephone services. That process necessarily involves consultation with Members through JAC.

5. **Total Costs**

- a. Implementation – once-off costs NIL
- b. Ongoing – annual costs NIL
- c. In-house resource costs (staff costs, effects on other budgets, etc.) NIL
- d. Assumptions that underlie the costings NONE

- e. How costs will be monitored over the lifetime of the project **Normal monitoring of monthly telephone bills.**
- f. Costs of modifying BCP/Disaster Recovery (DR) plans and implementing DR site systems. **NIL**
6. State whether there is necessity for **MAC/Commission approval.** **Both**

4. Risk Assessment

[Risks are the things that can go wrong in projects. All projects involve some level of risk and failure to deal adequately with risks can have serious consequences, leading ultimately to project failure. Obvious risks include cost overruns, purpose becoming unachievable or benefits unrealisable, delays and unforeseen difficulties (e.g. IR or legal)].

Outline risks under each category below and how these will be managed -

- a. Financial **NIL**
- b. Non-financial

Inconvenience for users of the phone system

Internal switchboard might be overwhelmed by calls for DQ services. Industry norms suggest that one telephonist can handle about 500 calls per day. Our telephonists handle about 300 calls per day, and should therefore have spare capacity to handle most DQ requests. As we have visually impaired telephonists, they may (in the interests of efficiency) have to use commercial DQ services, and this is allowed for in the proposals.

Other risks arise only from non-implementation. The data provided in the background above, combined with the current economic climate, require that telephony costs be addressed.

5. Impact on Business Continuity Planning/ Disaster Recovery

Provide a statement of the extent to which the proposal will impact upon or necessitate a review of existing business continuity/disaster recovery plans.

No impact

6. What tendering procedure has been/is to be undertaken? *[Detail advice, if any, obtained from PLA and Procurement Section. Outline award criteria used i.e. lowest cost, MEAT, or other.]* **No tendering arises**

7. Project Governance

*[How the proposal complies with **the project management guidelines** as set out in Office Notice 4/2008 - see **Appendix 5**].*

7.1 Who will take on the role of **None of these roles arises**

- **Approver** (e.g. Management Advisory Committee);
- **Sponsor** (e.g. Director/PO reporting to Management Advisory Committee);
- **Project Board** (chaired, depending on scale, by a Director/PO/AP other than the sponsor);
- **Project Manager** (designated manager or line manager reporting to project board);
- **Project Team** (staff delivering the project under direction of project manager);

- **Project Stakeholders** (users and other interested parties, including all of the above). Please outline how cross-directorate interdependencies are being or are to be addressed;
- **External Reviewer/Advisory Team** (where considered necessary by the approver).

7.2 Has a **project plan** been put in place? *Not considered necessary*

7.3 What are the **project milestones** and their expected achievement dates?

An immediate reduction in phone charges should be detectable within one quarter of a year. Comparison of invoices for a quarter with the same quarter one year earlier monthly will identify savings. Comparisons on a monthly basis may also confirm savings, but as monthly variations always arise, monthly comparisons are considered unreliable.

7.4 What are the proposals for **interim reviews** and monitoring of progress over the lifetime of the project?

The proposal is for an immediate change – the 'project' will be completed quickly. Reviews of its results can be quarterly, if required.

8. What are the plans for **post-project assessment** and benefits realisation assessment? What is the current **performance baseline** against which results can be measured?

[Projects will not always deliver immediate benefits and efficiencies, or delivery may be over several years. This needs to be taken into account in detailing a response. In all cases, detail the current baseline against which future performance will be measured.]

Cost reductions for international and DQ calls will be immediately measurable.

Submitted by Charles Hearne
 Section: ICT Unit
 Date: 22 November, 2010.

Sign-off/comment from Approver (MAC/Director/Other)

.....

Date: _____

ICT Steering Group

Telephony costs

Decision sought

ICTSG is asked to recommend to MAC that

- calls to directory enquiry services (DQ services) from the Oireachtas phone system be blocked, with an exception for telephonists.
- in the interests of openness, transparency and accountability, the Commission be asked to modify current practice so that all handsets connected to the Oireachtas PABX be ticketed in future, unless an alternative method of effectively regulating costs and preventing potential abuse can be implemented.

If these measures do not give rise to reductions in costs, further steps may have to be considered.

These could include

- the policy of permitting unlimited phone calls by Members and their staff should be reviewed, with a view to introducing cost thresholds, above which charges will be automatically queried, and to introducing a policy restriction so that telephony facilities may be used exclusively for purposes related to or arising from parliamentary duties, and for 'reasonable personal use';
- the practice of permitting international direct dial outward calls be ceased, and that all international calls be placed via the telephonists, with an exception for Interparliamentary and Travel Sections;

Background

Arising from preparations for a tendering process, ICT Unit became aware that our monthly phone bills indicated that calls to DQ numbers cost about €16,000 p.a. On-line DQ services are free

In addition, calls to various single numbers abroad during the year give rise to the following annualised charges. These examples represent costs of almost €6,000 p.a. and are based on call records which exclude calls costing more than €6.05.

Destination	Annualised charge, incl. VAT
Australia (mobile)	€1,249
Barbados	€140
Belarus	€285
Cyprus	€331 (actual cost in one month)
Kenya	€134 (actual cost in one month)
Lithuania (mobile)	€561
Malta (mobile)	€381
Pakistan (mobile)	€1,621
South Africa	€366
Spain (mobile)	€251
Turkey (mobile)	€191
UK (mobile)	€179
UK	€238
UK mobile	€370 – costs recovered from contractor

The proposal, that “calls to directory enquiry services (DQ services) from the Oireachtas phone system be blocked, with an exception for telephonists” is based on the fact that such calls are estimated to cost €16,000 in 2010 and these costs are generally avoidable. On this basis, it is not appropriate to continue to certify invoices for such services as being in order for payment, because they fail the ‘necessarily incurred in the conduct of public business’ test.

The proposal that “in the interests of openness, transparency and accountability, the Commission be asked to modify current practice so that all handsets connected to the Oireachtas PABX be ticketed in future, unless an alternative method of effectively regulating costs and preventing potential abuse can be implemented” would enable the Service to identify the handsets from which unreasonable use of the facility of free calls is being made. The simple change of logging calls may be enough to eliminate excessive use / misuse. Ticketing also places the staff who are asked to certify invoices in a better position, as they will then have access to the data from which individual charges can be queried, rather than the current situation in which they are expected to certify invoices as being in order for payment, without knowing that the charges were in fact necessarily incurred in the conduct of official duties (or that they arose from reasonable personal use – which would not cover most of the traffic described in the examples above).

It is considered that measures to limit calls charges or to prohibit DDO (direct dial outward) international calls would be premature. Reductions in avoidable charges should initially be sought without implementing such measures. Consideration has also been given to imposing a technical limit on the maximum duration of any external phone call, but this is not technically possible.

Consideration has been given also to ticketing the handsets used by Members’ staff (laving Members’ handsets unticketed), but this is unlikely to yield any reduced costs, as any person who is currently misusing the system is likely to be quite happy to continue that misuse on a different handset. It is also unfair to assume that misuse is limited to staff – there is no evidence to support this notion.

Consideration has been given to issuing notifications when ‘exception’ use is detected. Whilst ‘exception’ (most expensive, longest, etc) calls can be easily identified (subject to all handsets being ticketed), this requires a significant additional administrative overhead, and in a time of diminishing resources, should not be pursued as a first preference.

Context

These proposals arise in the context of the Croke Park Agreement and the need to control expenditure. They are not based specifically on the Strategic Plan, Corporate Business Plan or ICT Strategy Implementation Plan, but proposals are relevant to the themes of ensuring value for money, improving corporate governance and doing more with less, which run through those plans.

The administrative practice arising from a CPP decision made several years ago that calls to and from the handsets of Members and their support staff, and the handsets of Officers of the Houses not be ticketed (logged) leaves the Commission significantly exposed to the risk of incurring inappropriate costs. As far as can be established, the practice does not apply anywhere else in the public sector – even in the Departments of Finance and An Taoiseach, handsets and mobile phones used by cabinet members are subject to standard ticketing arrangements, and relevant civil servants have access to call details as part of normal invoicing arrangements. The C&AG has often identified weaknesses in telecoms cost controls – the most recent high profile example was in the HSE – see media report at <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/health/2010/0824/1224277437587.html>

In certifying that an invoice is in order for payment, a civil servant is confirming that the goods or services were received, and that the charges are in order for payment from public funds. Being in order for payment from the budget of the Commission clearly implies that the charges arose from Members’ duties, or the duties of staff in supporting them, or the duties of civil servants in

administering the Service. The absence of call records in relation to calls from the majority of handsets makes it impossible for any civil servant to properly comply with that process.

In the event that any issues arise from the nature of call charges, all Members are exposed by the lack of records. In effect, we are in a 'non-repudiation' situation (we cannot confirm that any Member is innocent of abuse of telephone facilities, and, based on the data listed above, there is an extremely high likelihood that some abuse is occurring) If the media decide to portray any of our call charges as excessive, all politicians will be 'tarred with the same brush'.

- a. Provide detail and date of **Phase 1 approval** from MAC/Director/Other? If approval was granted more than 6 months ago, provide details as to why Phase 2 approval is only now being sought.

2. Options/alternatives available and recommendation

Provide costs and benefits of all options considered.

The status quo can be maintained. Costs are outlined in the background above, but the details there are based only on a seven month analysis, and also exclude non-official calls which were of less than 30 minutes duration, or cost less than €6.05, or were carried by O2, Vodafone or Eircom. Production of more detailed analysis is not possible within existing resources, and in light of the detail provided in the 'background' section above, should not be necessary.

No other alternatives have been considered.

3. Recommended Option

3.1 Quantify the expected benefits, for year 1 and beyond

(a) Financial

Financial benefits are likely to be a reduction of about

(b) Non-financial

Non-financial benefits are improved cost management, improved governance, and improved risk management.

3.2 Improvement in Services

- a. Outline what improvement in services can be expected from the recommended option and for whom these benefits are intended?

The proposals are expected to deliver reduced costs, but not improved services

- b. How is it intended that this improvement be measured?

Reduced phone charges will show that savings have arisen.

- c. Can the expected improvement be measured against an existing standard of performance?

Measurement against performance does not arise, as these proposals address costs issues. Measurement can be effected only against phone bills.

3. Quantify the expected savings, increased output or greater efficiencies that will arise from successful implementation.

Cost reductions of about €30,000 per annum are likely, based on the call patterns identified above.

4. Consultation

- (a) Have **external consultants** or external advice (e.g. CMOD) been involved in the process to date? If so, please attach report or executive summary. **No.**

(b) What are the **implications for**

- i. **Members:** Those members (or their staff) who make 'exceptional' calls (exceptional by reference to all other calls, i.e., the most expensive calls) may be asked to account for, and possibly also pay for those calls. Members would also lose the ability to make DQ calls.
- ii. **Staff:** As staff handsets are already ticketed, it is likely that the only implications for staff would be loss of ability to make DQ calls.
- iii. **other sections**
- iv. **other stakeholders:** Taxpayers benefit. Improved corporate governance, Improved risk management.

and how are these being/to be managed?

This paper seeks ICTSG approval to refer to MAC a proposal to ask the Commission to agree revised arrangements and restriction on free telephone services. That process necessarily involves consultation with Members through JAC.

5. **Total Costs**

- a. Implementation – once-off costs **NIL**
- b. Ongoing – annual costs **NIL**
- c. In-house resource costs (staff costs, effects on other budgets, etc.) **NIL**
- d. Assumptions that underlie the costings **NONE**
- e. How costs will be monitored over the lifetime of the project **Normal monitoring of monthly telephone bills.**
- f. Costs of modifying BCP/Disaster Recovery (DR) plans and implementing DR site systems. **NIL**

6. State whether there is necessity for **MAC/Commission approval.** **Both**

4. Risk Assessment

[Risks are the things that can go wrong in projects. All projects involve some level of risk and failure to deal adequately with risks can have serious consequences, leading ultimately to project failure. Obvious risks include cost overruns, purpose becoming unachievable or benefits unrealisable, delays and unforeseen difficulties (e.g. IR or legal)].

Outline risks under each category below and how these will be managed -

- a. **Financial** **NIL**
- b. **Non-financial**
Inconvenience for users of the phone system

Internal switchboard might be overwhelmed by calls for DQ services. Industry norms suggest that one telephonist can handle about 500 calls per day. Our telephonists handle about 300 calls per day, and should therefore have spare capacity to handle most DQ requests. As we have visually impaired telephonists, they may (in the interests of efficiency) have to use commercial DQ services, and this is allowed for in the proposals.

Other risks arise only from non-implementation. The data provided in the background above, combined with the current economic climate, require that telephony costs be addressed.

5. Impact on Business Continuity Planning/Disaster Recovery

Provide a statement of the extent to which the proposal will impact upon or necessitate a review of existing business continuity/disaster recovery plans.

No impact

6. What tendering procedure has been/is to be undertaken? *[Detail advice, if any, obtained from PLA and Procurement Section. Outline award criteria used i.e. lowest cost, MEAT, or other.]* No tendering arises

7. Project Governance

*[How the proposal complies with **the project management guidelines** as set out in Office Notice 4/2008 - see **Appendix 5**].*

7.1 Who will take on the role of **None of these roles** arises

- **Approver** (e.g. Management Advisory Committee);
- **Sponsor** (e.g. Director/PO reporting to Management Advisory Committee);
- **Project Board** (chaired, depending on scale, by a Director/PO/AP other than the sponsor);
- **Project Manager** (designated manager or line manager reporting to project board);
- **Project Team** (staff delivering the project under direction of project manager);
- **Project Stakeholders** (users and other interested parties, including all of the above). Please outline how cross-directorate interdependencies are being or are to be addressed;
- **External Reviewer/Advisory Team** (where considered necessary by the approver).

7.2 Has a **project plan** been put in place? **Not considered necessary**

7.3 What are the **project milestones** and their expected achievement dates?

An immediate reduction in phone charges should be detectable within one quarter of a year. Comparison of invoices for a quarter with the same quarter one year earlier monthly will identify savings. Comparisons on a monthly basis may also confirm savings, but as monthly variations always arise, monthly comparisons are considered unreliable.

7.4 What are the proposals for **interim reviews** and monitoring of progress over the lifetime of the project?

The proposal is for an immediate change – the 'project' will be completed quickly. Reviews of its results can be quarterly, if required.

8. What are the plans for post-project assessment and benefits realisation assessment? What is the current **performance baseline** against which results can be measured?

[Projects will not always deliver immediate benefits and efficiencies, or delivery may be over several years. This needs to be taken into account in detailing a response. In all cases, detail the current baseline against which future performance will be measured.]

Cost reductions for international and DQ calls will be immediately measurable.

Submitted by Charles Hearne
Section: ICT Unit
Date: 22 November, 2010.

Sign-off/comment from Approver (MAC/Director/Other)

.....
.....
.....
.....

Date: _____

ICT Steering Group
Telephony costs
Discussion paper

Potential proposal

ICTSG is asked to recommend to MAC that

- calls to directory enquiry services (DQ services) from the Oireachtas phone system be blocked, with an exception for telephonists.
- in the interests of openness, transparency and accountability, current practice be modified so that all handsets connected to the Oireachtas PABX be ticketed in future, unless an alternative method of effectively regulating costs and preventing potential misuse can be implemented.

If these measures do not give rise to reductions in costs, further steps may have to be considered. These could include

- the policy of permitting unlimited phone calls by Members and their staff should be reviewed, with a view to introducing cost thresholds, above which charges will be automatically queried, and to introducing a policy restriction so that telephony facilities may be used exclusively for purposes related to or arising from parliamentary duties, and for 'reasonable personal use';
- the practice of permitting international direct dial outward calls be ceased, and that all international calls be placed via the telephonists, with an exception for Interparliamentary and Travel Sections;

Background

Arising from preparations for a tendering process, ICT Unit became aware that our monthly phone bills indicated that calls to DQ numbers cost about €16,000 p.a. On-line DQ services are free

In addition, calls to various single numbers abroad during the year give rise to the following annualised charges. These examples represent costs of almost €6,000 p.a. and are based on call records which exclude calls costing more than €6.05.

Destination	Annualised charge, incl. VAT
Australia (mobile)	€1,249
Barbados	€140
Belarus	€285
Cyprus	€331 (actual cost in one month)
Kenya	€134 (actual cost in one month)
Lithuania (mobile)	€561
Malta (mobile)	€381
Pakistan (mobile)	€1,621
South Africa	€366
Spain (mobile)	€251
Turkey (mobile)	€191
UK (mobile)	€179
UK	€238
UK mobile	€370 – costs recovered from contractor

The proposal, that “calls to directory enquiry services (DQ services) from the Oireachtas phone system be blocked, with an exception for telephonists” is based on the fact that such calls are estimated to cost €16,000 in 2010 and these costs are generally avoidable. On this basis, it is not appropriate to continue to certify invoices for such services as being in order for payment, because they fail the ‘necessarily incurred in the conduct of public business’ test.

The proposal that “in the interests of openness, transparency and accountability, the Commission be asked to modify current practice so that all handsets connected to the Oireachtas PABX be ticketed in future, unless an alternative method of effectively regulating costs and preventing potential abuse can be implemented” would enable the Service to identify the handsets from which unreasonable use of the facility of free calls is being made. The simple change of logging calls may be enough to eliminate excessive use / misuse. Ticketing also places the staff who are asked to certify invoices in a better position, as they will then have access to the data from which individual charges can be queried, rather than the current situation in which they are expected to certify invoices as being in order for payment, without knowing that the charges were in fact necessarily incurred in the conduct of official duties (or that they arose from reasonable personal use – which would not cover most of the traffic described in the examples above).

It is considered that measures to limit calls charges or to prohibit DDO (direct dial outward) international calls would be premature. Reductions in avoidable charges should initially be sought without implementing such measures. Consideration has also been given to imposing a technical limit on the maximum duration of any external phone call, but this is not technically possible.

Consideration has been given to issuing notifications when ‘exceptional’ use is detected. While ‘exceptional’ (most expensive, longest, etc) calls can be easily identified (subject to all handsets being ticketed), this requires a significant additional administrative overhead, and in a time of diminishing resources, should not be pursued as a first preference.

The ICTSG’s views on these issues are sought.

ICT Steering Group

Telephony costs

Discussion paper

Potential proposal

ICTSG is asked to recommend to MAC that

- calls to directory enquiry services (DQ services) from the Oireachtas phone system be blocked, with an exception for telephonists.
- in the interests of openness, transparency and accountability, current practice be modified so that all handsets connected to the Oireachtas PABX be ticketed in future, unless an alternative method of effectively regulating costs and preventing potential misuse can be implemented.

If these measures do not give rise to reductions in costs, further steps may have to be considered. These could include

- the policy of permitting unlimited phone calls by Members and their staff should be reviewed, with a view to introducing cost thresholds, above which charges will be automatically queried, and to introducing a policy restriction so that telephony facilities may be used exclusively for purposes related to or arising from parliamentary duties, and for 'reasonable personal use';
- the practice of permitting international direct dial outward calls be ceased, and that all international calls (including calls placed by Members and their staff) be placed via the telephonists, with an exception for Interparliamentary and Travel Sections;

Background

Arising from preparations for a tendering process, ICT Unit became aware that our monthly phone bills indicated that calls to DQ numbers cost about €16,000 p.a. On-line DQ services are free. Since this paper was first submitted in November 2011, the cost of DQ calls has risen – Eircom now charges up to €1,99 per minute for DQ calls.

In addition, multiple calls to various single numbers abroad during the year give rise to the following annualised charges. These examples represent costs of almost €6,000 p.a. and are based on call records which exclude calls costing more than €6.05.

Destination	Annualised charge, incl. VAT
Australia (mobile)	€1,249
Barbados	€140
Belarus	€285
Cyprus	€331 (actual cost in one month)
Kenya	€134 (actual cost in one month)
Lithuania (mobile)	€561
Malta (mobile)	€381
Pakistan (mobile)	€1,621
South Africa	€366
Spain (mobile)	€251
Turkey (mobile)	€191
UK (mobile)	€179
UK	€238

UK mobile	€370 – costs recovered from contractor
-----------	--

The proposal, that “calls to directory enquiry services (DQ services) from the Oireachtas phone system be blocked, with an exception for telephonists” is based on the fact that such calls are estimated to cost €16,000 in 2010 and these costs are generally avoidable. On this basis, it is not appropriate to continue to certify invoices for such services as being in order for payment, because they fail the ‘necessarily incurred in the conduct of public business’ test.

The proposal that “in the interests of openness, transparency and accountability, the Commission be asked to modify current practice so that all handsets connected to the Oireachtas PABX be ticketed in future, unless an alternative method of effectively regulating costs and preventing potential abuse can be implemented” would enable the Service to identify the handsets from which unreasonable use of the facility of free calls is being made. The simple change of logging calls may be enough to eliminate excessive use / misuse. Ticketing also places the staff who are asked to certify invoices in a better position, as they will then have access to the data from which individual charges can be queried. This is better than the current situation in which they are expected to certify invoices as being in order for payment, without knowing that the charges were in fact necessarily incurred in the conduct of official duties (or that they arose from reasonable personal use – which would not cover most of the traffic described in the examples above).

It is considered that measures to limit calls charges or to prohibit DDO (direct dial outward) international calls would be premature. Reductions in avoidable charges should initially be sought without implementing such measures. Consideration has also been given to imposing a technical limit on the maximum duration of any external phone call, but this is not technically possible.

Consideration has been given to issuing notifications when ‘exceptional’ use is detected. While ‘exceptional’ (most expensive, longest, etc) calls can be easily identified (subject to all handsets being ticketed), this requires a significant additional administrative overhead, and in a time of diminishing resources, should not be pursued as a first preference.

The ICTSG’s views on these issues are sought.

Management Committee

Telephony costs Control

Decision sought

Management Advisory Committee is asked to consider the attached discussion paper which was submitted to the ICT Steering Group in February 2011, and to determine what if any measure should be taken to control telecoms expenditure. Suggestions and recommendations are below

Background

Arising from preparation for a tendering process, ICT Unit became aware of

1. annual expenditure of circa €16,000 on directory enquiry (DQ) services, and
2. annual expenditure of at least €14,000 on international phone calls to a very small number of destinations.

Why is this significant?

Charges for calls to DQ services are often avoidable. On-line DQ services can be accessed from any PC / laptop in Leinster House and cost nothing, and our telephonists also have access to all national directories. Members frequently use the telephonists as a directory enquiries service for internal numbers, but rarely for external numbers. All DQ service providers offer to connect calls, and when callers requests that service, increased call charges apply – the increases vary depending on service provider and destination number, but can be several thousand percent.

It's important to note that elements of this expenditure may be entirely legitimate. Under current legislation, all calls made from Members' designated handsets in Leinster House are free of charge to the member, and members are entitled to call any number they wish. Only one restriction applies – the Service has not registered any of its phone lines for adult services, and thus no calls can be made to numbers commencing with the prefix '1559'. On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine what Oireachtas business would give rise to calls costing €1,621 to a single Pakistani mobile phone number, and it would be irresponsible not to consider the possibility that such calls might have been an unintended / improper use of the service provided. With available data, it is not possible to make any judgement in the matter.

ICT SG suggestions

ICT SG discussed the issue and identified the following options.

1. Do nothing. Easy, but wasteful, inappropriate and unacceptable.
2. Remind all users of Oireachtas phones of need to control costs. Unlikely to be effective.
3. Configure PABX so that all calls to DQ services are diverted to our own telephonists, and ask them to (i) use external DQ services only when they are unable to locate the required number themselves, and (ii) always dial the number directly, avoiding premium rates applied by DQ service providers.
4. Reconfigure PABX so that calls to more expensive destinations must be placed via an Oireachtas telephonist.
5. Request Commission / CPP to approve the introduction of ticketing of all calls for a trial period, in order to identify cost centres in which exceptional costs arise.
6. Introduce thresholds / limits on traffic charges (for which ticketing is a pre-requisite).

Recommendation

As an initial measure, ICT Unit recommends steps 3 and 4 above, with a review of costs after 6 months. ICT Unit recommends that step 4 should initially be effected with a 20 cent per minute threshold / limit, i.e. that calls costing more than 20 cents per minute, including VAT, must be placed via the telephonists. See appendix B for details of the impact of a 20 cent limit.

ICT Unit

12 May 2011.

Appendices

Appendix A – Submission to ICT SG, February 2011. [Blue text.](#)

Appendix B – Impact of introducing limits on costs of direct dialled calls

ICT Steering Group

Telephony costs

Discussion paper

Potential proposal

ICTSG is asked to recommend to MAC that

- calls to directory enquiry services (DQ services) from the Oireachtas phone system be blocked, with an exception for telephonists.
- in the interests of openness, transparency and accountability, current practice be modified so that all handsets connected to the Oireachtas PABX be ticketed in future, unless an alternative method of effectively regulating costs and preventing potential misuse can be implemented.

If these measures do not give rise to reductions in costs, further steps may have to be considered. These could include

- the policy of permitting unlimited phone calls by Members and their staff should be reviewed, with a view to introducing cost thresholds, above which charges will be automatically queried, and to introducing a policy restriction so that telephony facilities may be used exclusively for purposes related to or arising from parliamentary duties, and for 'reasonable personal use';
- the practice of permitting international direct dial outward calls be ceased, and that all international calls (including calls placed by Members and their staff) be placed via the telephonists, with an exception for Interparliamentary and Travel Sections;

Background

Arising from preparations for a tendering process, ICT Unit became aware that our monthly phone bills indicated that calls to DQ numbers cost about €16,000 p.a. On-line DQ services are free. Since this paper was first submitted in November 2011, the cost of DQ calls has risen – Eircom now charges up to €1.99 per minute for DQ calls.

In addition, multiple calls to various single numbers abroad during the year give rise to the following annualised charges. These examples represent costs of almost €6,000 p.a. and are based on call records which exclude calls costing more than €6.05.

Destination	Annualised charge, incl. VAT
Australia (mobile)	€1,249
Barbados	€140
Belarus	€285
Cyprus	€331 (actual cost in one month)
Kenya	€134 (actual cost in one month)
Lithuania (mobile)	€561
Malta (mobile)	€381
Pakistan (mobile)	€1,621
South Africa	€366
Spain (mobile)	€251
Turkey (mobile)	€191
UK (mobile)	€179
UK	€238
UK mobile	€370 – costs recovered from contractor

The proposal, that “calls to directory enquiry services (DQ services) from the Oireachtas phone system be blocked, with an exception for telephonists” is based on the fact that such calls are estimated to cost €16,000 in 2010 and these costs are generally avoidable. On this basis, it is not appropriate to continue to certify invoices for such services as being in order for payment, because they fail the ‘necessarily incurred in the conduct of public business’ test.

The proposal that “in the interests of openness, transparency and accountability, the Commission be asked to modify current practice so that all handsets connected to the Oireachtas PABX be ticketed in future, unless an alternative method of effectively regulating costs and preventing potential abuse can be implemented” would enable the Service to identify the handsets from which unreasonable use of the facility of free calls is being made. The simple change of logging calls may be enough to eliminate excessive use / misuse. Ticketing also places the staff who are asked to certify invoices in a better position, as they will then have access to the data from which individual charges can be queried. This is better than the current situation in which they are expected to certify invoices as being in order for payment, without knowing that the charges were in fact necessarily incurred in the conduct of official duties (or that they arose from reasonable personal use – which would not cover most of the traffic described in the examples above).

It is considered that measures to limit calls charges or to prohibit DDO (direct dial outward) international calls would be premature. Reductions in avoidable charges should initially be sought without implementing such measures. Consideration has also been given to imposing a technical limit on the maximum duration of any external phone call, but this is not technically possible.

Consideration has been given to issuing notifications when ‘exceptional’ use is detected. While ‘exceptional’ (most expensive, longest, etc) calls can be easily identified (subject to all handsets being ticketed), this requires a significant additional administrative overhead, and in a time of diminishing resources, should not be pursued as a first preference.

The ICTSG’s views on these issues are sought.

Appendix B – sample impact of introduction of cost limits.
Red shaded calls would have to be placed via Oireachtas telephonists.
Costs are based on BT Ireland tariffs, as most traffic is currently carried by BT.

Management Committee

Telephony costs Control

Decision sought

Management Advisory Committee is asked to consider the attached discussion paper which was submitted to the ICT Steering Group in February 2011, and to determine what if any measure should be taken to control telecoms expenditure. Suggestions and recommendations are below

Background

Arising from preparation for a tendering process, ICT Unit became aware of

1. annual expenditure of circa €16,000 on directory enquiry (DQ) services, and
2. annual expenditure of at least €14,000 on international phone calls to a very small number of destinations.

In June 2011, public controversy arose from charges of €2,639 incurred by the Office in 2007 due to calls from Leinster House to premium rate numbers associated with a reality TV show.

Why are these significant?

Charges for calls to DQ services are often avoidable. On-line DQ services can be accessed from any PC / laptop in Leinster House and cost nothing, and our telephonists also have access to all national directories. Members frequently use the telephonists as a directory enquiries service for internal numbers, but rarely for external numbers. All DQ service providers offer to connect calls, and when callers requests that service, increased call charges apply – the increases vary depending on service provider and destination number, but can be several thousand percent.

It's important to note that elements of this expenditure may be entirely legitimate. Under current legislation, all calls made from Members' designated handsets in Leinster House are free of charge to the member, and members are entitled to call any number they wish. Only one restriction applies – the Service has not registered any of its phone lines for adult services, and thus no calls can be made to numbers commencing with the prefix '1559'. On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine what Oireachtas business would give rise to calls costing €1,621 to a single Pakistani mobile phone number, and it would be irresponsible not to consider the possibility that such calls might have been an unintended / improper use of the service provided. With available data, it is not possible to make any judgement in the matter.

The calls to premium rate numbers highlight the absence of limits, controls or logging of traffic from telephone handsets assigned to members and their staff. Although members are entitled as a matter of law to 'free' calls from Leinster House (see Appendix C with PLA's statement of the legal basis for this), the current situation gives rise to a significant risk that unnecessary expenditure can arise from the manner in which telephony services are provided to members in Leinster House. The recent controversy regarding premium rate calls demonstrates this.

ICT SG suggestions

ICT SG discussed the issue and identified the following options.

1. Do nothing. Easy, but wasteful, inappropriate and unacceptable.
2. Remind all users of Oireachtas phones of need to control costs. Unlikely to be effective.
3. Configure PABX so that all calls to DQ services are diverted to our own telephonists, and ask them to (i) use external DQ services only when they are unable to locate the required number themselves, and (ii) always dial the number directly, avoiding premium rates applied by DQ service providers.
4. Reconfigure PABX so that calls to more expensive destinations must be placed via an Oireachtas telephonist.
5. Request Commission / CPP to approve the introduction of ticketing of all calls for a trial period, in order to identify cost centres in which exceptional costs arise.
6. Introduce thresholds / limits on traffic charges (for which ticketing is a pre-requisite).

The issue of premium rate calls had not arisen when ICTSG discussed this matter. ICT Unit has identified these options

- a. Do nothing. Easy, but wasteful, inappropriate and unacceptable.
- b. Remind all users of Oireachtas phones of need to control costs. Unlikely to be effective.
- c. Reconfigure members' handsets so that they can no longer make calls directly to premium rate calls and must ask the switch to connect them. For this purpose, any numbers commencing with a prefix 15XX which are subject to a tariff of more than 20 cents per minute should be considered to be premium rate.
- d. Subject to ticketing of all handsets, arrange for daily reporting of all premium rate calls, and respond to any spikes or surges within two working days of the occurrence.
- e. Reconfigure switch so that no calls to premium rate numbers can be made from the Oireachtas PABX (Excessive, and prevents calls to airlines, weather service, ferry companies, travel agents, traffic reports,

Recommendation

As an initial measure to address international call charges, ICT Unit recommends steps 3 and 4 above, with a review of costs after 6 months. ICT Unit recommends that step 4 should initially be effected with a 20 cent per minute threshold / limit, i.e. that calls costing more than 20 cents per minute, including VAT, must be placed via the telephonists. See appendix B for details of the impact of a 20 cent limit and the impact of a 30 cent limit

As an initial measure to address risks associated with unlimited access to premium rate phone lines, ICT unit recommends step c) above.

These measures should be reviewed after 6 months, or earlier if they create significant problems for users of the phone system.

ICT Unit
29 June, 2011.

Appendices

- Appendix A – Submission to ICT SG, February 2011. [Blue text.](#)
- Appendix B – Impact of introducing limits on costs of direct dialled calls
- Appendix C – Statutory basis for provision of telephone facilities to members
- Appendix D – current BT Ireland tariffs.

ICT Steering Group

Telephony costs

Discussion paper

Potential proposal

ICTSG is asked to recommend to MAC that

- calls to directory enquiry services (DQ services) from the Oireachtas phone system be blocked, with an exception for telephonists.
- in the interests of openness, transparency and accountability, current practice be modified so that all handsets connected to the Oireachtas PABX be ticketed in future, unless an alternative method of effectively regulating costs and preventing potential misuse can be implemented.

If these measures do not give rise to reductions in costs, further steps may have to be considered. These could include

- the policy of permitting unlimited phone calls by Members and their staff should be reviewed, with a view to introducing cost thresholds, above which charges will be automatically queried, and to introducing a policy restriction so that telephony facilities may be used exclusively for purposes related to or arising from parliamentary duties, and for 'reasonable personal use';
- the practice of permitting international direct dial outward calls be ceased, and that all international calls (including calls placed by Members and their staff) be placed via the telephonists, with an exception for Interparliamentary and Travel Sections;

Background

Arising from preparations for a tendering process, ICT Unit became aware that our monthly phone bills indicated that calls to DQ numbers cost about €16,000 p.a. On-line DQ services are free. Since this paper was first submitted in November 2011, the cost of DQ calls has risen – Eircom now charges up to €1.99 per minute for DQ calls.

In addition, multiple calls to various single numbers abroad during the year give rise to the following annualised charges. These examples represent costs of almost €6,000 p.a. and are based on call records which exclude calls costing more than €6.05.

Destination	Annualised charge, incl. VAT
Australia (mobile)	€1,249
Barbados	€140
Belarus	€285
Cyprus	€331 (actual cost in one month)
Kenya	€134 (actual cost in one month)
Lithuania (mobile)	€561
Malta (mobile)	€381
Pakistan (mobile)	€1,621
South Africa	€366
Spain (mobile)	€251
Turkey (mobile)	€191
UK (mobile)	€179
UK	€238
UK mobile	€370 – costs recovered from contractor

The proposal, that “calls to directory enquiry services (DQ services) from the Oireachtas phone system be blocked, with an exception for telephonists” is based on the fact that such calls are estimated to cost €16,000 in 2010 and these costs are generally avoidable. On this basis, it is not appropriate to continue to certify invoices for such services as being in order for payment, because they fail the ‘necessarily incurred in the conduct of public business’ test.

The proposal that “in the interests of openness, transparency and accountability, the Commission be asked to modify current practice so that all handsets connected to the Oireachtas PABX be ticketed in future, unless an alternative method of effectively regulating costs and preventing potential abuse can be implemented” would enable the Service to identify the handsets from which unreasonable use of the facility of free calls is being made. The simple change of logging calls may be enough to eliminate excessive use / misuse. Ticketing also places the staff who are asked to certify invoices in a better position, as they will then have access to the data from which individual charges can be queried. This is better than the current situation in which they are expected to certify invoices as being in order for payment, without knowing that the charges were in fact necessarily incurred in the conduct of official duties (or that they arose from reasonable personal use – which would not cover most of the traffic described in the examples above).

It is considered that measures to limit calls charges or to prohibit DDO (direct dial outward) international calls would be premature. Reductions in avoidable charges should initially be sought without implementing such measures. Consideration has also been given to imposing a technical limit on the maximum duration of any external phone call, but this is not technically possible.

Consideration has been given to issuing notifications when ‘exceptional’ use is detected. While ‘exceptional’ (most expensive, longest, etc) calls can be easily identified (subject to all handsets being ticketed), this requires a significant additional administrative overhead, and in a time of diminishing resources, should not be pursued as a first preference.

The ICTSG’s views on these issues are sought.

Appendix B – sample impact of introduction of cost limits.
Red shaded calls would have to be placed via Oireachtas telephonists.
Costs are based on BT Ireland tariffs, as most traffic is currently carried by BT.

Appendix C - Legal provisions governing provision of telephony facilities to members

From: Mellissa English/Office/Oireachtas
To: Communications
Cc: Mark Mulqueen/Office/Oireachtas@HOUSES, Cecilia NiChoileain/Oireachtas@HOUSES
Bcc: Charles Hearne/Office/Oireachtas

Privileged legal communication

The following are the relevant legal provisions governing the provision by the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission of telephony facilities to members of both Houses of the Oireachtas:

Article 15.15 of the Constitution provides:

The Oireachtas may make provision by law for the payment of allowances to the members of each House thereof in respect of their duties as public representatives and for the grant to them of free travelling and such other facilities (if any) in connection with those duties as the Oireachtas may determine.

The primary Act governing telephony facilities within Leinster House (the relevant legislation is different in respect of constituency facilities) is section 2 of the Oireachtas (Allowances to Members) Act 1962 which has been amended by section 11 of the Oireachtas (Allowances to Members) and Ministerial and Parliamentary Offices (Amendment) Act, 1992 (this section has been further amended but not in respect of telephony facilities within Leinster House). The section provides that:

The following facilities shall..... be granted to a member of Dail Eireann or Seanad Eireann: (a) free telephone calls from Leinster House....

The relevant current Statutory Instrument of application here is SI 36/2008 wherein it is provided in regulation 5 that:

Each member of Dail Eireann.....is entitled to.....one set of facilities as specified in Parts 3 to 5 of Schedule 1.....

Schedule 1 includes the following *inter alia* facilities:

Telephone handsets (with connectivity for local, national, mobile, premium rate and international calls, and with voicemail facilities where required) - at Leinster House only. One handset shall be supplied for each member and one handset shall be supplied for each person employed or engaged under these Regulations to provide secretarial facilities to the member in Leinster House.

Regards,

Mellissa English B.L.,
Parliamentary Legal Advisor.

Appendix D – current BT Ireland tariffs

The spreadsheet with current BT tariffs is embedded here. This spread sheet cannot be displayed here, as it has been protected against editing.

Please double click on this icon, and 'open' the file on your PC / laptop to see current tariffs.