

**Review of the System for Recording
Attendance of Members of the
Dáil and Seanad Éireann**

**Report by Trevor Reaney
17 February 2021**

1. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide advice to the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (the Commission) following a review of the System for Recording the Attendance (SRA) of Members of the Dáil and Seanad Éireann.

2. Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Review were agreed by the Commission on 12th November 2019. The review was undertaken independently by Trevor Reaney (former Clerk and Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Assembly) and supported by staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service. The ToR are attached at **Annex A**.

The objective of the review was to increase public confidence in the current system for verifying the attendance of Members at Leinster House.

The methodology for the review was:

- to seek information on international models from European parliaments and assemblies and undertake a desk-based review of responses.
- to undertake a desk-based review of systems in operation in the UK, Canada and New Zealand.
- to review the current market for biometrics.
- to consult with political parties and groups in the Dáil and Seanad.
- to consult with the Minister of Public Expenditure and Reform as the relevant Regulatory Authority.
- to seek administrative, technical and legal input from the Houses of Oireachtas Service.

3. Executive Summary

The review of the SRA was initiated by the Commission following alleged abuses of the system. The aim of the review was to identify measures which would enhance public confidence. The methodology for the review involved exploring international models, reviewing the market for biometrics, consultation with stakeholders and input from the Houses of the Oireachtas Service.

The review of international parliamentary institutions did not identify any models that would assist the Commission. No example of electronically registering a member's attendance exists and only one institution has plans to introduce such a system in the future. COVID-19 has been an unexpected factor in assessing options and will constrain consideration of any option which requires surface contacts. Increasingly secure systems for verification of identity are available in the market but many do not

fully eliminate the possibility of a third party acting on behalf of the individual. Facial identification or facial verification at the point of registration is most likely to give the highest level of public confidence.

The planned Integrated Corporate Services System will include a new system for registering Members attendance but this will not be available for another 2-3 years. An interim solution is therefore required and options have been identified and assessed against relevant criteria, primarily that of public confidence.

Having reviewed the possible options for an interim solution, and considered them against the identified criteria, the Commission may wish to consider options (1a) adding facial scanners to the VisionTime system and (1b) the VisionTime (fobbing) system being observed by CCTV. These options have the maximum potential to increase public confidence and are high on COVID-19 security.

Before progressing with any significant investment, it is recommended that the Oireachtas Service ascertain the longer-term policy of the Minister to be assured that the requirement to register attendance will continue for the foreseeable future.

4. Background/Context

The S.I. No. 84/2010 - Oireachtas (Allowances and Facilities) Regulations 2010 provided Members with a Travel and Accommodation Allowance (TAA) which is based on a banded system of fixed allowances for travel and accommodation costs incurred by Members in the performance of their parliamentary duties.

The Regulations require Members to verify the number of days of attendance at Leinster House. Attendance of less than 120 days per annum results in repayment of 1% of the annual allowance for each day below that number of days.

Under the Regulations the Commission is tasked with making such arrangements as are necessary to enable Members to record their attendance at Leinster House, including through electronic means. In 2010, the Commission approved an addition to the existing Oireachtas Service staff time recording system (VisionTime) to enable Members to use the terminals to register their attendance at Leinster House. Members register their attendance once per day and no specific time is recorded. The duration of a Members attendance is not recorded. The system is activated by Members presenting a fob to one of a number of available terminals. An individual fob is issued to each Member. Should a Member misplace their fob, a replacement can be issued immediately by the One Stop Shop. Only one fob is active per Member at any time. Provisions are in place to allow Members to reconcile their attendance record if they were unable to "fob in" due to being abroad on the performance of their duties, ill-health or in extraordinary circumstances.

In the autumn of 2019, media coverage of alleged abuses of the SRA had an adverse impact on public confidence in the current arrangements for registering Members' attendance. As a result, this review has been initiated by the Commission to identify measures which would enhance public confidence in implementation of

the Regulations.

Content of the Regulations is the responsibility of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. This review focuses solely on the responsibilities of the Commission. Should the Minister decide to review the Regulations at some point in the future, he may find it useful to consider the variety of systems used internationally; how they have evolved in recent years; and the content of this report.

5. Public Confidence

Public confidence in elected members and parliamentary institutions has been declining across the world in recent decades, as has been the case for most public service roles and institutions. The Westminster expenses scandal in 2009 brought an exceptional focus on how elected members are paid and financially supported in their parliamentary duties and the extent to which such support might be abused for personal gain. This created a ripple effect across the world and has resulted in radical changes to the systems in many countries including stricter rules on the use of financial support; establishing independent bodies to set pay and allowances; and the publication of the details of pay and allowances received by members.

It is clear that no system used internationally is the perfect answer to increasing public confidence and no system is 100% fool proof. It might be judged that changes to these systems over the years have arrested the decline in public confidence rather than increasing confidence, but that in itself is a valuable outcome.

Expectations of the public, along with the media, have resulted in less privacy and higher levels of scrutiny of an elected member's actions than at any time previously. This is a price that is now having to be paid by those serving in public office and who are in receipt of public funds.

In reviewing the SRA, the question of what will have a positive impact on public confidence is the primary consideration. Public confidence is a multifaceted issue and more subjective than objective in nature. However, the key issue is having a system that makes it impossible (or as close to impossible as can be) for anyone other than the Member themselves to register their identity on the SRA. The review therefore considers providing **certainty of identity** as the primary factor in improving public confidence.

6. International Models

In order to gain an understanding of best practice in recording the attendance of Members internationally and its connectivity, if any, with the payment of allowances, a desk-based study of systems used by Parliaments internationally was undertaken. A total of 32 parliamentary institutions in 27 countries, across the European Union (EU), the UK, Canada and New Zealand, have been considered. Responses from EU member states were obtained through the European Centre for Parliamentary

Research and Documentation (ECPRD). A list of institutions included in the review are listed in **Annex B**.

There is no single model of best practice in operation across these institutions. Each has elements of control and transparency to ensure that the financial support for Members is adequate, appropriate and represents value for money for their electorates. Various systems have developed over time in response to the specific circumstances of each country and institution and have been influenced by the learning from the Westminster expenses scandal of 2009.

Key points emerging from the information supplied by the institutions are summarised below:

- a. all institutions have some form of recording participation of members, usually within the records of plenary and committee proceedings;
- b. ten institutions (31%) require members to log on to access an electronic voting system for plenary sittings which also provides an electronic record of attendance;
- c. only five institutions (16%) maintain a stand-alone register of members' attendance. Of these, two are based on retrospective self-verification and three on personal signing of a daily attendance register;
- d. while some institutions publish certain activities of members (eg motions proposed, questions asked, debate contributions, votes), only two publish lists of members' attendances;
- e. twelve institutions (38%) have a direct link between salaries and attendance, either by a reduction in salary, if certain levels of unjustified absence are exceeded, or by having per diem fees which can only be claimed when in attendance;
- f. eight institutions (25%) have a direct link between non-salary allowances and attendance either by a reduction in the allowance, if certain levels of unjustified absence are exceeded, or by allowances which can only be claimed if in attendance;
- g. seven institutions (22%) have a direct link between both salary and non-salary allowances (a combination of points (e) and (f) above);
- h. sixteen institutions (50%) have rules which enable sanctions to be applied (i.e. reducing salaries or non-salary allowances) if a member does not meet a specified level of attendance or has a specified number of unjustified absences;
- i. twenty-nine institutions (90%) rely solely on vouched receipts and self-certified mileage claims for payment of subsistence and travel expenses;
- j. only one institution uses a banded system of travel allowances, another one uses a banded system for accommodation allowances and a third institution uses a points system to enable a certain number of journeys from home to parliament each session;
- k. one institution, which currently requires the signing of a register, plans to move to an electronic system using fingerprint technology.

The desk based review has not enabled an assessment of the level of public confidence in each of the systems to be undertaken. In any event, public confidence

is a multi-faceted issue which makes it extremely difficult to isolate direct cause and effect relating to members' activities, attendance and expenses.

7. Consultation with Stakeholders

On behalf of the Commission, the Ceann Comhairle sought observations and recommendations for change from political parties and groups in the Dáil and Seanad. He also sought views from the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, as the relevant regulatory authority. The Ceann Comhairle wrote to all stakeholders on 21 July 2020 and subsequent reminders were issued. A list of respondents is attached in **Annex C**.

The responses received included a number of points of detail. These are available for consideration by the Commission and the Houses of the Oireachtas Service and are not reproduced in this report. I have focused on the main points from the responses and summarise these below:

- the use of new technologies should be considered (eg fingerprint, facial, handprint, optical, photographic);
- monitoring and verification of the existing fobbing system could be undertaken by Oireachtas staff;
- that once per day registration is adequate;
- registration of attendance should be accommodated in all venues where sittings take place; and
- use of a fully vouched system was proposed by one respondent (note – such a decision would be outside the remit of the Commission).

Respondents also referred to any new system being subject to cost considerations; concerns about the retention of personal data; and the lack of public understanding of the work patterns of Members.

In his response dated 18 December 2020, the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Michael McGrath T.D., commented that the review of the SRA should lead to greater transparency; increased public confidence; be within the scope of the relevant regulations; uphold the integrity of the overarching regime; and stand up to scrutiny. The Minister stated that the review should consider new technologies, particularly those of a contactless nature in view of the COVID 19 pandemic (eg facial or iris identification) and also ensure that any proposals are cost effective.

8. Findings

International models and practice indicate that a variety of methods of administering and verifying travel and subsistence expenses are in operation worldwide for elected members.

Retrospective claims for expenses incurred, supported by mileage claims and/or receipts for each journey undertaken and accommodation used, is most common. An annual flat rate allowance (or similar), which has a link to the number of days attendance required, is only used by one other institution (the NI Assembly).

Attendance records are mainly derived from members' attendance at plenary and committee sessions of the institution. No institution maintains a stand-alone electronic register of attendance. Therefore, there are no direct comparisons with the system currently in use at Leinster House. The three institutions that require members to sign in do so by maintaining a manual sign-in register held for that purpose. In these cases, the Members sign the register in the presence of parliamentary staff. One institution, which currently requires the signing of a register, plans to move to an electronic system using fingerprint technology (the European Parliament).

The most common suggestion received from stakeholders was on the introduction of new technologies to replace the existing fobbing system.

A desk based review of the market indicates that a variety of biometrics and dual or multiple factor authentication are being used to provide security of identity. The range of biometric options currently available include:

- Fingerprint or palm print;
- Palm or finger veins;
- Facial, iris or retina recognition;
- DNA;
- Hand geometry;
- Odour or scent recognition; and
- Voice recognition.

The use of personal authentications is perhaps best developed in the financial services sector. These systems generally have some form of dual factor authentication (eg two passwords, a password plus a one-time use second verification code) and often use an individual's mobile phone in addition to their computer or primary device. These approaches have also been adopted by government agencies and by businesses to enable secure remote access and working. However, these systems do not prevent an individual from sharing their passwords or devices with another individual, if they choose to do so. Apps which rely on fingerprint activation usually have a security code alternative which could also be shared.

Facial recognition has developed in recent years in the area of air travel with facial recognition being used at airports both for security and passport controls.

The Oireachtas Service's Head of ICT has provided useful input to the review. In a paper on the future of recording Members' Attendance, he had suggested an interim solution of installing fingerprint readers at some of the VisionTime terminals. He also drew attention to the future potential of smart phones to enable additional parliamentary services for Members and the benefits of authentication via a dedicated tier of the Oireachtas wifi system. However, while the risks are less than

with a fob, the use of a mobile phone leaves open the potential for a device to be used by another individual. The same risk would apply to adapting security access swipe cards.

CCTV is a well tried and tested technology which is widely used as a deterrent and for retrospective identity checks. Retention of CCTV footage of "fobbing in" would provide a retrospective check, if an allegation of misuse of the SRA was made. It is noted that the increased use of CCTV is being adopted to provide greater certainty of identity in the Dáil voting procedures. [REDACTED] CCTV system is [REDACTED]

It should be noted that no electronic or digital system is 100% secure from the potential of abuse or hacking.

9. Implications of COVID-19

Since this review has commenced the COVID-19 pandemic has developed. The pandemic has introduced many constraints on society in general and on parliamentary institutions. Taking steps to mitigate the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus has now become a major consideration in life and must also be considered in this review.

In considering options for the future of the SRA, the additional criteria of being "COVID secure" has been added to the consideration. While the environment of COVID-19 is rapidly changing, at this stage it would appear that any new SRA system should seek to eliminate contact with shared surfaces, as far as is possible, or provide a sanitised method of doing so.

10. Other Relevant Systems

Plenary Voting

The plenary electronic voting system has recently been reviewed by the Committee on Procedures. The review, conducted by Professor David Farrell, has produced recommendations to improve the plenary voting system. His report was considered by the Committee on Procedures and his recommendations accepted. The recommendation that additional cameras be installed to record the act of voting has parallels with recording attendance in respect of the SRA.

In the future, there may be synergies which could be exploited for combined technological solutions for voting and registering attendance.

Integrated Corporate Services System

The Oireachtas Service's Human Resources IT system is planned for replacement within the next 2-3 years and will include a replacement for the existing staff attendance recording system. The SRA for Members will also be included within this new system and will provide an efficient integrated system which takes advantage of latest technological developments.

11. Option Development

The development of options has been undertaken against a number of criteria. The primary criterion is increasing **public confidence** in the SRA by providing **certainty of identity** (as referred to in paragraph 5 above). There are other relevant criteria and the full list is given below:

- Potential to increase **public confidence**;
- Proportionate **cost** (capital and revenue);
- Early **timescale** for implementation;
- **Practicality** of operation and administrative interventions; and
- High on **COVID-19 security**.

In considering options two broad approaches are available, either to **prevent** anyone other than the relevant Member from activating the SRA or to have a means of retrospectively **verifying** that the individual activating the SRA is the relevant Member. The options presented below cover both approaches but preventing anyone other than the Member from activating the system is the most desirable approach.

The status quo is always an option and it would score highly on cost, timescale, practicality and COVID-19 security. However, it has been excluded from consideration as its ability to provide certainty of identity, and therefore public confidence, has been undermined.

Costs

The cost implications for each option suggested for consideration would require detailed work by the Oireachtas Service and could only be fully known as a result of a procurement exercise.

Indicative costs have been included in relation to the options which involve either a biometric enhancement of the VisionTime system and/or the introduction of CCTV. The number of terminals to be fitted with either CCTV or biometric readers would have to be assessed in detail but could in the region of 6 to 10, placed at the most convenient locations for Members. A smaller number would obviously keep costs to a lower level, particularly if an interim solution was adopted

The indicative cost of supplying and fitting finger print biometric readers to 6 of the existing biometric ready terminals would be in the region of €5,250. Facial recognition readers could also be provided and fitted to 6 terminals at an indicative of cost in the region of €20,500. (Note that terminals cannot be used for both fingerprint/facial recognition scanners and fobbing. Designating or providing terminals "For Use of Members Only" may be required. The indicative cost of an additional terminal is in the region of €2,000).

The cost of these new technologies is reducing and, for example, individual facial recognition scanners are available in the market place for as little as €500 each and non-contact hand readers are available from around €750. However, a new infrastructure would have to be installed to accommodate such devices and costs/timescale would have to be assessed. It should be noted that installation of a new system for biometric scanners is likely to be greater than adding readers to the VisionTime system. However, a greater range of technical options may be available in the wider marketplace.

The Superintendent has helpfully obtained indicative costs for providing 6 CCTV cameras with facial recognition software, control equipment and associated installation. Such costs would be in the region of €24,000.

Each option under consideration will have associated administrative costs whether in the provision of staff to witness fobbing in, maintaining new databases/records or in dealing with subject access data requests. Such costs would need to be assessed by the Oireachtas Service.

Data Protection

Options for either the enhancement or replacement of the SRA system would involve the use of biometrics, facial images or CCTV. If biometrics or facial images are to be used, it will require a database to be created and maintained of Members' relevant information. A photographic database is unlikely to cause any problems as photographs of Members are already published on the Oireachtas web site. Biometrics would be subject to data protection regulations and may raise understandable concerns about security of data and privacy of individuals. Retention of CCTV footage will also raise data protection issues, particularly with images of staff using the terminals also being retained and those of visitors being inadvertently captured.

The Office of Parliamentary Legal Advisers (OPLA) has reviewed the options under consideration and provided helpful commentary. In the view of OPLA, any of the options set out below would fall within the scope of relevant Regulations. They highlight the data protection issues arising from creating and maintaining a database of biometrics or facial images. In respect of a photographic database, the OPLA is also of the view that it is unlikely to cause problems as photographs of Members are already published on the Oireachtas web site. Detailed legal advice would be required on any technological solutions and associated operational policies but justification could be argued under GDPR due to the strong public interest in transparency, accountability and the efficient use of public funds. The OPLA also highlight the need for any option to take account of public health concerns with

COVID-19 and the Commission's obligations under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005.

It should be noted that all electronic systems carry a risk of hacking and this must be addressed to ensure that adequate firewalls and data security protections are incorporated into whichever system is ultimately adopted.

12. Options for Consideration

Taking account of the current Regulations and the findings of this review, the following options are suggested for consideration:

1. Enhanced VisionTime System

Continue to use the current system with the addition of either:

- (1a) biometric or facial scanners (replacing the fob); or
- (1b) CCTV recording of fobbing in; or
- (1c) Oireachtas Service staff witnessing fobbing in.

2. Manual Sign-in System

Introduce a manual signing-in system with either:

- (2a) CCTV recording; or
- (2b) Oireachtas Service staff witnessing at sign-in desks.

3. New Electronic System

Introduce a new electronic system taking advantage of the latest technologies and authentication systems. This could be done as part of the planned Integrated Corporate Services System.

An assessment of these options against the criteria referred to above is set out in the following tables.

Option 1a	Enhanced VisionTime system using biometric or facial scanners
Public confidence	High – would provide certainty of identity and evidence to address any alleged abuses.
Cost	Medium - cost of installing scanners at a limited number (say 6) of the existing terminals estimated at €5,250 for fingerprint scanners or €20,500 for facial recognition scanners.

Timescale	Short-term – scanners are readily available and easily installed.
Practicality	Medium – would require a biometric or photographic database to be created and would require Members to use the scanners.
COVID-19	Variable security depending on type of scanner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insecure - fingerprint scanners would require surface contacts but this could be mitigated with the use of hand sanitiser and additional cleaning. • Secure - facial scanners would be contact free.

Option 1b	VisionTime system observed by CCTV
Public confidence	High – would provide certainty of identity and evidence to address any alleged abuses.
Cost	Medium/High - cost of installing cameras at 6 terminals estimated at €24,000.
Timescale	Short/Medium term – cameras could be added to the existing CCTV system in Leinster House following survey and development work.
Practicality	High – would not require any additional actions on the part of Members or Oireachtas Service staff but would require clear sight lines at each terminal.
COVID-19	Secure – does not require any surface contacts.

Option 1c	Enhanced VisionTime system witnessed by Oireachtas Service staff
Public confidence	Medium – would provide certainty of identity to address any alleged abuses but it may be perceived that Members could influence Oireachtas staff to their advantage.
Cost	High - would require staff to be available at all times and locations that Members are able to fob-in. Increased costs to provide staffing to undertake this function and to cover periods outside of normal working hours. (Staffing costs to be assessed by Oireachtas Service, if required).

Timescale	Short-term – may require the recruitment or redeployment of staff.
Practicality	Medium – as it is based on the current operating system but may create perception of potential pressure on staff.
COVID-19	Secure – does not require any surface contacts.

Option 2a	Manual Sign-in observed by CCTV
Public confidence	High – would provide certainty of identity and evidence to address any alleged abuses.
Cost	Medium/High - cost of installing cameras at 6 terminals estimated at €24,000.
Timescale	Short/Medium term – cameras could be added to the existing CCTV system in Leinster House following survey and development work.
Practicality	Medium – requires retention of manual register, updating attendance record by One Stop Shop and reconciling with CCTV, if an allegation is made.
COVID-19	Insecure – requires surface contacts but this could be mitigated with the use of hand sanitiser and additional cleaning.

Option 2b	Manual Sign-in witnessed by Oireachtas Service staff
Public confidence	Medium – would provide certainty of identity to address any alleged abuses but may be perceived that Members could influence staff to their advantage.
Cost	High - would require staff to be available at all times and locations that Members are able to fob-in. Increased costs to provide staffing to undertake this function and to cover periods outside of normal working hours. (Staffing costs to be assessed by Oireachtas Service, if required).
Timescale	Short-term – may require the recruitment or redeployment of staff.
Practicality	Medium – requires retention of manual register and updating of attendance record by One Stop Shop.

COVID-19	Insecure – requires surface contacts but this could be mitigated with the use of hand sanitiser and additional cleaning.
Option 3	New Electronic System
Public confidence	High – subject to final specification, could provide certainty of identity and evidence to address any alleged abuses and associated media coverage.
Cost	Unknown – costs not available at this stage but the cost for adding a Members’ facility to the system would be expected to be marginal.
Timescale	Long term – perhaps 2-3 years for development and implementation. Such a timeframe is too long for the purposes of this review.
Practicality	High – with input from users from stakeholders during development of the specification.
COVID-19	High – would be specified to be COVID-19 secure.

13. Way Forward

Given the planned development of an Integrated Corporate Services System, and the uncertainty surrounding the longer-term impact of COVID-19, there is merit in considering a phased approach to enhancing the SRA system. An interim solution could be adopted in advance of the implementation of the new Integrated Corporate Services System. Such a system would incorporate the latest developments in technology and authentication regarding security of identity. A phased approach would also provide an early response to concerns on public confidence and be cost effective.

Having reviewed the possible options for an interim solution and considered them against the criteria set out in paragraph 11, the Commission may wish to consider options 1a (adding facial scanners to the VisionTime system) and 1b (VisionTime system observed by CCTV) which have the maximum potential to increase public confidence and are high on COVID-19 security.

The Commission will rightly wish to consider the cost and value for money implications of any expenditure incurred. In doing so, the benefits of providing greater transparency and building public confidence will weigh significantly. Even at an indicative cost of €24,000, such an investment would represent less than 0.01% of the total annual expenditure on TAA (figures for 2019 - 191 Members received a total of €3,771,000).

The Regulations provide (para 4:10) that the Commission must make available the option for a member to record their attendance in writing. The options highlighted above provide a modern and progressive approach to managing the affairs of

Members and have the potential to enhance public confidence in the Oireachtas and its Members. The Commission will also be concerned about the public health risks of manual signing-in during the COVID-19 pandemic and will wish to adopt a COVID secure alternative at this time.

Before progressing with any significant investment, it is recommended that the Oireachtas Service ascertain the longer-term policy of the Minister to be assured that the requirement to register attendance will continue for the foreseeable future.

14. Acknowledgements

The author wishes to express his appreciation to all those who have so willingly and helpfully assisted with this review.

Terms of Reference for a Review of Attendance Recording System for Members of Dáil and Seanad Éireann

Background

On 12th November 2019, the Houses of the Oireachtas Commission agreed to review the current fobbing system by which Members record their attendance at Leinster House.

The system was introduced in 2010 to replace a previous manual signing in system. The procedure by which the system is governed is set out in SI84/2010 which provides that all Members in receipt of the Travel and Accommodation Allowance (TAA) must record their attendance at Leinster House. The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform is the Regulatory Authority for the oversight of the expense and allowance system.

The objective of the review is to increase public confidence in the fobbing system.

The terms of reference for the Review were considered by the Audit Committee and approved by the Oireachtas Commission.

The review will be led externally and supported by the staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service.

A draft Report of the Review findings will be considered by the Audit Committee in advance of its submission to the Commission.

Scope of the Review

Submissions by Parties/Groups

(a) Each party and group represented in Dáil and Seanad Éireann will be asked for its views on how the attendance system can be restructured in a way that increases public confidence in the system. Parties/Groups will, in particular, be asked for their views on the following issues:

- Is the requirement for a Member to confirm their presence at Leinster House once each day of attendance sufficient to count towards payment of the Travel and Accommodation Allowance?
- Given the need for Members to discharge duties outside Leinster House on a regular basis, how can the proven need for mobility be reconciled with any greater level of scrutiny/accountability than a once a day fobbing event?
- What measures need to be put in place to give greater certainty that the Member claiming attendance is the same person engaging with the system?
- What are the views on the current system of reconciliation where a Member may use a method other than fobbing to record their attendance?

Views by the Regulatory Authority

- (b) As noted above, the Minister for Public Expenditure is by virtue of the enabling secondary legislation (SI84/2010) the Regulatory Authority for the operation of the TAA allowance. As such, it is appropriate that the Minister be offered the opportunity to express his views on the effectiveness of the current attendance recording system and if any changes or improvements might be proposed.

International Comparison

- (c) To gain an understanding of best practice in recording the attendance of Members internationally and its connectivity, if any, with the payment of allowances, a focussed, desk-based study of systems in Parliaments overseas will be undertaken as follows: -

The Parliaments to be included in this study are as follows: -

- House of Commons /House of Lords
- Northern Ireland Assembly
- Scottish Parliament
- National Assembly of Wales
- Canadian Parliament
- New Zealand Parliament
- Parliaments in EU Member States
- EU Parliament

List of Parliamentary Institutions Reviewed

Belgium – Federal Parliament (House of Representatives)
Bulgaria – National Assembly
Canada – House of Commons
Canada - Senate
Croatia - Parliament
Denmark – Folketinget
Estonia – Riigikogu
European Union – EU Parliament
Finland - Eduskunta
France – Senate
France – National Assembly
Germany – Bundesrat
Germany - Bundestag
Hungary – National Assembly
Latvia - Saeima
Lithuania – Seimas
Netherlands – House of Representatives
New Zealand – Parliament
Northern Ireland - Assembly
Poland - Senate
Portugal – Assembly
Romania – Chamber of Deputies
Scotland - Parliament
Slovakia – National Council
Slovenia – National Assembly
Slovenia – National Council
Spain – Congress of Deputies
Sweden – Riksdag
Wales – Welsh Parliament (formerly the National Assembly for Wales)
Westminster – House of Commons
Westminster – House of Lords

(Note: a response was received from the Bundesrat of Austria which cross-referred to a response to be given by the National Council of Austria. A response from the National Council of Austria was not received. Therefore, the model operating in Austria was not considered during the review.)

List of Respondents to Consultation

Seanad Independent Group

Regional Group

Sinn Fein

Seanad Civil Engagement Group

Senators from the Fine Gael group

Rural Independents Group

Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform

