



Our Ref: 12/0081/PER

February 2011



Mr. John McGuinness, T.D.,
Chairman,
Public Accounts Committee,
Dáil Éireann,

Re. Appointment of the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG)

Dear Chairman,

Thank you for your letter of 2 February 2012 on the possibility of an input for the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) into the selection process for the next C&AG.

At its meeting on 11 January the Government decided to accept the resignation of the Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) with effect from 27 February. The Decision provided that the Minister for Finance, in consultation with the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, would make arrangements for the selection of a candidate, by open competition, to be proposed to the Dáil for nomination to the President for appointment as C&AG.

In line with the Government Decision this is the first time that the post of C&AG in Ireland is to be filled by open competition and it has been decided that the post will be filled using a TLAC- type approach. You will be aware that the TLAC's role is to recommend candidates for appointment to the most senior positions in the Civil Service. TLAC carries out this function in an independent manner and makes decisions strictly on the basis of the relative merit of the candidates for the positions concerned. It is not been the practice that a Member of the Houses of the Oireachtas would sit on a selection board for the appointment of a civil servant. As you can appreciate it would be important that there is nothing in the conduct of the upcoming selection and appointment process that would be perceived as compromising the independence of the post of the C&AG. I would also mention that, from the point of view of the job specification, the duties and functions of the C&AG are already provided for in the legislation.

I note your reference to a UK precedent in relation to such a role. It is my understanding that in the UK, the C&AG is an Officer of the House of Commons and is appointed by the Queen on a motion of the House of Commons, moved by the Prime Minister with the agreement of the chairman of the Committee of Public Accounts. In the UK therefore the C&AG is an officer of the Parliament while in this jurisdiction the C&AG is a constitutional officer independent of the Dáil and the Executive.

Given Minister Noonan's statutory role in relation to the C&AG I have consulted with him on your request and we share the view that we do not envisage a role for the Public Accounts

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Committee in the selection and appointment process in this case. Of course, once the appointment has been made and the new C&AG is appointed, the Committee will have ample opportunity to work with the new post holder.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brendan Howlin', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Brendan Howlin T.D.
Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform