Department of Finance
An Roinn Airgeadais
www.finance-ni.gov.uk

DoF PRIVATE OFFICE - NOTE OF MEETING

☐ Internal	☒ External

KN REF:	INV-1197-2024			
TITLE/ORGANISATION:	Meeting with Foras na Gaeilge			
DATE AND TIME:	22 July – 14:00 to 14:45 Pre Brief – 13:45 – 14:00			
VENUE:	☐ **PB**	☒ **Clare House**	☐ **OTHER:**	

ATTENDEES:
Chief Executive, Seán Ó Coinn (SOC)

Director of Corporate Services, Shane Ó hEidhin (SOhE)

☒ **Minister**	☐ **SpAd**	☒ **PS**	☐ **APS** ☐ **Office Manager**
OFFICIALS / OTHER	Patrick Neeson		

KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:

Section 35(1)(a)

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Introductions and Background to FnG and Irish Language Lead Organisations

- SOC provided a brief overview of the role of FnG – fund 25 projects/organisations. Range of educational and community projects. Half of money spent goes to community projects.
- Fund all aspects of books in the IL – support publishers and schools, distribution warehouse. Marketing project to promote reading of Irish
- Statutory responsibility for IL dictionaries (online platforms)/terminologies (EU).
- 340k people benefit from grant funding -summer camps, youth schemes.
- 1.6m access opportunities for using Irish language through FnG funding.

- Main objective is to promote language vitality for IL – UNESCO nine areas – FNG are involved in eight of these.

FNG Priorities and PfG

- Areas of PfG that are relevant - employment, education, communities. Childcare element to role of FnG – significant impact on communities.
- IL centres – mostly based in disadvantaged areas – have officers in the community.

FnG Funding Context

- SOeH – Finance director for FNG. Provided a set of slides to inform the discussion.
- Impact of imbalance in funding when compared with other similar organisations – 20 staff short for a standstill position since year 2000.
- Budget – explained the breakdown of the budget. Disproportionate spend on corporate services is a direct consequence on lack of funding.
- Discussed funding ratios between N&S and benefits of considering a change to assist unlock available funds.
- Set out the benefits to NIE if change in proportionality of funding were NI to assist fund FnG. FnG spend 40% of funding in North.
- Preference is for a degree of flexibility around the ratios +/- 5% by both governments. NSMC financial memorandum would permit this.
- SOC explained some of the challenges in funding for employment for FnG across the whole island while acknowledging the difficulties for DfC in managing its budget.

Minister

- Fully supportive of the work of FnG and recognises the challenges faced by the body.
- Set out the difficulties and challenges being faced by departments – referenced the budget agreed in April and the recent June MR.
- DoF officials engaging with counterparts and sponsor departments in South around funding for NSMC bodies.
- Section 35(1)(a) [redacted]

NISRA Collaboration

- FnG has been considering the statistics from the census to assist in how best it can use its funding. Would like to engage more fully with NISRA to access the NI census data.
- CEO of NISRA has been made aware and PN suggested that FnG approaches NISRA to discuss how they may be able to work together

North/South Pensions transfers

- Transferring pension between jurisdictions - changes in regulations has rendered this more difficult.
- RoI government has not continued to register pension schemes with HMRC. DoF officials will engage with southern counterparts (DPER) to ascertain if there are any steps that can assist in addressing the issue.
- DoF officials will seek clarification and follow up with HMRC.

ACTION POINTS / ISSUES AGREED & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE

Raise with Pascal Donohoe, DPER – pensions transfer issues between North and South.(PSD)

NOTE WRITTEN BY:	**DATE:**
Paula Dawson	22 July 2024