

Preparing for Regulation of Lobbying

Presentation to Association of Irish Local Government

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13 March 2015

Introduction

- Standards Commission – Members, existing supervisory functions and its approach as a regulator.
- Key areas in preparing for Regulation of Lobbying
- Communications Strategy

Standards Commission Members

- Chairman, Mr Justice Daniel O’Keefe
- Ombudsman
- Clerks of Dáil and Seanad
- C&AG
- Former TD, Mr Jim O’Keefe
- Supported by Secretariat staffed by the Office of the Ombudsman.

Standards Commission – Overview of existing supervisory functions

- Ethics in Public Office Acts – Disclosure of Interests, Tax Clearance
- Including complaints under Part 15 of Local Government Act 2015
- Electoral Acts – Disclosure of Donations and Election Expenditure
- Parliamentary Activities Allowance – Disclosure of Expenditure

Commission's approach as a regulator

- Experienced in supervising transparency regimes
- Approach is to assist compliance through.
 - Information
 - Guidance
 - Advice
- Enforcement only when absolutely necessary to achieve compliance

Key Areas for Regulation of Lobbying

- Design and Development of an Online Registration System
- Develop and Publish guidance and information material
- Develop and implement a communications strategy
- Appointment of a Head of Regulation of Lobbying

Online Registration System

- Project Board and Project Team established July 2014
- Developer selected November 2014
- User Acceptance Testing March 2015
- Go Live April 2015
- A simple system to facilitate online completion of returns.
- Simple and multi-faceted search facility

Guidelines and Information material

- Quick Guide to Regulation of Lobbying
- Guidelines for compliance with Regulation of Lobbying
- Guidelines for public bodies and Designated Public Officials
- Specific guidelines on lobbying with regard to development or zoning of land.

Communications Strategy - Objectives

- Ensure the value of the legislation and the register is understood by all stakeholders
- Ensure all those who are required to register are aware of this obligation
- Explain simply what is required and maximise compliance
- Ensure designated public officials are aware of the requirements of the legislation.

Key Messages to communicate

- Lobbying is a legitimate and essential part of the democratic process
- Register will enhance public confidence by providing easy access to information on lobbying activities
- Regulation of lobbying does not affect individual day to day interaction with public representatives
- Part of a suite of measures to increase transparency

Communications Plan

- Communications Working Group established
- Guidelines document to serve as core informational material
- Stakeholder education events
- Targeted advertising and media relations
- Direct engagement with influencers and stakeholders

Establishment of an Advisory Group

Advisory Group of potential users (IBEC, IFA, ICTU, the Wheel etc)

1. User Acceptance Testing on Online Registration System
2. Ongoing direction and advice on issues emerging
3. Comment and make recommendations on education and guidance material
4. Advise and assist in the implementation of a Communications Strategy