

*PARLAIMINT SHAORÁNAIGH SINSEARACHA
na hÉIREANN*

**CONSTITUTION OF THE
IRISH SENIOR CITIZENS PARLIAMENT**

VOICE OF OLDER PEOPLE

Introduction and Background

It is estimated that there are currently some 500,000 Senior Citizens in this Country and that a significant proportion of them are members or otherwise associated with the 200 or more organisations established primarily to respond to or otherwise service particular aspects of their interests and needs. Yet this large sector of Irish Society does not have any effective means of promoting its views with a single voice to Government or other appropriate agencies that may be in a position to respond positively to its concerns and to address in a national context key issues which affect the well-being of those who comprise the sector.

The role which a Parliament could play in providing this single voice has long been recognised by many of the existing organisations and it was again highlighted during the first Irish Senior Citizens Parliament Meeting which was held in the Dublin Institute of Technology, Bolton Street, Dublin in November, 1994 and attended by some 350 delegates, drawn from over 50 different organisations.

At a follow up meeting to the first Senior Citizens Parliament a broadly based Working Group was established to prepare a draft Constitution for such a Parliament and the fruits of this Working Group's deliberations is the document that follows:

Preamble

The more formal establishment of the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament is the obvious way to make progress towards providing an effective unified voice for the Senior Citizens of this country.

However, if such a body is to speak with authority on behalf of Irish Senior Citizens, it must enjoy the confidence and support of as many of them as possible as confirmed either through the organisations to which they belong or by some other form of affiliation. Special attention has to be given to ensuring that the Parliament communicates effectively and is responsive to the views and concerns of its membership in all parts of the country and hence it must also have an appropriate Regional structure.

It is appropriate to stress that the Parliament shall not have any role in regulating, controlling or otherwise becoming involved in the affairs of its associated organisations, unless requested to do so, as they carry out their own work and make representations in relation to matters which they consider are of importance to them or their members. Rather the aim will be to promote better co-operation and understanding, exchange information and to develop a spirit of mutual support among all those who share common goals in enhancing the lives of Irish Senior Citizens, now and in the years ahead.

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CONSTITUTION OF THE IRISH SENIOR CITIZENS PARLIAMENT VOICE OF OLDER PEOPLE

1. *Name*

The name of the organisation shall be the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament (known in short as ISCP). It shall be a non-party-political, non-sectarian and non-profit making autonomous organisation concerned with promoting the interests of retired and older people. The Parliament values the diversity of approach represented in its affiliated organisations (as well as its other members) with each of them retaining their own independence. The constituent members undertake to give ISCP their support and co-operation in the achievement of its objectives.

2. *Objectives of the ISCP*

The objectives of the ISCP shall be to provide Irish Senior Citizens with a unified voice in relation to:

- (a) Representing and Protecting their interests in relation to general policy matters which may impact on such areas as; ageism, social welfare, pensions, housing, health services, transport, security, taxation, leisure, social inclusion and general well-being.
- (b) Working with existing organisations to improve the services available for Senior Citizens (including representing their interests in specific areas) through better overall Co-ordination of the efforts of those who are involved or concerned.
- (c) Promoting better and closer Co-operation between different existing Senior Citizens Organisations in areas where they share common interests or goals and also improving channels of communication between them.

- (d) Supporting the implementation of the European Senior Citizens Charter, the Charter of Rights for the Elderly and similar initiatives.

3. *Functions of the ISCP*

- (a) To identify important issues that are of concern to, impact on, or otherwise affect the interests of Irish Senior Citizens.
- (b) To articulate and bring these issues and concerns to the attention of Government, other agencies and bodies, and the general public as considered appropriate.
- (c) To conduct research and investigations into various issues and problems in accordance with ISCP's objectives with a view to having it and its members better informed.
- (d) To communicate in an effective manner with its member organisations (or individual members) so as to keep them fully informed about its work and activities.

4. *Membership*

4.1 *Categories of Membership*

ISCP shall encompass the following categories of membership:

- (a) *Members* - open to organisations which are fully supportive of the objectives and functions of the ISCP and wish to become affiliated to it.
- (b) *Associate Members* - open to organisations which in general are supportive of the objectives and functions of ISCP but for various reasons may be reluctant to become organisational members at this stage.
- (c) *Individual Members* - open to individuals at the discretion of the ISCP Executive who are generally supportive of the objectives and functions of ISCP.

Membership may be subject to payment of a fee in accordance with Article 12.

4.2 *Voting Rights*

Voting Rights, will be available to Category (a) Members only. Each affiliated organisation in this category will be entitled to nominate three delegates to the ISCP. At the discretion of the Chairperson, the exercise of voting rights by individual delegates on behalf of their nominating Category (a) Members may be conditional on the payment of the appropriate membership fees by the Category (a) Member on whose behalf the delegate is proposing to vote.

4.3 *Autonomy of ISCP Members*

ISCP accepts as a fundamental principle that each affiliated organisation shall retain full autonomy to function in accordance with its own constitution or articles and memorandum of association etc. The main requirement expected of all categories of ISCP members is that they are fully committed to supporting its objectives and functions and to advancing the interests of Senior Citizens in the most effective manner possible, thereby creating a better society that is sympathetic to their interests and concerns.

5. *Organisational Structure of ISCP*

5.1 The ISCP National Organisational Structure will have three main elements as follows:

- (a) the Annual Parliament Meeting (APM) - which will be the body responsible for policy making and overseeing the work of ISCP.
- (b) The APM shall elect a President, Vice-President, Hon. Secretary, and fifteen other members, who will together comprise the ISCP Executive Committee (hereinafter referred to as “the Executive Committee”). The APM will also elect three Trustees (one of whom will be nominated by the APM as the Treasurer). The President, the Vice President, the Hon. Secretary and the Trustees shall collectively be described as the “Officers”.

- (c) Elected Officers / (members of the Executive Committee) will hold office for a period of one year unless they resign within that period. Vacancies to the Executive Committee will be filled by co-option at the discretion of the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee in filling a vacancy and exercising their discretion shall have regard (non-binding) to the candidate who received the highest number of votes before elimination.
- (d) The Executive Committee members shall be nominated as members of the Irish Senior Citizens Parliament (a registered company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital) (hereinafter called “the Company”). The Officers shall be nominated as Directors of the Company. The statutory Company Secretary of The Company shall ex officio be the Chief Executive Officer (the “CEO”) of the Executive Committee.
- (e) The Executive Committee shall hold meetings at venues throughout the Country to which members of affiliated organisations will be invited to attend. The purpose of these meetings will be to receive reports on the implementation of the decisions made at the APM, providing the Executive Committee with advice and direction, and assisting in two-way communication with and between ISCP members. These meetings may also assist in the preparation of the Parliament’s Budget or other submissions to Government.

The Executive Committee shall also hold at least two meetings per year to which at least two representatives of the Divisions of the Parliament shall be entitled to attend. The purpose of these meetings will be to assist the Executive Committee to implement the Work Programme of the Parliament at both local and national level. Each Division shall also be entitled to place an item on the Agenda of these meetings for discussion.

- (f) The Executive Committee shall be responsible for implementing the decisions made at the Annual Parliament Meeting and taking any other such actions that it considers appropriate to furthering the ISCP objectives and functions, as well as managing its own day to day business. It shall normally meet on a monthly basis.

- (g) The President or, if unavailable, the Vice-President shall preside at meetings of the Parliament and Executive Committee. In the absence of the President and Vice-President, the Executive Committee shall appoint from its members a Chairperson to preside at the meeting.
- (h) Except where otherwise provided in this Constitution, all decisions at the meetings of the Executive Committee shall be taken by a simple majority of those present and voting. In the event of a tie, the presiding Chairperson shall have a second or casting vote.
- (i) Special consideration will be given to gender balance in appointing the, Executive Committee and ISCP Committees.

5.2 *Sub-Structure of ISCP below that at National Level*

The ISCP will have a sub-structure based on local areas which will be called Divisions of the Parliament and shall be entitled to nominate three delegates to the Annual Parliament Meeting and place 2 Motions on the Agenda. Such Divisions shall be established as either “Area Divisions”, “Regional Divisions” or “Local Divisions” (collectively “the Divisions”) with the consent of the Executive and shall report to and be responsible to the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee (in consultation with interested members) shall define the eligible membership of each Division. The role and functions of the Divisions will be as follows:

- (a) To represent the Local Interests of Senior Citizens.
- (b) To make representations to the HSE, Local Authorities, Statutory and other Local Based Organisations on matters which affect the Quality of Life of Older People, including Social Welfare, Housing, Health.
- (c) To communicate with the Organisations which make up the Division, so as to keep them fully informed about its work and activities.
- (d) To bring to the attention of ISCP issues which require representation at National Level.

- (e) To assist the interests of the Parliament by lobbying TDs and other Local Politicians on the implementation of Parliament Policies.
- (f) To provide an Information Service to the Local Media on behalf of the Parliament.
- (g) To co-operate with other Local Organisations in advancing the interests of Senior Citizens.
- (h) To make reports on its activities to the ISCP from time to time as may be determined by the Executive Committee.
- (i) And any other functions which may be assigned by the Executive Committee.

Divisions of the Parliament shall elect a Chairperson and Secretary from its Committee which shall be representative of local groups in the area which are affiliated to the Parliament.

5.3 Regional Divisions of the Parliament may be established for areas of large centres of population which are fairly well defined. The establishment of a Regional Division shall be considered after application has been made by local Divisions of the Parliament. Regions shall elect their own Chairperson, Secretary and eight other members to its Committee. In general the range of regional activities shall mirror those at national level but may be more focused on regional issues.

5.4 The Divisions shall be required to furnish an Annual Report (including financial) to the Executive Committee.

5.5 ***Sub-Committees***

ISCP may establish Sub-Committees to further its objectives with membership drawn from those working actively in, or with expertise in particular fields. These may include the following:

- (i) Pensions and Taxation
- (ii) Housing
- (iii) Health Services
- (iv) Security
- (v) Leisure
- (vi) Social Needs
- (vii) Lifelong Learning
- (viii) Retirement Preparation
- (ix) Transport Services
- (x) European Affairs

The Divisions and the Sub-Committees shall abide by such Bye-Laws and Regulations as may be prescribed by the Executive Committee from time to time.

6. *Meetings*

- 6.1 At least ninety days notice of the **Annual Parliament Meeting** shall be given by the CEO in writing to each affiliated Organisation or member and to the members of the outgoing Executive Committee and the current Standing Orders Committee. This notice shall include the date, time and place of the meeting, and an outline of the Agenda together with an invitation to submit resolutions, nominations of candidates for election and other appropriate details.
- 6.2 Motions for the Agenda and Proposed Resolutions (including Proposals for amendments to this Constitution) shall be submitted to the CEO at least sixty days before the opening of the APM by the Executive Committee of its own motion or by organizations entitled to representation at the APM. No Organization shall be entitled to submit more than two motions and/or proposed resolutions. Every Motion and/or proposed Resolution must be signed by the authorised official of the organisation submitting it.
- 6.3 The Final Agenda shall be issued by the CEO at least fourteen days before the APM. The agenda shall include the full text of any amendment to this constitution being proposed by way of resolution.

6.4 One third of the delegates nominated to attend at the Annual Parliament Meeting shall constitute a Quorum.

6.5 All policy and financial motions at the Annual Parliament Meeting shall be passed by a majority of those present, and entitled to vote. Motions to amend this Constitution shall be proposed and seconded at the APM and shall only be passed by a two thirds majority of those present, and entitled to vote.

6.6 Election of Officers, Trustees and Executive Committee

(i) Elected Officers / (members of the Executive Committee) shall be elected for one year but shall be eligible for re-election at the Annual Parliament Meeting

(ii) Nomination of persons for election as officers, trustees and ordinary members of the Executive Committee may be made by any affiliated organisation.

(iii) Each nomination must be signed by an authorised official of the nominating organisation and must be forwarded so as to reach the CEO not later than 60 days before the opening of the Annual Parliament Meeting. A nomination should not be made without the expressed consent of the person nominated.

(iv) A list of the persons nominated as officers, trustees and members of the Executive Committee shall be sent to delegates at the same time as the Final Agenda for the Annual Parliament Meeting.

6.7 Standing Orders Committee

(i) Nominations of persons for election to the Standing Orders Committee may be made by any affiliated organisation entitled to representation at the Annual Parliament Meeting.

Each nomination must be signed by the authorised officer of the nominating organisation and be forwarded so as to reach the CEO not later than 30 days before the opening of the Annual Parliament Meeting.

A person nominated for election as a member of the Standing Orders Committee must be a delegate to the Annual Parliament Meeting. Officers, Trustees and members of the Executive Committee shall not be eligible for election to the Standing Orders Committee.

- (ii) The Standing Orders Committee shall comprise of seven members.
- (iii) A list of persons elected as members to the Standing Orders Committee shall be sent to delegates at the same time as the Final Agenda for the Annual Parliament Meeting.
- (iv) The Standing Orders Committee shall be elected by the APM and shall hold office from the closing of the APM at which they are elected until the closing of the next APM.
- (v) The sitting Standing Orders Committee shall meet prior to and during the Annual Parliament Meeting or Special Delegate Meeting and the Executive Committee shall provide a staff member of the Company for the assistance and technical guidance of the Standing Orders Committee.
- (vi) The Standing Orders Committee shall
 - (a) Elect its Chairperson, examine and report where necessary upon the credentials of delegates.
 - (b) Consider proposals of the Executive Committee and generally make recommendations as they may deem expedient to facilitate discussions and business of the Annual Parliament Meeting or Special Delegate Meeting.
 - (c) Consider the Motions and Nominations for elections submitted to the Annual Parliament Meeting or Special Delegate Meeting and report thereon as to whether they are in order.

- (d) Consider applications for the sale and distribution of literature during the Annual Parliament Meeting or Special Delegate Meeting and generally take charge of the meeting place and its precincts.

- (vii) All decisions of the Standing Orders Committee should be embodied in reports and submitted to the Annual Parliament Meeting or Special Delegate Meeting and may be subject to the decisions thereof.

6.8 Tellers and Scrutineers

- (i) 4 delegates or any other such number as may be agreed upon at the time of election shall be appointed by the Chairperson as Tellers whose duty shall be to count and record the votes on every occasion on which a decision is taken. Their decision as to the numbers recorded on any vote shall be final. In cases where the Tellers disagree the Chairperson of the Annual Parliament Meeting or Special Delegate Meeting shall order a recount.

- (ii) 4 delegates or any other such number as may be agreed upon at the time of election shall be appointed by the Chairperson as Scrutineers. They shall be responsible for the arrangements for the election by ballot of the officers, trustees and members of the Executive Committee. They shall take into account the number of ballot papers printed and distributed before the ballot is taken, destroy all unused ballot papers in excess of the number distributed to the delegates and take such steps as will ensure the validity of the election.

- (iii) No candidate for office may be appointed as Teller or Scrutineer.

7. Special Delegate Meetings:

- 7.1 A special Delegate Meeting of the Parliament may be convened by a decision of the Executive Committee to consider urgent business which requires a decision of the delegates from affiliated organisations. Urgent business may include amendments to the Constitution of the Parliament.

- 7.2 At least thirty days notice of a special meeting shall be given by the CEO, in writing, to each affiliated organisation and members of the Executive Committee. The notice shall include the date, time and place of the meeting and an agenda outlining the business of the meeting.

The agenda shall include the full text of any amendment to this Constitution being proposed by way of motion.

8. Method of Voting

- (i) Voting at the Annual Parliament Meeting or Special Delegate Meeting save as hereunder provided shall be by a show of hands, each voting delegate having one vote.
- (ii) The election of officers, trustees, Executive Committee members and members of the Standing Orders Committee shall be carried out using the single transferable system of proportional representation.

9. Limitation of Speeches

- (i) Subject to the discretion of the Chairperson of the Annual Parliament Meeting or Special Delegate Meeting the proposer of a Motion should be allowed 5 minutes and each subsequent speaker 3 minutes.
- (ii) No delegate shall speak more than once on the same question except the mover of the original Motion who shall be allowed 3 minutes to reply to the discussion.
- (iii) Each delegate on rising to speak must announce his/her name and the name of the organisation he/she represents.

10. Procedure Motions

- (i) Next Business: If a proposal to proceed to the next business has been moved and seconded, the proposer of the motion under discussion shall have the right to speak briefly in opposition; and the Procedure Motion shall then be put without further discussion.

If the Procedure Motion is carried, the discussion on the Motion originally under discussion shall be abandoned and the meeting shall proceed to the next business on the Agenda. If the Procedure Motion is lost, the discussion on the original Motion shall be resumed.

- (ii) Discussion to close: A proposal that the discussion be brought to a close shall be moved, seconded and decided without discussion. If the Procedure Motion is carried, the Motion originally under discussion shall be put and decided without further discussion other than a reply by the mover thereof. If the Procedure Motion is lost, the discussion on the original Motion shall be resumed.
- (iii) Question now put: A proposal that the question be now put shall be moved, seconded and decided without discussion. If the Procedure Motion is carried, the Motion originally under discussion shall be put and decided forthwith without further discussion. If the Procedure Motion is lost, the discussion on the original Motion shall be resumed.
- (iv) The acceptance of a Procedure Motion shall be at the discretion of the Chairperson of the Meeting.
- (v) Agreement to Remit: The mover of a Motion on the Agenda of the Meeting may be asked by any delegate, or by the Executive Committee to agree to remit the Motion for consideration by the Executive Committee, reasons being stated for such request. Where the mover so agrees, the Meeting will then be asked to approve the remit, and if it is approved, the Motion will be remitted to the Executive Committee. If the Meeting does not approve, the original Motion may then be withdrawn by the mover, or if not withdrawn, will then be voted on.
- (vi) Motion to Remit: Where the mover of a Motion is asked to remit but does not agree to the remit, any delegate may move that the Motion be remitted to the Executive Committee.

Where a Motion to remit is moved and seconded, then following the conclusion of the debate, the Chairperson shall take the Motion to remit and if it is carried, the Motion shall be remitted to the Executive Committee. If the Motion to remit is lost, the original Motion shall then be voted on.

11. Suspension of Standing Orders

- (i) A Motion to suspend Standing Orders must be submitted in writing to the Chairperson by the proposer and seconder who are delegates to the Annual Parliament Meeting. It must specify the Standing Orders to be suspended and the period of suspension. It must state the reasons for the urgency and importance, and if the suspension is sought for the purpose of giving consideration to a matter not on the Agenda, the reason for not submitting such matter by way of Motion in accordance with Standing Orders.
- (ii) A Motion to suspend Standing Orders may not be moved except with the permission of the Chairperson, and may not be adopted without the consent of two-thirds of the delegates present and voting on the Motion.
- (iii) The Chairperson, before giving his/her ruling, may at his/her discretion consult the Standing Orders Committee.

12. Finance

- 12.1 The Annual Parliament Meeting may in due course make regulations on the recommendation of the Executive in relation to affiliation/membership fees and other related matters.
- 12.2 The Company shall ensure that proper books of account and records shall be drawn up and kept at the office of the Company and shall report to the Executive of the ISCP as and when required.

13. *Secretariat*

- (a) The Servicing of ISCP will be undertaken by the Company.
- (b) The Company shall assist ISCP to fulfil its functions under the direction of its Annual Parliament, and Executive.
- (c) The Company shall operate with such staff as are approved by the Executive having due regard to the APM. The function of the Company shall be to implement decisions of ISCP and otherwise to take appropriate steps to further the aims and objectives of the ISCP.

14. *General*

14.1 The ISCP year shall run from 1st January to 31st December and the Annual Parliament will be held as close to the 31 March as possible.

14.2 *Notices*

Notices shall be deemed to have been properly served when posted by ordinary pre-paid post in an envelope containing the notice, addressed to each member's usual address.

As amended Annual Parliament Meeting March 2011