Northern Ireland Assembly

Committee for Finance
Room 346
Parliament Buildings

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To: Kathy O'Hanlon, Clerk to the Justice Committee

From: Peter Hall, Clerk to the Finance committee

Date: 8th October 2026

Subject: Call For Evidence on the Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill

Dear Kathy,

Following the Call For Evidence on the Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill, the Committee for Finance agreed to ask the Department of Finance if there is a policy locus for it in the provisions of the Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill and if it is engaged in respect of the financial cost for the Bill.

At its meeting on 7th October, the Committee considered a response from the Department in which it states that while there is not expected to be a direct policy locus, the Bill as introduced states that the Department of Justice may pay the Commissioner remuneration and allowances. Any remuneration would need to be consistent with pay policy and, depending on the arrangements introduced, may require DoF approval.
The Bill also states that the Commissioner has the power to employ staff as the Commissioner considers necessary, following approval of the Department of Justice and the Department of Finance.

The Department also states that the Bill is not expected to result in significant costs, as it is intended to apply only to serious and harmful conduct and is therefore expected to be used infrequently. The department's understanding is that some costs may arise for departments and the PSNI in producing guidance and enforcing the legislation, while any fines imposed would be paid into the public purse.

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The Committee agreed to share this information with the Committee for Justice.

You will wish to share this with your committee.

Regards,

Peter Hall
Clerk to the Finance Committee

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Point 16 – Members would ask the Department if there is a policy locus for it in the provisions of the Victims and Witnesses of Crime Bill.
In addition Members would ask the Department if it is engaged in respect of the financial cost for each Bill.

Response -

While there is not expected to be a direct policy locus, the Bill as introduced states that the Department of Justice may pay the Commissioner remuneration and allowances. Any remuneration would need to be consistent with pay policy and, depending on the arrangements introduced, may require DoF approval.

The Bill also states that the Commissioner has the power to employ staff as the Commissioner considers necessary, following approval of the Department of Justice and the Department of Finance.

The Bill is not expected to result in significant costs, as it is intended to apply only to serious and harmful conduct and is therefore expected to be used infrequently. The department's understanding is that some costs may arise for departments and the PSNI in producing guidance and enforcing the legislation, while any fines imposed would be paid into the public purse.