

Point 4 – Administrative and Financial Provisions Bill: Members considered the enclosed correspondence from the NI Assembly Audit Committee in relation to Clause 20 of the Bill and would request that the Department provide comment on the issues raised

Response –

- Following receipt of the correspondence from the NI Assembly Audit Committee in relation to Clause 20, the options were presented to the Finance Minister.
- On consideration the Finance Minister agreed with the Audit Committee's position, namely that Option 5 may be the most appropriate at this time.
- As such a proposed amendment to the Bill will be brought forward which will seek to remove Clause 20 from the Bill with responsibility for the appointment of the external auditor remaining with the Department of Finance.
- The Department has also noted Option 6, which could be considered over the medium term, in which the wider governance arrangements for NIAO are reconsidered.
- On this the Department is content that this is pursued in tandem with Option 5 and the Department of Finance looks forward to engaging proactively with the NIAO and Audit Committee on this matter.
- Formal letters from the Department to both the Finance Committee and the Audit Committee will issue in due course.