



Committee for Finance

Addendum Report on the Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Public Office (Accountability) Bill

Ordered by the Committee for Finance to be published on 30th September 2026

Addendum to Report: NIA 137/22-27 Committee for Finance

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Powers and Membership

Powers

The Committee for Finance is a statutory departmental committee established in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of Strand One of the Belfast Agreement and under Assembly Standing Order No 48. The Committee has a scrutiny, policy development and consultation role with respect to the Department of Finance and has a role in the initiation of legislation

The Committee has power to:

- consider and advise on Departmental budgets and annual plans in the context of the overall budget allocation;
- consider relevant subordinate legislation and take the Committee Stage of primary legislation;
- call for persons and papers;
- initiate inquiries and make reports; and
- consider and advise on matters brought to the Committee by the Minister of Finance.

Membership

The Committee has nine members, including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson, and a quorum of five members. The membership of the Committee is as follows:

Mr Matthew O'Toole Chairperson)

Ms Diane Forsythe (Deputy Chairperson)

Dr Steve Aiken OBE

Mr Gerry Carroll

Miss Áine Murphy*

Miss Deirdre Hargey

Mr Harry Harvey**

Mr Brian Kingston***

Mr Eóin Tennyson

*Miss Áine Murphy replaced Miss Jemma Dolan with effect from 7 September 2026.

**Mr Harry Harvey replaced Mr Paul Frew with effect from 23 September 2025.

***Mr Brian Kingston replaced Mr Phillip Brett with effect from 23 September 2025.

Further Committee Consideration

1. In its [8th Report](#), the Finance Committee concluded that following consideration of the Legislative Consent Memorandum laid on 19 December 2025, the Committee for Finance would reserve its position in relation to the Minister for Finance's motion to seek the Assembly's endorsement of the Legislative Consent Motion:

"That this Assembly endorses the principle of the extension of the provisions of the Public Office (Accountability) Bill to Northern Ireland".

2. On 24th June 2026, the Department of Finance informed the Committee that it was still its intention to seek the Assembly's legislative consent to the Public Office (Accountability) Bill extending to Northern Ireland. The Department also highlighted that the Bill's progress in Parliament was ongoing, with further amendment stages, at which the provisions could be extended to Northern Ireland, not expected until after Summer recess. The Department also indicated that it was also cognisant of the time pressures on Assembly business before recess. As a result, it intended to delay seeking the Assembly's legislative consent until after the summer recess. This correspondence can be found in **appendix 1** of this addendum.
3. At the Committee meeting on 9th September and being mindful of this impending consent, Members agreed to ask the Department of Finance for an update briefing.
4. Accordingly, a Departmental official briefed Committee on 16th September and updated Members on developments since the Committee's report had been published. The Hansard transcript for the briefing can be found in **appendix 3** of this addendum. During the briefing, the official reflected on the extended discussions between the UK Government and stakeholders about how the Bill's provisions would apply to security & intelligence officers. However, Members were assured that these discussions were concluded satisfactorily and that the

Bill has continued its legislative stages with remaining stages in the House of Lords expected before Christmas.

5. During the briefing, Members also noted the work between the Department of Finance and Scottish and Welsh counterparts as well as the work of the cross-departmental working group including the latter's engagement's with the wider public sector. The Chairperson explored this issue further; asking for further detail on the extent of guidance available to public sector bodies and public servants. In that respect, the official assured the Committee that the Department was keen to ensure alignment with the Cabinet Office as well as Scottish and Welsh Counterparts. Members also noted anticipated work between the Department of Health and the UK Department of Health and Social Care to support those particular sectors.
6. Finally, the Chairperson obtained important clarification about the nuances and applicability of definitions within the legislation.

Conclusion

7. Following the conclusion of the briefing, Members noted that the Department anticipated Royal Assent for the Bill in the New Year with an expected margin of 6 months to allow for implementation.
8. Minutes of the proceedings from 16th September, can be found in **appendix 2** of this addendum.

Links to Appendices

Appendix 1: Memoranda and Papers from the Department of Finance

View the Memoranda and Papers supplied to the Committee by the Department of Finance

Appendix 2: Minutes of Proceedings

View Minutes of Proceedings of Committee meetings related to the report

Appendix 3: Minutes of Evidence

View Minutes of Evidence from evidence sessions related to the report

This Report can be made available in a range of formats including large print, Braille etc. For more information please contact:

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