

Response ID ANON-J8TH-TTUG-2

Submitted to Northern Ireland Fiscal Council Bill - Call for Evidence
Submitted on 2025-08-19 16:23:01

Introduction

1 What is your name?

Name:

2 What is your e-mail address?

e-mail:

3 If you are providing a submission on behalf of an organisation, please state its name.

Organisation:

4 Do you consent to your submission being published on the Committee's website and included in the Committee's report?

Yes, publish but with my personal information and any content that could be used to identify me redacted.

Clause 1

Clause 2

5 Do you support the Fiscal Council having a statutory duty to examine and publish a budget assessment report for each fiscal year?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer and explain why. :

It is an imperative for public finances to receive due scrutiny, especially at a time of fiscal pressures as we are in now. For proper public administration budgets should be assessed.

6 Do you support the Fiscal Council having a statutory duty to examine and publish a fiscal sustainability report at least once a year?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer and explain why. :

Clause 3

7 Do you support the Fiscal Council having a statutory duty to publish a Budget Assessment report in response to the publication of the proposed budget for the year?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer and explain why. :

Absolutely - DoF should also, if it does not already, have a statutory responsibility to provide the Council with a copy of proposed budgets in advance of publication to allow the Council to prepare its report.

Clause 4

8 Do you support the Fiscal Council having a statutory duty to publish a Fiscal Sustainability report, inclusive of public revenue, public borrowing and accumulated debt, expenditure and other matters that the Council feel appropriate?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer and explain why. :

Candidly, this is the only 'one stop shop' for the listed information. DoF is as accessible and approachable as a hungry tiger.

Clause 5

9 Do you support the DoF being able to add or remove functions and responsibilities of the Fiscal Council through secondary legislation?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer and explain why. :

It is a body established by statute and by statute it is right that it should be changed. That is part of the democratic process.

Clause 6

10 Do you support the Fiscal Council having complete discretion to carry out its functions?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer and explain why. :

Due regard can be given to the effect on a Department or public finances. This is broad enough to allow the Council scope to pre-warn a Department or body if such an occasion arises but, candidly, if there is information which materially impacts on a department or public finances as described it is completely and utterly imperative but the Council be given freedom and independence to publish or withhold as it sees fit, or public in a format or way which mitigates against negative repercussions.

11 Do you support the Fiscal Council having the ability to consider the likely effect of a publish or proposed policy of a NI Department on public finances?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer and explain why. :

Obviously. This is surely one of the core functions of it. DFI wants to build Road X that costs X billions. Will that impact on a budget, even capital expenditure budgets? Yes and it needs to be scrutinised.

Clause 7, 8 & 9

Schedule 1: Part 1: General

12 Do you support that the Fiscal Council must aim to carry out its functions efficiently and cost effectively?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer and explain why. :

It would be rather ironic if the body securitising public finances did not have to operate cost effectively.

Schedule 1: Part 2: Membership and Staff

13 Do you support that appointments to the Fiscal Council are to be made by the DoF?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer and explain why.:

14 Do you support that the Fiscal Council should consist of a chair and at least 2 but no more than 5 members?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer and explain why.:

15 Do you support that the Fiscal Council can employ additional staff, including a Chief of Staff, with the approval of the DoF?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer and explain why.:

Schedule 1 Part 3: Committees, Procedure and Delegation

Schedule 1 Part 4: Information and Disclosure

16 Do you support that the Fiscal Council can access all government information in order to fulfil its functions?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer and explain why. :

Schedule 1 Part 5: Annual Review & Review of Councils Performance

17 Do you support that the Fiscal Council should report on its performance of duties and provide it to the DoF and the NI Assembly after each financial year?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer and explain why.:

18 Do you support that the Fiscal Council's performance should be reviewed by a person / body with the relevant expertise?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer and explain why.:

Schedule 1 Part 6 Finance and Funding

19 Do you support that the Comptroller and Auditor General must examine, certify and report on the Fiscal Councils statement of accounts?

Yes

Please give details to support your answer and explain why.:

Schedule 1 Part 7: Initial Membership of the Council

Schedule 2

Any other comments?

20 Do you have any other comments in relation to the Bill?

No

Please give details to support your answer and explain why.: