



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

WRITTEN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SCOTTISH COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC AUDIT AND AUDIT SCOTLAND ON THE BUDGET PROCESS IN SESSION 4 OF THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

Introduction

1. This document sets out the agreed administrative arrangements and procedures between the Scottish Commission for Public Audit and Audit Scotland in order to assist the SCPA in the discharge of its statutory duties under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act 2000. It is not intended to create any legal rights or obligations on either body.
2. A separate agreement between the Finance Committee and the SCPA exists setting out the arrangements for the scrutiny of the annual draft budget.

Audit Scotland's budget

3. The expenditure plans of any body which has a prior call on the Scottish Consolidated Fund will reduce the total amount available to the Scottish Government for inclusion in its plans. Audit Scotland's budget falls into that category. It is therefore important that accurate information about Audit Scotland's spending plans is provided to the Finance Committee, through the SCPA, and the Scottish Government at an early stage.
4. To this end, the SCPA, as the body responsible for examining Audit Scotland's expenditure proposals, will provide to the Finance Committee (as set out in the agreement between the Committee and the SCPA) no later than the end of the first week in November each year, its report on Audit Scotland's budget proposals for the next financial year. To accommodate the SCPA's work cycle, Audit Scotland will provide the SCPA with a detailed annual budget submission no later than 20 September each year.
5. Where Audit Scotland believes that it may not be able to meet the 20 September deadline, it will consult the SCPA on a revised timescale.
6. Audit Scotland will keep the SCPA informed of any substantive changes to Audit Scotland's budget in recognition of the fact that these would affect the Scottish Government's expenditure plans and the Parliament's consideration of them.
7. The SCPA normally expects to consider and, when it considers necessary, take oral evidence from Audit Scotland on its annual budget proposals in October to

allow the SCPA to report to the Finance Committee no later than the end of the first week in November.

8. The Secretary to the SCPA will give Audit Scotland as much notice as possible regarding dates for evidence taking sessions.

Audit Scotland's annual accounts

9. The SCPA is required to arrange for Audit Scotland's annual accounts to be audited and laid before the Parliament each year. To facilitate this, Audit Scotland shall arrange for an annual meeting to be held between it, the SCPA's appointed external auditor for Audit Scotland and, if necessary, the Secretary to the SCPA for the purpose of formally signing off the annual accounts. Once signed, Audit Scotland will formally submit, no later than sixteen calendar days before the final meeting of the Scottish Parliament before the summer recess, the accounts, and the auditor's report on these, to the Secretary to the SCPA who will arrange for the document to be laid before the Parliament and published.

10. Where Audit Scotland and/or the SCPA's external auditors believe that it may not be able to meet this deadline, it will consult the SCPA on a revised timescale.

11. The Secretary to the SCPA will seek to arrange for the SCPA to meet before the end of June each year in order to consider the accounts and the external auditor's report on these. The SCPA will, if it considers it necessary, take oral evidence from Audit Scotland and from its external auditor at this meeting.

12. The Secretary to the SCPA will give Audit Scotland as much notice as possible regarding dates for evidence taking sessions.

Review of this written agreement and annual work cycle

13. The SCPA shall keep this agreement under review and amend it as appropriate. In particular, it shall monitor any changes to the annual budget process and the implications this may have for the arrangements set out in the work cycle. It shall, in a timely fashion, seek and consider the opinion of Audit Scotland on any proposed amendments to the agreement. Audit Scotland may propose amendments to the agreement or work cycle whenever it considers necessary. Such amendments shall be discussed and then authorised by the SCPA if appropriate.

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