

# **DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL**

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**To: Departmental, Agency and Additional Accounting Officers**

## **ISSUES RAISED BY THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE - ACCURACY OF EVIDENCE**

In the Report on the Public Accounts Committee's hearing on the Control of River Pollution in Northern Ireland, the Committee has asked DFP to ensure that Departments are aware of the importance it places on Accounting Officers attending PAC hearings fully and correctly briefed and with accurate information. The relevant part of the Conclusion is replicated below.

*We find it totally unacceptable that Departments should provide this Committee with information that is incorrect. This is poor practice, and we emphasise that we expect witnesses to be fully and correctly briefed on the subject under discussion. If accurate information is not available at the time of the session, the Committee will normally accept a later note, but inaccurate information given in oral evidence undermines the Committee's proceedings. We expect DFP to ensure that Departments fully understand this point.*

DFP guidance on this issue is contained in paragraph 32 of the revised Accounting Officer Memorandum which issued to Departments in July 2000 as DAO(DFP) 9/00. It states:

*The Committee has emphasised the importance it attaches to accuracy of evidence, and the responsibility of witnesses to ensure this. The Accounting Officer should ensure that he or she is adequately and accurately briefed on matters which are likely to arise at the hearing. The Accounting Officer may ask the Committee for leave to supply information not within his or her*

*immediate knowledge by means of a later note. Should it be discovered subsequently that the evidence provided to the Committee has contained errors, these should be made known to the Committee at the earliest possible moment.*

Similar wording is in place in paragraph 23 of the NDPB Accounting Officer Memorandum.

**Action**

Copies of this letter should be sent to sponsored bodies.

*Andrew McCormick*

**ANDREW McCORMICK**  
**Treasury Officer of Accounts**