

Section 2

Resources

Background

The Commission continued to ensure that sufficient resources were available in order to fulfil the requirements of the Northern Ireland Assembly as defined in the Northern Ireland Act 1998. In presenting its initial budget requirements to the Assembly in February 1999, the Commission indicated that the budget had been established on the basis of a fully operational Assembly and a full complement of staff.

Assembly Estimates

Following the completion of the 2002 spending review by HM Treasury in June 2002, the Commission, together with all other public bodies in Northern Ireland, participated in the Budget 2002 exercise undertaken by the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP). This identified the forward demands in the Northern Ireland Vote for the forward three-year period from 2003-04 to 2005-06.

Following a detailed analysis of the Assembly Secretariat's forward work plan and the associated resource requirements of that work, the Assembly Commission advised DFP that it was content that the baseline previously debated by the Assembly provided sufficient resources to meet the Secretariat's day-to-day resource needs.

In respect to the development of Ormiston House, the Commission concluded that it would not be appropriate to identify any specific funding

requirements relating to this project as part of the Budget 2002 exercise, given the early stage of the development. DFP was advised accordingly.

Following suspension of the Assembly in October 2002, the Assembly Secretariat undertook a detailed review of the impact of suspension on forward resource requirements and identified a sum of £7.4 million, which was returned to DFP for reallocation to other spending priorities.

Financial Accountability

During the past year the Commission has continued to progress the introduction of processes designed to support high standards of accountability. To this end, the Commission appointed a Head of Internal Review to further enhance these systems. A number of key areas have been developed as a result of this appointment:

- The introduction of a corporate risk management strategy in the Assembly Secretariat;
- The establishment of an independent audit review committee; and
- The development of internal review activity plans;
- The formation of an internal fraud policy.

The resource accounts for the period 2001-02 were presented to the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in November 2002.

