

Assembly Information

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The Committee System

belong to the same political party as the relevant departmental minister.

Membership of Ad Hoc Committees is determined by the Assembly.

Quick Facts

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Most meetings of Assembly Committees are held in Parliament Buildings

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Committee meetings are mainly held in public session and visitors are welcome to attend

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The work of each committee can be viewed on the Assembly website at www.niassembly.gov.uk

The Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Northern Ireland (St Andrews Agreement) Act 2006 and Assembly Standing Orders provide for the establishment of 3 types of committees in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Statutory Committees

Statutory committees have been established to advise and assist each Minister on the formulation of policy in relation to matters within his/her responsibilities. There are 12 statutory committees:

- Agriculture and Rural Development
- Culture, Arts and Leisure
- Education
- Employment and Learning
- Enterprise, Trade and Investment
- Environment
- Finance and Personnel
- Health, Social Services and Public Safety
- Justice
- Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

- Regional Development
- Social Development

Each committee has legislative, scrutiny, advisory and consultative roles in relation to their respective department. Specifically, in accordance with the Belfast Agreement each has the power to:

- consider and advise on departmental budgets and annual plans
- consider secondary legislation and take the committee stage of primary legislation
- initiate inquiries and make reports
- consider matters brought to their attention by ministers

Statutory committees can also initiate legislation and have the power to require any person to attend their proceedings and to provide any documentation the committee may need in relation to its work. A person may have to pay a fine or even go to prison if they fail to attend a committee's proceedings, or if they do not produce documents when asked.

Standing Committees

Standing committees are permanent committees of the Assembly and have been established to carry out necessary functions. There are six standing committees:

- The [Public Accounts Committee](#) considers and reports on accounts laid before the Assembly.
- The [Audit Committee](#) exercises powers in relation to the operating expenses of the Northern Ireland Audit Office.
- The [Assembly and Executive Review Committee](#) considers any matters relating to the functioning of

the Assembly or the Executive Committee as may be referred to it by the Assembly.

- The [Committee on Standards and Privileges](#) considers specific matters relating to privilege and oversees the work of the Assembly Clerk of Standards.
- The Committee on [Procedures](#) considers and reviews on an on-going basis the Standing Orders and procedures of the Assembly.
- The [Business Committee](#) makes arrangements for the business of the Assembly.

Ad hoc Committees

Ad hoc committees are established as necessary to consider specific, time-bounded terms of reference that the Assembly may set. These committees usually only last as long as they are needed to carry out their work and report to the Assembly.

Committee Membership

Most statutory and standing committees have 11 members including a chairperson and a deputy chairperson. Exceptions are the Business Committee which has a maximum of 13 members and the Audit Committee which has 5 members.

Committee chairpersons and deputy chairpersons are appointed using a selection system (d'Hondt mechanism) that ensures each Assembly party is represented according to the votes it received in the election. Membership of the committees also reflects party strengths. The chairpersons and deputy chairpersons of statutory committees do not normally