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Dear Accounting Officer

NEW GUIDANCE FOR ACCOUNTING OFFICERS ON THE PARLIAMENTARY SCRUTINY OF PUBLIC SPENDING

This letter draws attention to the publication of three revised accounting officer guidance documents by the Treasury, namely:

- Parliamentary scrutiny of public spending (PSPS);
- The accounting officer's survival guide; and
- Making an accounting officer assessment.

The guidance documents are available as PDFs online at
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/parliamentary-scrutiny-of-public-spending>.

1. Parliamentary scrutiny of public spending

1.1 *Parliamentary scrutiny of public spending*¹ replaces the former *Guide to the scrutiny of public expenditure* published by HM Treasury in October 2004.

1.2 It is primarily aimed at assisting accounting officers of United Kingdom central government departments and organisations, senior responsible owners, senior officials, finance directors and others involved in the value for money scrutiny of government spending undertaken by Parliament. The guidance focusses on how to:

- engage with the National Audit Office on the Comptroller and Auditor General's value for money studies and reports;
- prepare for appearances before the Committee of Public Accounts; and
- respond to the Committee of Public Accounts' recommendations.

1.3 It should be of particular assistance and relevance to those in departments or organisations who have a role in briefing and advising accounting officers and others throughout the scrutiny process.

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https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486805/parliamentary_scrutiny_of_public_spending_2015.pdf

2. The accounting officer's survival guide

2.1 *The accounting officer's survival guide*² is intended to be of assistance to all accounting officers but should be particularly helpful to newly appointed accounting officers of arm's length bodies. It is intended to help new accounting officers understand their personal responsibilities and to help established accounting officers resolve problems arising from time to time.

3. Making an accounting officer assessment

3.1 *Making an accounting officer assessment*³ is designed to help officials advising accounting officers faced with challenging decisions on proposed policy initiatives where there are doubts about whether they meet the standards set out in *Managing Public Money*. It outlines a method of analysing a proposition against the standards of regularity, propriety, value for money and feasibility in order to assess how far a policy or proposal is compatible with these four key standards. It can enable the accounting officer to decide whether to seek a ministerial direction, or in the case of arm's length bodies, a board direction and, if so, on what grounds.

4. Circulation of the guidance

4.1 I should be grateful if the contents of this letter could be brought to the attention of all officials who are involved in spending scrutiny undertaken by both the National Audit Office and the Committee of Public Accounts.



Richard Brown
Treasury Officer of Accounts

² https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486677/AOs_survival_guide__Dec_2015_.pdf

³ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486678/AO_s_assessment_guide__Dec_2015_.pdf