

I'm Larry Honeysett and I have been Head of financial scrutiny within the House of Commons' scrutiny unit since 2012.

My role and that of my team I see as threefold

- to provide briefing, analysis, suggested questions and recommendations for members of Committees on financial issues relating to matters they are examining in the course of their inquiries
- to brief Members of Committees, and backbench members more widely on the financial content of government spending plans, outturn and performance, and suggest lines of scrutiny
- to act as a conduit for discussion and dialogue between Parliament and government- advocating on behalf of the interests of Parliament

By international standards, the UK has a weak and less developed system of ex ante budget scrutiny than many other parliaments. Thus Westminster starts from a low base. We don't have the equivalent of a Budget oversight committee, nor do we have an established process for consideration by select committees of Estimates.

But since 2017 there have been some modest but positive steps.

- Following a Procedure committee report, the allocation of Estimates day debates has been passed to the Backbench Business Committee. This has ensured that topics for debate are genuinely about spending in Estimates, and are chosen on the basis of strong bids and clear interest from backbench members.
- The Procedure Committee's report also led to a complete review of the supporting material provided to Parliament by government on estimates. The content and format of required Estimates memoranda has been clearly specified and departments have been enforced and the quality and content has improved considerably. This has enabled the Scrutiny Unit to produce various new briefings and visualisations to aid understanding by members of Estimates

We have also been working to further improve financial reporting.

- The Public Administration and constitutional Affairs Committee produced a wide ranging report on improving government accounts. This led to a six month review involving the Scrutiny unit, NAO and outside experts which in turn led to a government report with commitments to changes and improvement to financial reporting. These are currently due to be implemented next year

I'm happy to answer your questions on these and other issues.