

**Criminal Justice Committee
Wednesday 28 October 2026
9th Meeting, 2026 (Session 7)**

Pre-budget scrutiny 2027-28

Background

1. Pre-budget scrutiny is a key part of the Budget process, allowing committees to influence the Scottish Budget as it is being developed by the Scottish Government rather than commenting after it is published.
2. As part of pre-budget scrutiny, committees gather written and oral evidence to inform an evidence session with the relevant Cabinet Secretary and publication of a report. The Scottish Government must then respond, setting out how it has taken account of committees' recommendations in developing the Budget.
3. The Finance and Public Administration Committee produces an annual guidance document to support subject committees' scrutiny of the Scottish Budget, including pre-budget scrutiny. That Committee published the latest [Budget Process 2027-28: Guidance for Committees](#) on 18 June 2026.

Criminal Justice Committee scrutiny

4. The Criminal Justice Committee agreed to undertake pre-budget scrutiny of the Scottish Budget 2027-28 at its meeting on [9 September 2026](#).
5. The Committee agreed that its scrutiny would consider the impact of spending decisions across the justice portfolio, including on frontline services, prevention and rehabilitation, community justice, public service reform, the implementation of recent legislation and capital investment pressures. In addition to hearing from organisations with oversight of justice services and spending, the Committee agreed that its scrutiny should be informed by frontline practitioners and organisations delivering services across the justice system. This reflects the Committee's interest in understanding how financial decisions made at a national level are experienced in practice and how they influence service delivery, reform and prevention efforts across the justice sector.
6. The Committee's scrutiny will culminate in evidence sessions with the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and the Cabinet Secretary for Public Service Reform on 4 November 2026.

Written evidence received

7. To inform its scrutiny, the Committee sought written evidence from a range of organisations and stakeholders across the justice sector.
8. The Committee received 22 written submissions. These are available on the Committee's [Citizen Space webpage](#) and links are provided below.

- [Apex Scotland](#)
 - [Association of Scottish Police Superintendents](#)
 - [Criminal Justice Voluntary Sector Forum](#)
 - [Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service](#)
 - [Fire Brigades Union \(Scotland\)](#)
 - [His Majesty's Fire Service inspectorate in Scotland](#)
 - [HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland](#)
 - [HM Inspectorate of Prosecution in Scotland](#)
 - [Police Investigations and Review Commissioner](#)
 - [Police Scotland](#)
 - [Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists](#)
 - [Sacro](#)
 - [Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service](#)
 - [Scottish Fire and Rescue Service](#)
 - [Scottish Police Authority](#)
 - [Scottish Police Federation](#)
 - [Scottish Sentencing Council](#)
 - [Social Work Scotland](#)
 - [Simon Ernest Peers](#)
 - [The Wise Group](#)
 - [UNISON Police Staff Scotland](#)
 - [Victim Support Scotland](#)
9. At its meeting on [7 October 2026](#), the Committee also agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Public Service Reform seeking a written overview of the Scottish Government's Public Service Reform programme as it relates to the criminal justice system.
10. The Committee [received a response on 22 October 2026](#), which is available on the Committee's webpage.

Today's meeting

11. At today's meeting, the Committee will take evidence from two panels of witnesses.
12. During the first panel, the Committee will hear frontline workforce and practitioner perspectives. This session is intended to provide insight into how budgetary decisions and financial pressures are experienced by frontline practitioners and organisations delivering services across the justice sector.
13. During the second panel, the Committee will hear oversight and strategic perspectives on justice spending and reform. This session is intended to explore wider system-level issues, including performance, sustainability, prevention, public service reform and the effectiveness of current approaches to funding and delivery across the justice system.

Next steps

14. The Committee is scheduled to take evidence from the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and the Cabinet Secretary for Public Service Reform on 4 November 2026.
15. Following that session, the Committee will then consider a draft report or letter setting out its conclusions and recommendations to the Scottish Government.

**Clerks to the Committee
October 2026**