

JOINT COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE THE WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN MOTION

FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES

Memorandum by the Accounting Officer

1. A motion has been tabled by the Leader of the Opposition to establish a Joint Committee to Investigate the Withdrawal from Afghanistan. If the motion were agreed and a comparable decision were reached by the House of Lords, the Committee so established would continue until the end of the current session. The full text of the motion can be found on the [Order Paper](#).
2. Under Standing Order No. 22C, a motion which if agreed would have a direct consequence of additional expenditure under the House of Commons: Administration Estimate, estimated to be £50,000 or more shall not be considered by the House unless a memorandum setting out its expected financial consequences has been made available to the House by the Accounting Officer. This memorandum therefore seeks to set out the expected financial consequences were the House to agree this motion.
3. This memorandum relates only to the costs that would arise from the House of Commons Administration Estimate. It is usual for the costs of operating joint committees to be shared between the two Houses, but the balance can vary between individual committees. This memorandum necessarily makes assumptions about the cost contribution from the House of Commons, but it could be greater or smaller depending on the staffing and wider contribution from the House of Lords.
4. Working on the basis that the Committee will be established at short notice and will likely be required to begin its work rapidly to meet the timetable reflected in the motion, the staff team for the Committee would be formed by re-assigning staff currently supporting other Select Committees, with additional staff then recruited to fill those vacancies. This will necessarily mean that staffing levels for some other Committees will be reduced, pending recruitment of staff to fill vacant positions on the new Committee or on existing Committees. This means that during the first two months or so of operations the staffing of the new Committee will not involve additional expenditure, but a diminution in the resources available to existing Committees. The cost calculation in relation to staff costs therefore relates to a six-month period from December 2021 to May 2022. It is also possible that some specialist staff would be seconded from outside the House of Commons Service, but this is unlikely markedly to affect the overall costs.
5. Based on assumptions about the likely level of activity of a committee on a matter of this significance it is assumed that it requires seven House of Commons staff members. This core Commons team would be expected to operate alongside both staff resource from the House of Lords and resource and expertise drawn from the staff of existing select committees whose Chairs are proposed to be nominated to the Committee and specialist cross-cutting units within the Select Committee Team. The core Commons team would cost an estimated £225,000 for a six-month period. Support from the media team to promote the work of the Committee would cost an additional £10,000 for a six-month period. An average select committee spend approximately £8,000 on non-staff costs such as specialist advisers and publications in a six-month period. It is assumed that a further £7,000 would be spent on travel

within the United Kingdom by Commons members and staff. The costs to the House of Lords budget would be additional but would likely be less than that amount as the Lords Administration would also seek to redeploy existing staff.

6. Based on these broad assumptions the total anticipated cost to the House of Commons for the operation of the proposed Joint Committee until 31st May 2022, is £250,000.

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Accounting Officer
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