



House of Commons
Justice Committee

**Criminal courts charge:
Government Response
to the Committee's
Second Report of
Session 2015–16**

**Second Special Report of Session
2015–16**

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The Justice Committee

The Justice Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Ministry of Justice and its associated public bodies (including the work of staff provided for the administrative work of courts and tribunals, but excluding consideration of individual cases and appointments, and excluding the work of the Scotland and Wales Offices and of the Advocate General for Scotland); and administration and expenditure of the Attorney General's Office, the Treasury Solicitor's Department, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Serious Fraud Office (but excluding individual cases and appointments and advice given within government by Law Officers).

Current membership

[Robert Neill MP](#) (*Conservative, Bromley and Chislehurst*) (Chair)
[Richard Arkless MP](#) (*Scottish National Party, Dumfries and Galloway*)
[Alex Chalk MP](#) (*Conservative, Cheltenham*)
[Alberto Costa MP](#) (*Conservative, South Leicestershire*)
[Philip Davies MP](#) (*Conservative, Shipley*)
[Rt Hon David Hanson MP](#) (*Labour, Delyn*)
[John Howell MP](#) (*Conservative, Henley*)
[Dr Rupa Huq MP](#) (*Labour, Ealing Central and Acton*)
[Andy McDonald MP](#) (*Labour, Middlesbrough*)
[Victoria Prentis MP](#) (*Conservative, Banbury*)
[Marie Rimmer MP](#) (*Labour, St Helens South and Whiston*)

The following Members were also members of the Committee during the Parliament:

Richard Burgon MP (*Labour, Leeds East*), Sue Hayman MP (*Labour, Workington*), Christina Rees MP (*Labour, Neath*), and Nick Thomas-Symonds MP (*Labour, Torfaen*).

Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental select committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152. These are available on the internet via www.parliament.uk.

Publications

Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at www.parliament.uk/justicecttee and by The Stationery Office by Order of the House.

Evidence relating to this report is published on the Committee's website on the [inquiry page](#).

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Nick Walker (Clerk), Gemma Buckland (Senior Committee Specialist), Jonathan Whiffing (Second Clerk), Christine Randall (Senior Committee Assistant), Anna Browning (Committee Assistant), Yohanna Sallberg (Sandwich Student), and Liz Parratt (Committee Media Officer).

Contacts

Correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Justice Committee, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 8196 and the email address is justicecom@parliament.uk.

Second Special Report

We have received the Government’s Response to our Second Report of Session 2015–16, *Criminal courts charge*, HC 586. The response came in a letter dated 3 December 2015 to the Chair of the Committee from the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice. We publish Mr Gove’s letter as an Appendix to this Special Report.

Appendix: Government response

Letter dated 3 December 2015 from the Rt Hon Michael Gove MP, Lord Chancellor & Secretary of State for Justice, to Robert Neill MP, Chair, Justice Committee.

Government Response to the Justice Select Committee Report on the Criminal courts charge (Second Report of Session 2015–16).

Thank you for your report on the criminal courts charge. I have today laid a Written Ministerial Statement which sets out our approach towards financial impositions in the criminal courts.

As you know, the courts take money from offenders in a number of ways, including fines, the victim surcharge, compensation orders, prosecution costs and the Criminal Courts Charge.

This array of penalties, fines and charges is complex and confusing. I have therefore asked my department to review the entire structure, and purpose, of court-ordered financial impositions for offenders, in order to bring greater simplicity and clarity to the system.

This review will seek to achieve three goals: giving the judiciary greater discretion in setting financial impositions; making financial penalties a more effective tool in delivering improved non-custodial sentences; and ensuring that money raised through financial penalties plays an appropriate—and sustainable—role in supporting taxpayers to meet the costs of running the courts.

The review will consider how to ensure offenders make a fair contribution. The Criminal Courts Charge was introduced in order to ensure that those who break the law make a financial contribution to the costs of seeing justice done.

The basic principle behind the policy—that those who have broken the law should bear some of the costs of running the criminal courts—is right. However, as your committee set out in its recent report, there have been concerns raised about how this has worked in practice.

I am today laying in Parliament an amending statutory instrument which will mean that, as of 24 December, the criminal courts charge will no longer be imposed. Our review will consider alternative ways of ensuring that criminals pay their fair share.

Please accept this as my department's formal response to your report.