



PARLIAMENT OF SIERRA LEONE

Parliament Building - O.A.U Drive, Tower Hill, Freetown | admin@parliament.gov.sl | www.parliament.gov.sl

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PRESS RELEASE



PAC PROBES LOCAL COUNCILS IN SOUTH-EAST ON THE AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORTS

Alive with its constitutional mandate, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC), chaired by the Rt. Hon. Deputy Speaker of the Parliament of Sierra Leone, Hon. Ibrahim Tawa Conteh on 26/8/2024, concluded six (6) days engagements with Local Councils in the South-Eastern Regions of Sierra Leone based on the queries raised in the Auditor General's Reports for the financial years 2021 and 2022.

Making his statements during the course of the engagements, the Deputy Speaker of Parliament, who doubles as the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, Hon. Ibrahim Tawa Conteh reiterated the committee's crucial mandate including its pivotal role that is geared towards promoting transparency and accountability in the governance sphere of the country.

The Chairman promised to follow and implement the law to its fullest and encouraged the Councils to collect credible data with the view to increasing the generation of their own-source revenues to undertake development in their localities.

Commencing the hearings, the Committee observed that several documents requested by the Committee were not available including annual budgets, development plans and audited financial statements.

However, the Committee proceeded with its hearings and heard issues relating to administrative and financial discrepancies. As a result, vote controllers and other core staff of councils, both past and present were thoroughly scrutinized on accountable financial records as indicated in the 2021 and 2022 Audit Reports.

Prior to the hearings, the Chairman and some Committee Members did some unannounced visits to certain project sites to ascertain and confirm the levels of work done, given value for money.

Many audit queries were either wholly or partially resolved pending a determination by the Auditors and others were recommended for follow-ups including the sale of Bo Club House, which the Committee had ordered an injunction for anyone to stay action, pending an engagement with the chief, former chairman, Albertson and the land owning families, who had sold the property after the expiration of the lease.

Probing further, the Committee ordered certain councils to employ revenue collectors in order to increase revenue mobilization, and also spoke on the need for councils to collaborate and cooperate with chieftom authorities to mobilize more revenues for the development of their localities.

Overall, the Committee strongly recommended that the Valuation Units in councils be supervised directly by the Chief Administrators to tap more information for purposes of revenue generation. The Committee also observed that councils are weak in the collection of own-source revenues and recommended that certain councils should increase their staff strength and collaborate with chieftom authorities to collect more revenues to develop their communities.

Engaging further, the Committee resolved that the Local Government Service Commission should provide training to enhance robust revenue mobilization for Chief Administrators, their Deputies and other staff of councils.

Concluding, the Chairman said "doing the right thing is difficult", but admonished them to always "try to do the right things," in light of transparency and accountability in governance.

The Committee will continue its hearings in the North and North-Western regions of the country to look into issues raised by the Audit Reports for 2021/2022.

Parliamentary and Public Relations Department, Sierra Leone Parliament.
Contacts: +23278495023/+23276625960/+23278697776/+23277473804
Email: www.parliament.gov.sl