

FINANCE COMMITTEE

DRAFT BUDGET 2014-15

SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH WOMEN'S BUDGET GROUP

1. The Scottish Women's Budget Group (SWBG) welcomes this opportunity to present evidence to the Finance Committee and support the approach of the Budget Strategy Phase. For over ten years, the SWBG has pressed for the integration of equality analysis in the budget process of the Scottish Government. Drawing on our expertise from academia and practice in local government, voluntary and third sector organisations, and private business, members of the SWBG have consistently presented evidence of practice in gender analysis of budgetary processes from elsewhere, evidence of the absence of gender analysis in the Scottish budgetary process and the impact that has on advancing gender equality in Scotland and achieving the equality outcomes expressed by government.
2. During this time period there have been significant advances in the process and analysis within the Scottish Government, most notably, the introduction of the Equality Budget Statement in 2009. While SWBG has remained positive and supportive of the EBS, we have also consistently called for the EBS to link strategically to the National Performance Framework (NPF) and the Government Economic Strategy (GES). In evidence to both the Finance and Equal Opportunities Committee, as well as direct representations to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Sustainable Growth through the Equality and Budgets Advisory Group, SWBG has argued that the quality of analysis within the NPF/Scotland Performs and the GES, and the impact of the EBS are undermined if they are not interlinked conceptually and in practice.
3. SWBG has proposed that the EBS reflects the extent to which policy proposals and spending allocations support or advance the objectives of the GES and contribute to progress against the indicators within the NPF. We encourage the Finance Committee to support this approach and to incorporate it into the deliberations of the Committee in its scrutiny of the forthcoming Draft Budget and Equality Budget Statement.
4. Evidence from other countries emphasises the need for sustained political will and leadership from elected members and officials in Finance Departments, the adoption of processes and indicators that allow for robust equality analysis and to track progress towards cross-cutting equalities objectives, underpinned by a commitment to integrating equality into all aspects of government policy of which the budget is the principal expression of its priorities.
5. I would be pleased to provide further evidence in writing or in person to the Committee in support of the comments in this brief response. SWBG look forward to the publication of the Committee's consideration of the Strategy Phase and to commenting on the Draft Budget and Equality Budget Statement in due course.