Further to my appearance before the Local Government and Regeneration Committee on Wednesday 2 November I agreed to provide further information on a number of issues.

Firstly, I was asked for my views in response to the evidence from Mr Callum Chomczuk of Age Scotland which suggested that only 19 per cent of funding from the health and social care change fund was being directed towards preventative spend. In this regard I would like to take this opportunity to explain to the Committee that as part of the Reshaping Care for Older People programme, the Change Fund was established to change the way the total resource of approximately £4.5 billion per year is spent on health and social care provision for people aged over 65 years.

We are asking that Partners should have a clear strategy to invest upstream in anticipatory and preventative approaches that will help to both manage demand for formal care, and support carers when more people are at home. Over the four years of the Change Fund to 2015 we would expect to see the proportion of funding allocated to preventative and anticipatory care and proactive care and support at home increase. But this will not happen overnight, so during this period we will work with partnerships to compile and monitor more targeted information about their Change Plans on spend, activity and variation, as we also look to collaborate with them on the development of longer term Joint Commissioning Strategies covering the period 2012-2020. We will be issuing more guidance about this to partnerships in due course.

I was also asked for my views on the SOLACE benchmarking report which, at the time of the Committee meeting, I had not seen. The current position is that this report has still to reach the Scottish Government and clearly I do not yet have a view on it at this stage. I understand from the evidence provided to the Committee by COSLA immediately before me that the COSLA leadership board were to discuss the report on Friday 4 November and that they were to take a view after that about whether the report needed to go to their Leaders meeting on 18 November. I would then expect the report to come to the Scottish Government and we will look for a discussion with COSLA soon after that.
I can confirm that I did write to Councillor Keenan, COSLA’s Resources and Capacity Spokesperson on 21 September and although this letter was not made public, I attach a copy for the Committee’s information.

I also said in a reply to Ruth Davidson that I thought that it was in 2009-10 that the Scottish Government relaxed some of the collection arrangements for business rates to provide a bit more time at the acute period of financial difficulties. I agreed to check the exact date and I can confirm that it was indeed 2009-10.

I can also confirm to Kevin Stewart that, as promised, I am about to make further representations to the UK Government expressing the Scottish Government’s concerns over the interest rates for the Public Works Loan Board.

I trust that this information is sufficient for the Committee to prepare the first draft of its budget report.

JOHN SWINNEY