Dear Secretary of State,

Invitation to appear before the Welfare Reform Committee

Thank you for your letter of 12 October declining the Committee’s invitation for you to appear before it.

The Committee is extremely disappointed that you have declined its invitation, particularly following the positive commitment that you gave in the House when asked by Dr Whiteford whether your new ministerial team would engage with the Welfare Reform Committee.

The Committee feels very strongly that evidence from you is important in the Committee’s work of scrutinising Scottish Government policy in relation to devolved matters and monitoring the implementation of the Welfare Reform Act in Scotland.

The Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities has, for instance, in evidence to the Committee made several references to difficulties in the flow of information from your Department. We would be interested to ascertain your perspective on this and other issues.

In inviting you to attend, the Committee was, of course, aware that a number of UK Ministers have appeared formally before committees of this Parliament to provide evidence on matters where UK Government policy on reserved matters impacts on devolved responsibilities.

That this has happened suggests to us that formal appearances by UK Ministers at Scottish Parliament committees are not necessarily viewed as inappropriate or undermining the role of UK Parliament committees.

The Committee therefore asks you to reconsider your decision and reissues its invitation to you for you to appear before it.
Yours sincerely

MICHAEL MCMAHON MSP
CONVENER