

Finance and Public Administration Committee

Medium Term Financial Strategy Review

Submission from the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

Dear Convener,

Medium Term Financial Strategy

I am writing further to your Committee's recent request for input to its review of the content of the Scottish Government's Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

I would firstly like to recall to you the conclusions of our predecessor Committee as set out in a letter to your predecessor on 4 December 2019.

This concluded that, while the first MTFs (published in May 2018) "...had some (limited) portfolio detail" and did contribute to the Committee's 2019-20 pre-budget scrutiny, "the second MTFs (May 2019) was much sparser in detail containing no specific reference to health spending, no medium-term focus strategy" and "lacked any detail on prioritisation of spend".

In line with these conclusions, subsequent MTFs publications have lacked the level of portfolio detail needed to provide meaningful context for the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee's pre-budget scrutiny.

My understanding of the original intention behind these publications was that they would include five-year projections at broad portfolio level and would set out how spending in different areas meets Scottish Government priorities.

If future MTFs publications were better aligned to this intention, I believe the Committee would find them an extremely useful tool that would be of great assistance to its pre-budget scrutiny.

At the same time, I appreciate that in the light of recovery from Covid, and a particularly adaptive approach to health spending priorities, it can be challenging to have detail in current circumstances.

There is, however, a previous Scottish Government commitment to bring forward a medium-term financial framework for health, which remains outstanding, and I feel may be of far more use to us.

It may be that providing greater detail in future MTFs publications will remain difficult until such times as that medium-term financial framework for health has been finalised.

I hope you find this input useful to your Committee's MTFS content review.

Yours sincerely,

Gillian Martin MSP
Convener, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee