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7 August, 2025

Dear Convener,

I provided evidence at the Finance and Public Administration Committee on 24 June and committed to follow up with further detail on several areas of interest.

The Committee asked for a breakdown of the areas of growth in the Civil Service in recent years. The Scottish Government core workforce increased by 39% between 2019 and 2025 following the transfer of new powers and functions, the expansion of digital capability, and responses to major events like COVID-19 and the Ukraine conflict. Main areas of growth included Health and Social Care (accounting for 27% of the growth), DG Corporate (28%), DG Net Zero (18%), DG Communities (9%), and DG Education and Justice (9%).

Growth trends have corresponded to key events and priorities. For example between 2019–2020 growth was largely due to devolution of powers such as Social Security, Net Zero policy areas, and EU Exit preparations. From 2020–2022, COVID-19 was the main driver of growth, especially in Health and Social Care, however there was also growth in Economy to respond to the wider impact of the pandemic. Over the period of 2022–2025 whilst the directly employed workforce has increased, the overall workforce has reduced by 5%, due to a substantial reduction in the number of contingent workers.

It is important to note in considering the future outlook that several areas that were drivers of growth, such as Social Security and the Ukraine response, have peaked and are already downsizing as the context changes.

As you are aware, the Scottish Government published the [Public Service Reform Strategy](#) in June setting out its vision to go further and faster to deliver the services that people across Scotland need and deserve. It seeks to reform services to ensure every pound spent delivers optimum value and includes a commitment to reduce the annual combined corporate costs of the Scottish Government and Scotland's public bodies by £1bn over five years.

The Committee also asked for data on disciplinary cases taken in relation to any civil servants not complying with working from home requirements. Since March 2020 (the start of lockdown) to date, there have been three instances of formal disciplinary action taken against civil servants working from home for not meeting working week requirements or breaching informal working arrangements. Managers are

misconduct, including ensuring staff comply with agreed working hours and managing any individual issues as they arise.

Finally, the Committee asked about risk assessment in relation to the sustainability of the university sector in Scotland. The Executive Team has had a number of updates on the sustainability of the higher education sector as well as the specific situation at the University of Dundee and support for that institution's recovery. The Scottish Government corporate risk register, as well as the Director-General Education & Justice and Directorate for Lifelong Learning and Skills risk registers, require assurance on the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) strategy and ability to allocate funding to support a high performing, coherent and sustainable tertiary landscape. Within its statutory powers the SFC has a role in supporting the sector and therefore considers any sectoral risks and associated commensurate risk management within its own risk register and risk management arrangements. Scotland's universities are of course independent and autonomous and risk management exists within these institutions to address financial stability and sustainability at a local level.

I trust this provides the further detail the Committee was seeking on the issues raised.

Best wishes,

Joe Griffin
PERMANENT SECRETARY