



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Jamie Hepburn MSP
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Public Audit Committee
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The Scottish Parliament
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Dear Jamie,

Shared outcomes framework

I write in response to your letter received by the clerks on the afternoon of 9 March 2022, regarding the Shared Outcomes Framework for the work of Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council, which we understand was published by the Scottish Government that same day.

The Committee notes from your letter that it was your intention for this information to support the Committee's evidence session the following day with the Director-General Education and Justice on Audit Scotland's [Planning for skills report](#). Given the importance of this document to the evidence session, I wish to express the Committee's extreme disappointment that it was made available to us at such short notice.

Indeed, the late receipt of this information provided the Committee with little to no meaningful opportunity to fully review the framework before its meeting. As such, rather than the information supporting the evidence session as you had hoped, its last-minute circulation severely obstructed the quality of our evidence session, and more crucially, our ability to scrutinise the framework in detail. As I made clear to Mr Griffin and his colleagues at the conclusion of the meeting, had we known that this information was imminent, we would have sought to re-schedule the session to take

account of this important document, and to enable a more comprehensive discussion to take place.

We note the joint letter from Mr Griffin and the Interim Director, Fair Work, Employability and Skills Director, Helena Gray, issued on the same day as the evidence session apologising unreservedly for not having given the Committee further advanced sight of the Shared Outcomes Framework. While we appreciate the prompt action taken by your officials to recognise this mistake, we are deeply concerned at the lack of respect that appears to have been shown to the Public Audit Committee by the way this information was shared with us.

Turning to the framework itself, the Committee considered it in more detail at our meeting on 17 March. While we acknowledge that it demonstrates some signs of progress by the Scottish Government in defining the strategic direction and delivery of skills alignment and outcomes, we are also aware that it was developed “at pace with partners in order to get the best possible product”¹.

The Committee recognises the importance of progressing this agenda quickly, particularly given the lack of progress on skills alignment over an almost five-year period. We also note the hard work that will have gone into preparing this document by officials. However, we have identified a number of concerns relating to the quality and readability of the final output, which we believe demonstrates that the framework was produced in a hurry.

Indeed, we are strongly of the view that the framework is loaded with bureaucratic language that is largely inaccessible to the lay person with an interest in how the Scottish Government is progressing its work on skills alignment. In many areas we feel that the framework lacks sufficient detail, and we generally note a number of presentational errors including missing wording. All of this feedback demonstrates the rush at which we believe this document was prepared in, which does a disservice to the credibility of the document put before us for consideration.

To that end, the Committee would be grateful if the Scottish Government would work to prepare an Executive Summary to capture, in plain English, what this framework sets out to achieve and how it will seek to do it, alongside with its partners, and by when.

The Committee would be grateful for a response by **Friday 22 April 2022**.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Leonard MSP
Convener

¹ Official Report, Public Audit Committee, 10 March 2021, Column 3