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Craig Hoy, MSP for Dumfriesshire
Social Justice, Housing and Local Government
Committee

Your ref: Email 20 October, Assistant Clerk to Social Justice, Housing and Local
Government Committee

Our ref:

27 October 2026

Dear Convener,

At my Committee appearance in September I committed to providing an update on tracking of headcount reductions and the cost of the civil service.

With respect to Core Scottish Government, internal monthly management reporting of headcount numbers and staffing costs is subject to scrutiny and oversight as part of routine governance and control procedures. I review performance against Core Scottish Government headcount reduction targets on a monthly basis.

Every quarter, the Scottish Government publishes statistics on the number of people employed in the public sector by major workforce group ([Public Sector Employment in Scotland Statistics for 2nd Quarter 2026 - gov.scot](#)). More granular quarterly public sector employment statistics by organisation has also begun to be published, to provide further transparency ([Public sector employment in Scotland: employment by organisation - gov.scot](#)). For Core Scottish Government, quarterly workforce statistics are published ([Scottish Government workforce information - gov.scot](#)) including workforce numbers (for directly employed and non-directly employed workers), staff sickness absence, and staff diversity information.

It is important to note that the data reported for the 'devolved civil service' in these statistics is wider than Core Scottish Government, and includes a number of operational public bodies, such as the Scottish Prison Service.

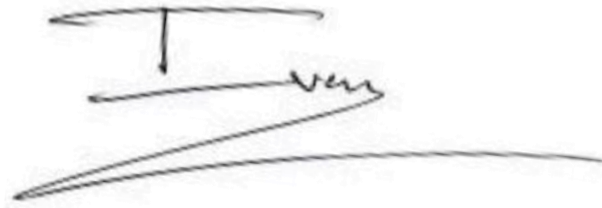
Monthly tracking of headcount movements and staffing costs is expected to be routine activity within all public sector organisations using internal management reporting, as part of senior management oversight and control.

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Annual paybill costs for public sector organisations are reported within published annual accounts. Scottish Government publishes a Pay and Workforce Factsheet estimating the total paybill costs for the devolved public sector, split by major workforce group ([Annex: Pay and Workforce Factsheet - Scottish Budget 2026 to 2027: integrated public sector pay and workforce policy - gov.scot](#)). The most recent estimate of the total 2025-26 total public sector paybill is £28.1 billion. The latest estimate of 2025-26 Core Scottish Government staff costs is £730 million, compared to £724 million in 2024-25, which represents a 2.5% reduction in real terms over that period.

I hope the Committee finds this information useful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ivan McKee', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

IVAN MCKEE MSP

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