



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Social Justice and Social Security Committee

Kenneth Gibson MSP
Convener
Finance and Public Administration Committee

25 March 2025

Dear Convener,

Inquiry into the Scottish budget process

Thank you for your letter of 26 February, seeking views on how the Scottish budget process has worked in practice during this parliamentary session and details of any improvements that can be put in place in time for the next parliamentary session.

The Committee considered your request at its meeting of 20 March and agreed to delegate to me responsibility for replying to your letter.

The Social Justice and Social Security Committee has a wide remit, which overlaps to a significant extent with the remits of some of the other subject committees. Our Committee has also worked jointly with the Criminal Justice and the Health, Social Care and Sport Committees this session on tackling drug deaths and drug harm.

Under the current budget arrangements (set out in the document “Guidance for Committees” – available on your committee’s web-pages¹), committees are asked to report their pre-budget findings to the relevant Ministers by letter or report, at least six weeks before the Scottish Government’s budget is published.

This is normally done around the end of October or at the start of November for an early to mid-December publication date for the Scottish Government’s budget.

The “Guidance for Committees” document indicates (paragraph 6) that there is no requirement for pre-budget letters/reports to be copied to the Finance and Public Administration (FPA) Committee. Committees also do not tend to routinely share their pre-budget findings with each other.

The Scottish Government will then include within its budget document a summary of how parliamentary committees have influenced the formulation of the budget.

Whilst the “Guidance for Committees” document acknowledges that it is not possible for committees to undertake detailed budget scrutiny of every area within their

¹ [Budget Process 2025-26: Guidance for Committees](#)

remits, it would be helpful if there was oversight of the areas being scrutinised by individual committees to determine whether any key budget areas have been or will be missed during the pre-budget scrutiny process.

This oversight role could perhaps be undertaken by the Conveners' Group or the Finance and Public Administration Committee.

An oversight process might also identify budget areas which span the remits of more than one committee to determine whether a cross-cutting topic which was not chosen for pre-budget scrutiny by one committee, could be picked up instead by another committee.

Similarly, oversight of the pre-budget process might identify where two committees had chosen the same cross-cutting topic to focus on. There may be potential for those committees to undertake joint budget scrutiny of an issue, which could minimise duplication. Alternatively, one of the committees may decide to focus their scrutiny on another issue instead.

It would also be helpful if there was some analysis of the budget areas covered by committees at the pre-budget stage to determine whether there are any issues which are routinely being missed.

This analysis could perhaps be undertaken by SPICe or the Finance and Public Administration Committee.

Adopting this approach could improve the influence of committees on the Scottish Government's budget, as well as leading to better outcomes.

Yours sincerely,



Collette Stevenson MSP
Convener
Social Justice and Social Security Committee