



Committee on the Scottish Government Handling of Harassment Complaints

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Dear Ms Evans

Thank you for your early response to my letter of 2 September.

The Committee considered your response at our meeting on 5 September. It raises further questions on which we are seeking more information.

You indicate that established procedures were followed to agree the final sum to be paid in respect of the expenses of the judicial review awarded to Mr Salmond. Please confirm what process was followed. In doing so, it would be helpful for this to be provided in a manner that ensures the Committee is clear of the steps taken by the Scottish Government [and Ministers] to mitigate the cost to the public purse.

In addition, please advise whether the steps taken here are any different from steps taken in previous circumstances of this kind and, if so, why this is the case.

In seeking this information, we are mindful that court proceedings against Mr Salmond are active and that detailed accounts could contain personal or sensitive data. The Committee therefore wishes to be clear that it is restricting its current focus to steps taken after the court award of expenses to mitigate the cost to the public purse. It does not want to see other information at this stage but may seek this detail once its formal inquiry commences. Therefore, please confirm that this information will be preserved in line with our earlier request on the preservation of information.

You also advise that expenditure incurred in the settlement of the judicial review expenses will be published on the Scottish Government website, alongside all other Scottish Government expenditure over £25,000. Can you advise when you expect this information to be published (if it has not already been published) and where it will be available.

Finally, I would like to raise a more general concern in relation to the provision of information for the Committee.

While it is helpful to receive the details of the settlement of expenses, the Committee is frustrated about finding out about this through the media. The Committee also notes that the responses to written parliamentary questions S5W-24819, S5W-24820 and S5W-24821 on this issue contain more information than is in your response to my letter.

We accept that the media reports were not prompted by the actions of the Scottish Government. However, as a courtesy to the Committee it would have been helpful to have received the information set out in your response without the Committee having to actively seek it. I therefore seek your assurances that you will alert the Committee to any further matters related to the Committee's inquiry before they appear in the public domain, no matter how they got there.

It would also be helpful if the Committee could receive the same level of detail on matters within its remit as contained in any other information available in the public domain (for example, answers to Parliamentary questions).

The Committee intends to meet again before the October recess. We will advise you of the date of the meeting in due course. It would be helpful to have a response to this letter by Thursday 26 September.

Yours sincerely

Linda Fabiani MSP
Convener
Committee on the Scottish Government Handling of Harassment
Complaints