



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee

Derek Mackay
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Sent by email only

14 September 2017

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Draft budget 2018/19

The Economy, Jobs and Fair Work Committee considered its approach to scrutinising the draft budget 2018/19 at its meeting on 12 September.

As you are aware, in its report on the draft budget 2017/18, the Committee stated:

To fulfil our scrutiny role effectively there must be sufficient time to hear, question and assess evidence. That was not the case this year. We are though aware that the Finance Committee is examining the matter and we remain hopeful that circumstances better suited to full and effective scrutiny will be put in place by the time of next year's budget process.

The Committee wants to undertake effective scrutiny of this year's budget and is very concerned that the circumstances have not changed. Although the exact timing of the publication of the draft budget is not known, we expect to get the figures late in the year. This will severely constrain the time available to the Committee to scrutinise the proposed spend within our remit.

The Committee has asked me to write to you expressing members' concerns about this issue and to ask if the Scottish Government is able to address the timing difficulties in any way or, at least, provide the Committee with some advance information to allow it to scrutinise the draft budget in a meaningful way.

In addition, the Committee would ask that when the draft budget is produced, the accompanying notes provide clarity and transparency in exactly what each budget line relates to.

The Committee acknowledges the work of the Budget Review Group and its recommendations and the value of year around scrutiny. Indeed, the Committee has already taken evidence from the enterprise agencies on their 2017/18 spend. However, the Committee is keen to carry out effective scrutiny of the forthcoming draft budget and finds itself unable to do so due to a lack of timely information.

I am copying this letter to the Convener of the Finance and Constitution Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gordon Lindhurst". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Gordon Lindhurst MSP
Convener