Dear Convener

BUDGET 2020-21: PRE-BUDGET SCRUTINY

Thank you for your letter of 7 November 2019 setting out the views of the Equalities and Human Rights Committee as part of its pre-budget scrutiny, and the Committee’s report of the same date ‘Looking ahead to the Scottish Government’s Draft Budget 2020-2021: Valuing the Third Sector.’

This year’s Scottish Budget is taking place in exceptional circumstances caused by the UK Government. The significant delay to the UK Budget and the associated uncertainty have had a serious effect on the Scottish Budget, and its introduction has been delayed as a result.

As a consequence, the Scottish Parliament’s time for consideration of the Scottish Budget will be reduced if a new Budget Act is to be in force for 1 April 2020, which the Government considers essential. Scottish Ministers are appreciative of the Scottish Parliament’s understanding and flexibility in these circumstances.

I am delighted to say the Equalities and Human Rights allocation has been significantly increased and now stands at its highest ever level of £30.2m.

The increased Equality and Human Rights budget will allow us to continue to promote equality and human rights through investment in organisations working to achieve equality for women and girls, including preventing gender-based violence, improve policy coherence and enhance the Government’s focus on equality and human rights. It will provide increased resources to respond to the First Minister’s National Advisory Council on Women and Girls Reports, and support the work of the First Minister’s Human Rights Leadership Taskforce.
We are also increasing support to the Violence Against Women and Girls sector through revised funding streams and supporting work to embed equality and human rights more firmly across Government. All our work in this area underpins the full range of this Government’s priorities and supports National Performance Framework outcomes.

I am providing this response to the committee’s pre-budget scrutiny report today, on the day that the Scottish Budget is published, to inform the committee’s consideration of the Budget. Annex A to this letter provides a response to the points raised in your letter, and annex B covers the points raised in the Committee’s report.

CHRISTINA MCKELVIE