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Kenneth Gibson MSP
Convener
Finance and Public Administration Committee

By email

20 May 2024

Dear Convener

Thank you for the opportunity to give evidence to the Finance and Public Administration Committee on 7 May.

At the session I said I would reflect on the Scottish Government approach to providing updated financial information for the National Care Service (NCS) Bill. In the case of the NCS Bill, the Minister wrote to the Committee providing updated financial information in the format of an updated FM, because there had been a re-phasing of the plans for delivering the NCS, which meant significant changes to the overall estimated costs of the Bill as introduced. As I understand it, it was not lodged and exists only as an annex to correspondence. It does not have formal status under Standing Orders, which only provide for revised or supplementary Financial Memorandums at Stage 2.

The difference between the approach on NCS and the approach taken in respect of the Police (Ethics, Conduct and Scrutiny) Bill is one primarily of form. I provided to the Committee updated financial information under cover of my letter of 1 May 2024. It was not in the form of a financial memorandum but that was to avoid any confusion about the status of the document.

Turning to the impact of the Bill on front line policing, as raised by both you and Mr Halcro Johnston, I would note that, within the training cost estimates now provided, there is a significant sum allocated for abstraction costs. It is important to reflect these costs in the financial memorandum as this shows the value of the time lost whilst officers undertake training to understand the impact of the legislation to then allow them to carry out their front-line policing role effectively to allow public trust and confidence. Provision for abstraction costs will allow officer time to be backfilled minimising the impact on frontline policing. This is, of course, subject to future budget decisions and the Chief Constable will remain responsible for decisions on deployment in any given circumstance.

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I hope this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

ANGELA CONSTANCE

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