

Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee

3rd Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Tuesday 25 January 2022

Note by the clerk

Budget Scrutiny 2022-23

Introduction

1. All Committees now undertake a full year approach to budget scrutiny. This involves undertaking pre-budget scrutiny of the Scottish Government's draft budget before it is published and writing to their respective minister with their pre-budget report.
2. Following publication of the budget, the Committee agreed to undertake a follow-up session to hear witnesses' views on the contents of the budget, and to what extent issues raised by the Committee are being addressed. This also provides a useful foundation for further work that Members may wish to undertake later this year.
3. An emerging area for the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee is to consider the implications of human rights for the budget. For example, a key recommendation of the [National Taskforce for Human Rights: leadership report](#) is to incorporate the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) into Scots law, as well as rights for women, disabled people and minority ethnic communities.

Call for views

4. This year the Committee agreed to focus on budget scrutiny from a human rights perspective. To inform its consideration, it issued a [Call for Views](#) which ran from 1 to 24 September. [Published responses](#) are available on the Citizen Space platform and can also be accessed via the Committee's [website](#).
5. The Call for Views took account of some of the questions raised in a [blog on human rights](#) budgeting by Dr Alison Hosie of the Scottish Human Rights Commission in relation to resource generation, resource allocation and whether budget processes are transparent, participative and accountable.

Pre-Budget Scrutiny

6. In 2021, as part of its pre-budget scrutiny, the Committee heard from three panels of witnesses and the Cabinet Secretary on [28 September 2021](#) and on [5 October 2021](#).
7. Following these sessions, the Committee [wrote to the government on 5 November 2021](#) with its observations and recommendations on:
 - Overall approach (and human rights budgeting);
 - Equalities budgeting;
 - The budget process;
 - Tax policy and human rights;
 - Data, tracking spend and understanding impacts of spend;
 - Participation and engagement;
 - Advocacy
8. The Government [published the budget](#) 2022/23 on 9 December 2021. A [SPICe briefing](#) summarising the main points is available here. The budget was also accompanied by the [Equality and Fairer Scotland Budget Statement](#). The [Cabinet Secretary replied](#) on 13 December 2021.

Oral evidence

9. At this meeting, Members will hear again from members of the first panel from 28 September which comprised economists and budgeting experts. It will explore some of the issues arising from the budget and in the Cabinet Secretary's response. The Committee will hear evidence from—:
 - Chris Birt, Associate Director for Scotland, Joseph Rowntree Foundation
 - Dr Angela O'Hagan, Chair, Equality Budget Advisory Group (EBAG)
 - Emma Congreve, Knowledge Exchange Fellow, Fraser of Allander Institute

Next steps

10. The Committee will consider the evidence it heard and make a decision on what action, if any, it wishes to take.
11. The Committee has also agreed to SPICe recruiting an academic Fellow who will work with the Committee over the coming months to look at some practical steps on human rights budgeting using a case study. Work on the case study will begin in April 2022.

Committee Clerks
20 January 2022