

# Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee

20th Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Tuesday 24 October 2023

Note by the Clerk

## Pre-Budget Scrutiny 2024-25

### Background

1. All Committees now undertake pre-budget scrutiny of the Scottish Government's draft budget which is subsequently published later in the calendar year. The purpose of pre-budget scrutiny is for Committees to produce, report and provide comment to the Scottish Government with the aim of influencing the budget when priorities are set.
2. A key feature of the full year approach to scrutiny involves each Committee writing to their respective Minister with a pre-budget letter around six weeks prior to the publication of the budget.
3. The letter sets out the Committee's views on the delivery and funding of existing policy priorities, any proposed changes and how these should be funded. The Committee intends to publish its pre-budget letter in early November.

### The Committee's Approach

4. Over the past two years, the Committee has built a solid understanding of human rights budgeting and a useful evidence base and examples of how the principles of human rights budgeting can support budget scrutiny. This reflects the Scottish Government's stated intentions of incorporating the UN Convention of Human Rights into Scots' Law.
5. At its meeting on 23 May, the Committee agreed its broad approach to pre-budget scrutiny for 2024/25 would comprise a three-year plan to look at each principle of human rights budgeting in turn – participation in year 1, transparency in year 2 and accountability in year 3.
6. This year's pre-budget scrutiny focussed on participation. As part of that scrutiny and to run alongside formal scrutiny, the Committee agreed to explore the impact

of the budget from a lived experience perspective. One of the aims of the informal participation is for participants to suggest questions that the Committee may wish to ask the Scottish Government on their behalf.

7. The Parliament's Participation and Communities Team (PACT) identified a group it was in the process of building a relationship with as ideal to work with, and both the Committee and the group agreed to working over three deliberative sessions.

## Call for views

8. The Committee issued a short call for views over summer recess with the aim of understanding how much the general public understand about the Scottish budget. The [Call for Views](#) ran from 4 July to 25 August.
9. The Call for Views focused on finding out how much people know about the budget, finding out which areas of the budget people think affect them most and finding out how to involve the public more in the budget process so the Committee can get a better understanding of spending outcomes and lived experience.
10. Once the Call for Views closed, submissions were reviewed and a summary of responses published. [Published responses](#) are available on the Citizen Space platform and can also be accessed via the Committee's [website](#).

## Oral evidence

### Panel Process

11. The **Whole Family Equality Project** is supported by [Capital City Partnership](#) and delivered by [Children 1st](#) and [CHAI](#). The project aims to bring about significant and measurable improvements to the lives of individuals and families from ethnically diverse communities across Edinburgh, and to empower people by giving them a leading role in the decisions that are made about the project's design and delivery.
12. A group of 12 participants agreed to take part. The process the Panel followed was as follows:
  - On 29 August 2023 the Panel attended a session delivered by the Participation and Communities Team (PACT) with support from SPICe and the committee clerks. This session focused on building capacity among panel members, and covered the role of the Parliament and Government, and the Committee, and an introduction to the budget process. This was followed by an online drop in discussion to help the Panel prepare for the next steps in the deliberative process.

- On 12 September 2023, the Panel and Committee (along with the Convener of the Social Justice and Social Security Committee) worked together in groups to discuss how and when people should be able to participate in the budget process, what the barriers to this are, and policy areas may be where human rights aspirations are the hardest to meet. This was an opportunity for panel members to share their lived experiences and its importance in budget spending decisions such as health, social care, local government and education.
- Finally, on 3 October 2023 the Panel, supported by PACT and SPICe, used the discussion notes from 12 September to form questions for the Minister in groups, then worked together to agree how to merge, re-word and prioritise these questions. SPICe was asked by the group to apply the agreed changes to form a final set of six questions, and the Panel agreed these unanimously by correspondence.

13. PACT, SPICe and Clerks have provided additional support to help prepare the Panel delegates for today's meeting, both in person and online.

### **Formal Evidence**

14. In addition to the panel process, the Committee held a formal evidence session on 26 September to explore the core principles of gender budgeting and participation in the budget process. It heard from:

- Heather Williams, Training Lead, Scottish Women's Budget Group
- Danny Boyle, Senior Parliamentary and Policy Officer, BEMIS
- Allan Faulds, Senior Policy Officer, Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE)
- Alexis Camble, Policy Manager and Mirren Kelly, Chief Officer, Local Government Finance COSLA

### **Evidence session on 24 October**

15. At today's meeting, five representatives from the Panel will speak to the Committee during a public session. They will make an opening statement and then read out a set of questions that the Panel developed and agreed. The intention is that Committee members will then ask the Minister for Equalities, Migration and Refugees these questions on the Panel's behalf later in the evidence session which follows.

16. There will also be an opportunity for the Committee to ask the Panel questions about the work they have done, their questions for the Minister, and their experience of the deliberative process. Other members of the Panel will be in the public gallery.

17. The Committee will hear from:

- Citizens Panel representatives from the Whole Family Equality Project and then from

- Emma Roddick MSP, Minister for Equalities, Migration and Refugees and Scottish Government officials Rob Priestley, Head of Mainstreaming and Strategy Unit, Directorate of Equality Inclusion and Human Rights and Fi Robertson, Fi Robertson, Head of Scottish Budget Team, Directorate of Budget and Public Spending.

## **Next steps**

18. The Committee will discuss the evidence heard at both sessions and consider and agree a draft letter with recommendations to the Scottish Government at a later meeting.

Committee Clerks  
October 2023