

An Leas-phrìomh Mhinistear agus Ath-shlànachadh
Cobhid
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid
Recovery
John Swinney MSP



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Daniel Johnson MSP
Deputy Convener
Finance and Public Administration Committee
Scottish Parliament

[by email]

6 October 2022

Dear Daniel,

Timing of Scottish Budget 2023-24

Thank you for your letter of 4 October and for the Committee's engagement yesterday on the Scottish Budget.

The Committee will be aware of the ongoing turmoil and uncertainty regarding the UK Government's plans for its Autumn budget. The Scottish Government is not privy to those discussions despite the clear and obvious impact that this has on our ability to plan our 2023-24 Budget.

As I indicated to the Committee, it is essential to ensure that there is adequate time to prepare the Scottish Budget after the Office of Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecasts are published. As part of this Government's prudent approach to budgeting and fiscal sustainability, we are committed to providing the highest quality information to the Scottish Fiscal Commission to assist in the development of its economic and fiscal forecasts. I also appreciate and support the need for effective parliamentary scrutiny of the Scottish Budget.

Taking the Committee's view into consideration, I am content to support a joint proposal that the Scottish Budget be published on 15 December and I will write today to the Scottish Fiscal Commission (SFC) to advise of this.

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It is crucial for us to have a clear plan in place for Scotland's Budget to provide certainty and reassurance, and collectively agreeing a date is welcome.

As it is becoming less clear if the UK Government will publish the OBR forecasts earlier than the originally announced date of 23 November, I must stress that this risks creating an exceptionally challenging timeframe in which to deliver the Scottish Budget.

In these uncertain times, we will need to be ready to adapt flexibly and prudently to ensure that Scotland's interests are best protected.

As you will be aware, the SFC requires a minimum of 10 weeks to prepare for its forecasts and given the uncertainty and volatility of UK Government's plans, we may need to revisit our plans if there are implications for this 10-week period.

I look forward to working with the Committee on the new Budget over the coming months and I have copied this letter for information to Professor Graeme Roy at the Scottish Fiscal Commission.

JOHN SWINNEY

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