



## Finance and Public Administration Committee

Shona Robison  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet  
Secretary for Finance  
The Scottish Government

By email:

All correspondence c/o  
Finance and Public  
Administration Committee Clerks  
Room T3.60  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh, EH99 1SP  
[FPA.committee@parliament.scot](mailto:FPA.committee@parliament.scot)

19 September 2023

Dear Shona

Thank you for your letter on 31 August in which you respond to the findings and recommendations in the Committee's Report on Public Administration: Effective Scottish Government decision-making. The Committee considered your response, along with that of the Permanent Secretary, at its meeting on 12 September and agreed to seek further information in a range of areas.

In your letter you respond to the Committee's Report recommendation (at paragraph 57), on proactive publication of information on Cabinet decisions. You confirm that information on Cabinet decisions will continue to be communicated to Parliament and the public "through established processes, with due reference to parliamentary scrutiny through Committee processes and parliamentary engagement".

The Committee requests further information on specifically where, through the established processes, Cabinet decisions are published, along with an indication of the timescales for their publication.

The Committee would also seek further information on the Scottish Policy and Research Exchange (SPRE) and how the Scottish Government uses its services. We would welcome details of the extent to which the research output from SPRE which has been requested by the Scottish Government is then made public.

In relation to the new approach to induction for newly appointed Ministers which began in March 2023, the Committee seeks clarification of how this new approach will be evaluated and the extent to which you would propose to publish details of this approach to provide greater transparency and understanding of how Scottish Ministers work.

In your response you further commit to provide updates to the Committee in relation to a number of report recommendations. The Committee would therefore seek an update, by

the end of March 2024, on progress in the following areas in order that responses may inform our annual evidence session with the Permanent Secretary:

- your commitment to explore how reflective learning and sharing including “more transparent monitoring and evaluation can be more fully embedded in Scottish Government to improve the accountability of government decision making”,
- in relation to how the Scottish Government assesses the quality of its engagement, progress with your review of “the effectiveness of these arrangements”.
- you note that “a culture of continuous improvement” is a strategic priority for the Scottish Government’s corporate transformation work this year. This, you explain, is a practical example of how Ministers foster a culture of learning and constructive dialogue with civil servants. We therefore seek information on how the focus on this strategic priority has led to improvements in the culture of robust challenge and full and frank advice.

The Committee looks forward to receiving your response but should you or your officials have any queries or wish to discuss this further then please do not hesitate to contact the clerks to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Kenneth Gibson MSP  
Convener  
Finance and Public Administration Committee