



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

## Finance and Public Administration Committee

Kevin Stewart MSP  
Minister for Mental Wellbeing  
and Social Care  
Scottish Government

By email

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9 March 2023

Dear Minister

Thank you for your letter of 28 February 2023 in which you set out your plans to delay providing a response to the Finance and Public Administration Committee's report on the Financial Memorandum (FM) for the National Care Service (Scotland) Bill, in order "to consider the full weight of the evidence" gathered by all committees.

As you are aware, the Committee published our report on 1 December 2022 expressing our significant concerns regarding the lack of detail in the original FM and requesting that an updated FM be provided, at least two weeks before completion of Stage 1 of the Bill. We have been given assurances since that an updated FM was being developed and would be provided to the Committee within this timeframe. The Deputy First Minister for example told the Committee on 7 February 2023 that the maximum cost of the NCS Bill in the next financial year "is likely to be a figure no higher than £50 million", adding however that the updated FM "will give greater confidence around that point".

As you are aware, we had scheduled time in our work programme to take evidence from the Bill Team on the Scottish Government's response and updated FM on 7 March, and then from you on 14 March.

The Committee was therefore concerned to receive at such late notice your letter proposing a delay in providing this information, not least due to the significant impact on our work programme. We therefore seek details of the reasons why the

Committee was only advised of this delay less than two days before the Committee's deadline for receiving the Scottish Government's response and updated FM, and clarification on exactly when the decision to delay was taken. Given the concerns set out in our report of 1 December regarding the lack of detail provided in the original FM, we request details of the full financial implications of the delay and a breakdown of how much has been spent on the project to date. We also seek details of how any unspent funding will be reallocated and how future spending will be reprofiled in light of the delay.

Since receiving your letter of 28 February, the Parliament has agreed to extend the deadline for completion of Stage 1 to the end of June 2023. It would have been helpful if you had advised the Committee in your letter of this request rather than providing very limited reasons for the delay.

We therefore repeat here our request for a full response to our report of 1 December 2022 and updated FM prior to the Stage 1 debate. Given the time that will have elapsed since our original report was published, we expect to receive this information at least one month before the rescheduled Stage 1 debate, to provide sufficient time for proper scrutiny, including taking any further evidence as required. This will inevitably have an impact on an already busy work programme up until summer recess. We therefore seek assurances now that you and the relevant Bill team will make yourselves available to provide evidence to the Committee at that time.

Finally, the Committee's report makes a number of recommendations that are intended to be more widely applied, for example, at paragraph 14 we ask the Scottish Government to take on board feedback related to the length of consultations on flagship policies. We would welcome confirmation that you will respond to such wider recommendations as soon as possible.

I look forward to hearing from you by 23 March 2023.

Yours sincerely

**Kenneth Gibson MSP**  
**Convener**  
**Finance and Public Administration Committee**