



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Finance and Constitution Committee

Cabinet Secretary for Finance

The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

By email

finance.constitution@scottish.parliament.uk

8 April 2020

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Thank you for your letter, dated 1 April 2020, on the Scottish Government's plans for fiscal events during 2020 in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Committee welcomes your commitment to keep us updated of any changes or developments and to feed in our views, where appropriate.

As you note, our existing work programme has been suspended and we will now focus on COVID-19, in as much as it impacts on issues within our remit.

The Committee recognises that this scrutiny focus must be proportionate given the need for the Scottish Government and Scotland's public bodies and wider civic society to collectively focus on addressing the pandemic.

The Committee will want to examine the impact of the pandemic including the impact on the public finances but recognises that this is not the right time. Doing so now would risk diverting essential resources away from the Scottish Government's management of the pandemic in what is a rapidly evolving situation. Consequently, the Committee has agreed that it will only formally meet if required to consider time-critical matters including any emergency primary, secondary legislation or Legislative Consent Memorandums.

Within this context, the Committee agrees with the approach set out in your letter. The Committee is also of the view that asking the Scottish Fiscal Commission (SFC) to prepare a revised set of forecasts at this time would not be appropriate.

At some point, however, further consideration will need to be given regarding the timing of future fiscal events. We welcome, therefore, your recognition of the importance of ongoing dialogue and engagement and agree that this can be achieved, in the first instance, through your officials working closely with the Committee's clerks.

The Committee suggests that the clerks and your officials, together with officials from the SFC, draft proposals for the possibility of future fiscal events in the Autumn. The

Committee is particularly mindful that the SFC will need sufficient notice to allow it to prepare revised forecasts. As such, we suggest that this work is completed by early June to allow consideration by Ministers and the Committee prior to Summer recess.

The Committee will keep its approach under review and the clerks will notify your officials of any changes to the above.

I am copying this letter to Dame Susan Rice, Chair, Scottish Fiscal Commission.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bruce Crawford".

Bruce Crawford MSP
Convener