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Your reference:  
Our reference: COR/420/2010

*Dear Jennifer*

10 May 2010

Thank you for your letter of 26 April in which you requested further information on the implementation of those recommendations made by the Committee for Finance and Personnel's Procurement Inquiry, which I suggested in my letter of 7 April could be accepted at this stage.

I note the Committee appreciates that it is a matter for the Procurement Board how the recommendations contained in the Report are taken forward. The Procurement Board's role in policy development and approval was agreed by the Executive and approved by the Assembly in 2002. I consider that the Procurement Board's role is all the more important in this instance, given the significance of the Report. You will appreciate, therefore, that taking forward many of the recommendations in the Report, including seeking the necessary agreement and ensuring that legal and cost implications have been properly assessed, will take time.

However, that said, I am happy to give you some indication of the areas where progress can be made and indeed where, in some cases, it has already commenced.

Many of the 30 recommendations to which I referred in my initial reply focus on SMEs and SEEs and deal with practical matters that, if addressed, could be of enormous benefit. Because of the essentially operational nature of these recommendations their implementation is not subject to formal approval by the Procurement Board and I am, therefore, content for CPD and CoPEs to start work on their implementation.

I believe that many of these can be addressed within the scope of a number of pieces of work currently being taken forward by CPD and the CoPEs. The roll out and on-going development of the eSourcing tool will help increase access and standardise systems such as pre-qualification. Raising awareness of public sector procurement is continuing and you will be pleased to note that progress has been made on the establishment of a CIFNI equivalent for the business sector suggested by the Committee.

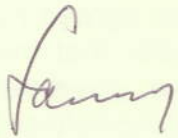
suppliers being able to access procurement opportunities across the Public Sector more easily. Subject to the availability of resources, CPD will review, and add to, current guidance. This will include seeking stakeholders' views as appropriate depending on the subject matter.

Other recommendations which can be taken forward include improvements to payment practices to help SMEs and SEEs cash flow, methods of providing feedback to bidders and working to increase usage of the clauses to provide opportunities for the unemployed and for apprenticeships.

While I am content to recommend acceptance of 30 recommendations at this initial stage a small number of those to which I referred will require the formal endorsement of the Procurement Board before proceeding. It is with this in mind that I believe it would be inappropriate to share the detail of the 30 recommendations with the Committee at present. However I will provide the Committee with the full Action Plan following the Procurement Board's meeting on 17 June.

Finally, I can also confirm that representatives of the Procurement Board will be happy to attend the briefing session on 30 June and be in a position to provide you with an up-to-date assessment of progress against the Committee's recommendations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Sammy Wilson', written in a cursive style.

**SAMMY WILSON MLA**