

**From the Minister**



Department of

**Finance**

An Roinn

**Airgeadais**

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Dear Steve

## **BUDGETING MATTERS**

### **EXECUTIVE RESPONSE – RHI ACTION PLAN**

Thank you for your letters of 8 and 15 October.

I am content to engage with the Committee on Budgeting matters. I will of course update the Assembly with the Spending Review outcome in line with legislative requirements, and a draft budget will be published in due course upon which Committees will be able to consult.

I shall also be happy to include a briefing on the RHI Inquiry Response Report and Action Plan at my forthcoming session with the Committee. The Committee will be aware that the Executive has taken a holistic approach to its response, covering the issues raised by the Inquiry within a number of key themes. I anticipate that these themes will not just shape the immediate response to the RHI Inquiry but inform the longer-term reform of the Civil Service as well.

I note that you have issued a similar invitation to the Head of the Civil Service. It would seem most appropriate that she attend following my own appearance before

the Committee, rather than in advance. This is in line with the current planned dates of 17 November for my appearance and 24 November for HOCS to attend. The Clerk and our DALO can liaise on the written briefing and wider attendance.

In answer to your questions about specific pieces of work:

- The proposed Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Finance and the Executive Office is currently in draft, and officials are liaising with their colleagues in TEO. The fundamental features of the MOU are already to be found in the Introduction to the RHI Inquiry Response Report, and in the Department's response to the PAC's report on the Capacity and Capability Review. I am happy to provide an agreed copy in advance of the planned session.
- A draft of the proposed overarching 'Raising a Concern' policy has been presented to the NICS Board for discussion, and will be subject more detailed consideration at working level before being brought back to me with formal advice.
- The proposal for Speak-Up champions is being looked at alongside the 'Raising a Concern' policy, upon which it depends.
- Policy champions have been in place in Departments for some years. The Champions actively engage with their Departmental policy teams to identify needs and to promote and lead new policy development approaches in their own Department. Denis McMahon, the Head of the Policy Profession, has formed a Policy Profession Steering Group, building upon the previous Policy Champions Network.

The policy areas that are subject to particular attention within the RHI Inquiry Response (such as HR, governance and financial accountability, records management, procurement, central services, *etc.*) are, for the most part, within the remit of my own Department. The Response Report was developed by those policy lead teams and coordinated within DoF, and I brought it to the Executive, through the Executive Subcommittee, for agreement. Policy decisions in respect of the Civil Service are a matter for me as Minister of Finance, and I shall remain accountable to the Assembly.

Delivery of such a broad programme of reform is of course a matter for the whole Civil Service. The Head of the Civil Service provides leadership and Chairs the INCS Board which is comprised of Departmental Permanent Secretaries.

My officials will continue to monitor the delivery of the actions in the Response Report, and will report to me and through the Permanent Secretary to the NICS Board.

The NIAO is monitoring the implementation of the Inquiry's recommendations separately. I understand that the Finance Committee will be interested in the report of the NIAO when it issues in due course. The Executive Subcommittee on Reform Following the RHI Inquiry has agreed to consider its role in overseeing the delivery of the Action Plan in light of the work of the NIAO.

Timelines for delivery are set out within the Action Plan.

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Conor Murphy." The signature is written in a cursive style with a period at the end.

**CONOR MURPHY MLA**  
**Minister of Finance**