

From the Minister of Finance

*Paul Givan MLA
Chair of the Committee for Justice*

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Your reference:
Our reference: *GM1818-2020*

Date: *11th January 2021*

Dear Paul,

COMMITTEE FOR JUSTICE – CALL FOR EVIDENCE ON THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE (COMMITTAL REFORM) BILL

Thank you for the correspondence of 27 November 2020 regarding the Criminal Justice (Committal Reform) Bill.

I note that the Financial Memorandum to the Bill states that “In effect, there will be a rebalancing of resources - less work will be done in the lower court tier (magistrates’ court) but more work will be done in the higher court tier (Crown Court.. A business case is being prepared to capture the relevant costs for criminal justice organisations and these costs will be factored into prioritised plans for future budget periods.”

A business case has not been finalised, so, while the intention of the legislation is clearly to produce a desirable outcome and I fully understand the need that DoJ has to move ahead, the final position on financial impact, affordability and financial risk is potentially not fully documented at this time.

I therefore suggest that the Committee should seek to be updated on the progress of the business case and keep issues typically documented in a business case such as value for money (as opposed to cost), affordability, risk and project management arrangements in mind when considering the bill, particularly in respect of any amendments, until DoJ has completed this process.

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CONOR MURPHY MLA MINISTER OF FINANCE