



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Committee for the Economy

Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA  
Chairperson  
Committee for Finance  
[Committee.Finance@niassembly.gov.uk](mailto:Committee.Finance@niassembly.gov.uk)

**Our ref: EC2025/121**

28 February 2025

Dear Matthew,

### **Draft Budget 2025-26 – Feedback**

At its meeting of 26 February 2025, the Committee for the Economy considered a previous request from the Committee for Finance for feedback in respect of the draft budget 2025-26.

The Committee had previously received oral evidence from officials on 5 February 2025 and noted further written Departmental responses on 26 February 2025.

Members noted that the Department for the Economy had produced a budget plan and had furnished the Committee with information on resource and capital bids - setting out those which were met and those which were not. Indeed officials had also helpfully provided comparisons for key budget lines contrasting the anticipated closing position for 2024-25 with the draft opening position for 2025-26.

However, the Department declined to provide the impact assessments for the draft allocations for 2025-26. Without these, Members found it impossible to determine what the draft budget might mean in respect of: skills places; apprenticeship numbers; Further Education places; or Higher Education places as well as the impact of apparent budget cuts to Tourism NI and NI Screen.

Furthermore, the pressures that the Department had set out in respect of pay were understood to be based on a 3% award to the NICS and to Further Education lecturers even though the former is expected to be a 6% award and the latter may be around 5% (in line with that expected for teachers).

In the absence of clarity in respect of these important matters and the question of UK Government support for increased Employers National Insurance contributions, Members felt that they could not yet judge the draft DfE budget for 2025-26 and that further time and more Departmental information was needed.



Consequently and with regret, the Committee agreed that I should write to you setting out this interim position and advising that the Committee will endeavor to respond later in March when the necessary impact assessments have been provided.

If you require further information or clarification in respect of the above, please do not hesitate to have the Clerk to the Committee for Finance contact the Clerk to the Committee for the Economy.

Yours sincerely,

*Phillip Brett*

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**Phillip Brett MLA**  
Chairperson of the Committee for the Economy