



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE

George Adam MSP
Minister for Parliamentary Business

By email only

Citizen Participation and Public
Petitions Committee
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26 October 2023

Dear George,

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee pre-budget 2024-25 views

You recently gave [evidence](#) to the Committee for our pre-budget scrutiny. There were two key themes that emerged – the impact of budget pressures on the Scottish Government’s ambitions for participation and the need to establish a central team within Government with responsibility for participation in line with the recommendation of the Institutionalising Participatory and Deliberative Democracy (IPDD) working group.

Both you and the officials accompanying you highlighted the creation of a central team as key to enabling participation and engagement costs across portfolio areas to be quantified, identifying the resources needed for participation work and assessing the effectiveness of this work. Creating a team within Government responsible for participation was a recommendation of the Institutionalising Participatory and Deliberative Democracy (IPDD) working group. It is clear that this team is central to the Government’s current approach to participation and engagement. **We urge the Scottish Government to make sure that resources are provided in the 2024-25 Budget to allow a central team within government with a responsibility for engagement and participation work to be established.**

You [explained that](#), for citizens’ assemblies, “funding has moved and it will now be from the individual portfolio that is asking the question of the citizens assembly. We are looking at individual portfolios to deliver, and they are looking at that, but they also face challenges.”

While we understand the rationale for looking to individual portfolio areas to fund specific citizens' assemblies, the Committee is concerned that without a clear budget line for citizen participation and engagement, the costs of both individual citizens' assemblies and the Government's participation work more generally, as well as effective scrutiny of both the cost and effectiveness of Government participation and engagement work will be hampered. **We ask the Scottish Government to make sure that the costs associated with citizen participation and engagement work are clearly identified across portfolio areas to give an accurate overview and allow effective scrutiny.**

On the budget for participation more generally you [explained that](#) the "Public Information and Engagement" budget line covered marketing and communications, rather than public participation. Whilst we appreciate this, we heard during our inquiry into Public Participation in the work of the Scottish Parliament that education and awareness-raising was central to increasing participation. We believe that this is no different for the Scottish Government, so we do not agree that marketing and communications, and participation, should be considered independently of one another. **We ask the Scottish Government to set out a clear strategy linking marketing and communications activities to participation, to include investment in awareness-raising and policy education communications within any breakdown of engagement and participation spend, and to ensure this area is appropriately funded.**

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Carlaw', written in a cursive style.

Jackson Carlaw MSP
Convener