

DOF/0371-2025 Document 1

DoF PRIVATE OFFICE - NOTE OF MEETING

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KN REF:		INV-1483-2024	
TITLE/ORGANISATION:		Joint mtg with Minister O'Dowd, Minister Kimmins and NI Chamber, Construction Employers Federation and Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations	
DATE AND TIME:		12 February – 14:00 to 15:00	
VENUE:	<input type="checkbox"/> PB	<input type="checkbox"/> Clare House	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: James House, Cromac Ave, Belfast BT7 2JB
ATTENDEES:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DfI Minister Kimmins • Suzanne Wylie - NI Chamber, CEO • Stuart Anderson - NI Chamber, Director of Public Affairs & International Relations • Mark Spence – CEF, CEO • David Fry – CEF, Director of External Affairs • Seamus Leheny – NIFHA, CEO 			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minister	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SpAd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PS	<input type="checkbox"/> APS <input type="checkbox"/> Office Manager
OFFICIALS / OTHER	Redacted Section 40(2)		
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:			
<u>Meeting</u>			
Introductions and welcomes			
<u>NI Chamber</u>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – SW provided an overview of the issues for discussion which concern business challenges and barriers for economic growth and expansion in particular construction and social housing. – Planning and waste water are the main concerns across a number of sectors. – Want to be able to help and identify and offer possible solutions to addressing the waste water issues. – Want to conduct a piece of work to identify solutions and work in partnership with depts. Should be completed by early summer. 			

- SA NI Chamber - Referred to FDI and inward investments. Expressed concerns among Chamber members about connection to the grid, waste water system and communications networks.
- Redacted Section 35(1)(a)
- Redacted Section 35(1)(a)
- Redacted Section 35(1)(a)
- MOD advised he intends holding a roundtable with business sector to discuss the issues.
- Discussed statistics around contraction of businesses – cost of doing business
- Minister Kimmins (MK) alluded to a number of issues which remain outside the control of Executive.
- MOD stated the position is better than 12 months ago and referred to the increase in funding.
- Redacted Section 35(1)(a)
- Alignment of budgets with PfG priorities and ISNI strategy .
- Minister’s plans will be based on robust data and evidence.
- Aware of the challenges faced by industry and businesses but need to look at things from a more positive perspective.

SL (NIFHA)

- Explained the model for building social housing.
- Concerns for banks in relation to borrowing for building social housing. Rates for borrowing are usually favourable.
- Hope to have approx. 1400 builds commenced by end of FY2024-25 but considers this may be optimistic.
- May require 2000 houses to be built in FY 2025-26.
- Will seek to target solutions.

MS (CEF)

- CEF has just conducted a 6 month survey of members and views are reflective of what SW conveyed – confidence is a concern.
- Wants to engage further with Ministers to identify solutions
- MK – recognises the issues around housing and that Ministers are working together and in partnership with stakeholders.
- MK is happy to hear proposals as the issue does need to be addressed – housing is a critical issue for the Executive and impacts a number of departments.

– Redacted Section 35(1)(a)

- MS referred to 3-prong approach re Jan MR, SuDS and developer contributions.
- Affordability of connecting to a waste water system and viability of a development project due to need to upgrade an aging waste water system, could cost tens of millions, developers/housing associations don’t have that resource.
- MK referred to the MR process and the ability to have plans held in readiness should additional funding become available in-year.
- MOD referred to ability to make strategic significant investments to address housing issues and wants to look at this further.

– Redacted Section 35(1)(a)

ACTION POINTS / ISSUES AGREED & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE	
Arrange roundtable event with business sector. Ongoing (PO/PSD/SpAR)	
NOTE WRITTEN BY: Paula Dawson	DATE: 12 February 2025

Document 2

DoF PRIVATE OFFICE - NOTE OF MEETING

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KN REF:	INV-0065-2025		
TITLE/ORGANISATION:	Introductory meeting with Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP, SoSNI to discuss Transformation Funding		
DATE AND TIME:	18 February – 14:00 to 14:30		
VENUE:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PB	<input type="checkbox"/> Clare House	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
ATTENDEES: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP- Julie Harrison – NIO Perm Sec- Redacted Section 40(2)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minister	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SpAd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PS	<input type="checkbox"/> APS <input type="checkbox"/> Office Manager
OFFICIALS / OTHER	Neil Gibson Ciarrai Conlan Aidan McMahon		
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Welcomes and introductions- SOSNI thanked the Minister for his letter of 14 February and agreed with the proposals put forward.- SOSNI agreed (i) the Terms of Reference for the interim Public Sector Transformation Board (iPTSB) and (ii) the proposals for the additional experts identified for the interim Board.- SOSNI confirmed his next step is to advise CST that agreement has been reached and undertook to write to CST at conclusion of the meeting in relation to the release of funds.- Hopes to be able to make significant progress in release of the funding to allow transformation projects to move forward.- Both Minister and SOSNI thanked officials for the work to secure agreement of the ToR.- They agreed there was a need to focus on the transformation projects not the process.- Minister advised he will update Executive colleagues on progress at the Executive meeting later in the week but ask them to avoid making any public announcements until confirmation that the money will be released for the projects.- An approach will be agreed for announcing the projects and release of funding at official level.			

ACTION POINTS / ISSUES AGREED & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE

- Provide a speaking note for Minister to provide a verbal update under AOB to Executive colleagues at meeting on 20 February. Completed.

NOTE WRITTEN BY:

Paula Dawson

DATE:

18 February 2025

Document 3

DoF PRIVATE OFFICE - NOTE OF MEETING

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KN REF:	INV-1421-2024		
TITLE/ORGANISATION:	Mtg with Chris Quinn, NI Commissioner for Children & Young People		
DATE AND TIME:	19 February – 14:15 to 15:00		
VENUE:	<input type="checkbox"/> PB	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clare House	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
ATTENDEES:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chris Quinn, NICCY Commissioner (CQ)• Alex Tennant, NICCY Head of Policy and Research (AT)• Joanne McGurk, NICCY Head of Legal & Investigations (JM)		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minister	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SpAd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PS	<input type="checkbox"/> APS <input type="checkbox"/> Office Manager
OFFICIALS / OTHER	Katie Victor		
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:			
Meeting			
– Welcomes and introductions			
<u>Outcome of the Roundtable</u>			
– CQ wanted to know if there was follow up with the Executive after the roundtable event – Minister confirmed the information was provided to Executive colleagues.			
– Will also provide a follow up note on actions taken to attendees of the September roundtable.			
– CQ queried if would DoF be amenable to introducing CRIA – Child’s Rights Impact Assessments into the assessment of the budget.			
– He suggested training for DoF officials about consideration of CRIA but Minister was unable to give this commitment so early in his tenure.			
– CQ referred to the cumulative impact assessment on the draft budget which NICCY were pleased to see being conducted.			
– Would like to identify what mitigation can be put in place iro Children being impacted by the budget.			
– Minister explained the structure of the budget process and the remit of each department.			

- Minister advised that the political and budget situation has been stabilised over the last 12 months, but a fine balance remains with significant challenges to be faced but there are also positive aspects.
- Referred to pending Spending Review in June – indicators are there will be a 3-year multiyear budget (MYB) for resource and 4 years for capital.
- CQ commented on available money within the budget not being spent appropriately and would like to see resources available used more effectively and directed to services on the ground.
- Minister stated he will be seeking to look at the budget to spend it more effectively and efficiently too direct help where it is most needed. Will discuss this approach with individual Ministers and seek to support them to take forward.
- MYB will be a game changer as it allows for better planning, but quantum will be critical.
- CQ confirmed he previously met Chris Heaton Harris and Hilary Benn as SOSNI about the NI Budget.
- Wants to take a preventative approach to the budget's impact on children and referred to free school meals paper.

Child poverty

- PAC and NIAO considered the child poverty strategy but considered no actions arising.
 - Concerned that a new strategy may be lacking in concrete actions and the mechanism for funding the strategy. Would like to see the approach changing with new and impactful actions. More inclusivity in developing the strategy.
 - Minister will wait to see the strategy when the DfC Minister provides it – due in the Spring.
 - Joint Executive initiative, Minister will play his role and seek to influence the strategy as far as possible.
- UK Poverty Strategy– Barnett Consequentials – CQ asked what could be directed to child poverty.

Redacted Section 35(1)(a)

Transformation Funding

- Minister provided an update on the latest progress of the Transformation Funding and that he will be updating the Executive team tomorrow.
- Public announcement will be coordinated with NIO in due course.
- Follow up on COR-1550 – resend to Chris Quinn. Completed.

Pooling of Resources

- CQ CSCA (Children's Services Cooperation Act) – want to try to activate the legislation and seeking assistance from DoF to do this.
- Minister referred to the collaborative approach to some of the TF projects.
- CQ questioned if DoF could provide guidance to all departments on how to pool resources.
- Minister explained the approach taken to Procurement - may be a model for looking at provision of services to children. Will discuss further with his officials.

- Lack of cooperation is impacting on children in a number of areas e.g. mental health.

CQ – UN Convention on Rights of the Child

- **Redacted Section 35(1)(a).**
- **Redacted Section 35(1)(a).**
- **Redacted Section 35(1)(a).**

ACTION POINTS / ISSUES AGREED & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE

- Officials to engage with NICCY re CRIA.
- Update on actions taken following the September roundtable (INV-1285-2024) to be shared with its attendees

OTE WRITTEN BY:

Paula Dawson

DATE:

19 February 2025

Document 4

FINANCE INTERMINISTERIAL STANDING COMMITTEE (F:ISC)

Minutes of meeting held in Cathays Park, Cardiff on Thursday 27 February 2025, 14:00 – 15:30

Ministers attending:

Welsh Government

Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Welsh Language (Chair)

Northern Ireland Executive

John O'Dowd MLA, Minister of Finance

Scottish Government

Shona Robison MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government

UK Government

Rt Hon Darren Jones MP, Chief Secretary to the Treasury

Officials attending

Northern Ireland Executive

Joanne McBurney, Ciarrai Conlon, Dr Dara O'Hagan (Special Adviser), Paula Dawson (PS)

Scottish Government

Jennie Barugh, Ben Kerfoot, Edwina Ryan (PS)

Welsh Government

Sarah Govier, Anna Adams, Jessica Ward, Madeleine Brindley (Special Adviser), Helen Childs (PS)

UK Government

Zoe Ryan, Florence Masser, Felicity Slater (Special Adviser), Lucy Chaffey (PS)

Item 1: Welcome including previous Minutes and Actions

1. Mark Drakeford (MD) welcomed everyone to the meeting, all agreed the minutes of the previous meeting.

Item 2: Economic and fiscal context

2. **Redacted Section 28.**
3. **Redacted Section 28.**
4. **Redacted Section 28.**

5. Redacted Section 28.
6. Redacted Section 28.
7. Redacted Section 28.
8. Redacted Section 28.
9. Redacted Section 28.
10. Redacted Section 28.
11. Redacted Section 28.
12. Redacted Section 28.
13. Redacted Section 28.
14. Redacted Section 28.

Item 3: Fiscal Plans

15. Redacted Section 28.
16. Redacted Section 28.
17. Redacted Section 28.
18. Redacted Section 28.
19. Redacted Section 28.
20. Redacted Section 28.
21. Redacted Section 28.
22. Redacted Section 28.
23. Redacted Section 28.
24. Redacted Section 28.
25. Redacted Section 28.
26. Redacted Section 28.
27. Redacted Section 28.

28. **Redacted Section 28.**
29. **Redacted Section 28.**
30. **Redacted Section 28.**
31. **Redacted Section 28.**
32. **Redacted Section 28.**
33. **Redacted Section 28.**
34. **Redacted Section 28.**
35. **Redacted Section 28.**

Item 4: Fiscal Flexibilities

36. **Redacted Section 28.**
37. **Redacted Section 28.**
38. **Redacted Section 28.**
39. **Redacted Section 28.**
40. **Redacted Section 28.**
41. **Redacted Section 28.**

Item 5: Collaborative working and shared priorities, including improving collaboration with the Offices of the Nations

42. **Redacted Section 28.**
43. **Redacted Section 28.**
44. **Redacted Section 28.**

Item 6: AOB

45. The meeting agreed the draft communique and its publication.

In the interests of transparency please see link to communique below

[Communiqué from the Finance: Interministerial Standing Committee - 27 February 2025 - GOV.UK](#)

Document 5

DoF PRIVATE OFFICE - NOTE OF MEETING

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KN REF:	INV-0041-2025		
TITLE/ORGANISATION:	Introductory meeting with the Rt Hon Darren Jones MP, Chief Secretary to the Treasury		
DATE AND TIME:	05 February – 11:15 to 11:30		
VENUE:	<input type="checkbox"/> PB	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clare House	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
ATTENDEES: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Darren Jones MP Chief Secretary to the Treasury– Lucy Chaffey – Private Secretary to CST			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minister	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SpAd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PS	<input type="checkbox"/> APS <input type="checkbox"/> Office Manager
OFFICIALS / OTHERS	Joanne McBurney Ciarrai Conlan		
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED: <u>Meeting</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Welcome and introductions– CST referred to the aim to reset relationships and the spirit of how the Westminster government intends to proceed. Referred to the legacy and ensuing challenges new Labour government has been dealing with.– Offered to be in touch with Minister O’Dowd as needed.– Confirmed the reduction to one fiscal event per annum– Role of NIO in the financial landscape in NI.– Minister referred to the issues to be worked through and is looking forward to working together to meet the challenges.– Assembly priorities are political and financial stability.– Minister is keen to have certainty and asked for formal clarification on the BC arising from NICs raises.– Minister will consider the engagement with SOSNI and the NIO role in the Executive’s finances.– Welcomed a bilateral in Cardiff with CST.			
ACTION POINTS / ISSUES AGREED & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE – N/A			

NOTE WRITTEN BY:	DATE:
Paula Dawson	05 February 2025

Document 5

DoF PRIVATE OFFICE - NOTE OF MEETING

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KN REF:	INV-0074-2025			
TITLE/ORGANISATION:	Bi-lateral with Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Darren Jones MP (CST)			
DATE AND TIME:	27 February – 15:30 to 16:00			
VENUE:	<input type="checkbox"/> PB	<input type="checkbox"/> Clare House	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER:	Welsh Government Buildings, King Edward VII Avenue, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ
ATTENDEES: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Darren Jones MP• Lucy Chaffey, PS to CST				
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minister	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SpAd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PS	<input type="checkbox"/> APS <input type="checkbox"/> Office Manager	
OFFICIALS / OTHER	Ciarrai Conlan Joanne McBurney			
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED: <p>Minister and CST discussed the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Level of need and potential cliff edge for 2026-27. Will be considered as part of the spending review.– Access to the Treasury Reserve (PSNI data breach, Holiday pay, McCloud Remedy). Officials will continue to discuss numbers and move the process further.– Victims payments and dispute resolution.– Agricultural Inheritance tax and support funds.– NIHE Borrowing– EU Replacement Funds - Shared Prosperity Funds/Levelling Up. Need to ensure devolved views are taken into consideration.– Employers national insurance increases.– Transformation funding.– Hospitality VAT and Tax-free childcare lie with James Murray, Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury – CST advised such matters will be considered as part of the Spending Review.– Casement Park – need for commitment to funding to remain. NIO may submit a bid as part of the Spending Review.				

ACTION POINTS / ISSUES AGREED & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE	
– Officials will continue to engage on issues raised to move forward with dispute resolution and preparation for Spending Review in June.	
NOTE WRITTEN BY: Paula Dawson	DATE: 27 February 2025

Document 6

DoF PRIVATE OFFICE - NOTE OF MEETING

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KN REF:	INV-1198-2024		
TITLE/ORGANISATION:	Joint meeting with DfE Permanent Secretary, DfC Minister Lyons and the Community Wealth Building Partnership		
DATE AND TIME:	3 March – 16:00 to 17:00		
VENUE:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PB	<input type="checkbox"/> Clare House	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
ATTENDEES: DTNI <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Charlie Fisher, CEO, Development Trusts NI• Andy Tough, Chairperson, Development Trusts NI• Fintan McAliskey, Director, Development Trusts NI• Dr Andrew Grounds, Queen's University Belfast, Communities and Place Larne CWB Partnership <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ken Nelson, CEO, Larne Enterprise Development Company Ltd• David Hunter, Larne Community Wealth Building Partnership North West CWB Partnership <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brian O'Neill, Northwest Enterprise• Siubhán Nic Amhlaoibh, Culturlann, Derry			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minister	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SpAd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PS	<input type="checkbox"/> APS <input type="checkbox"/> Office Manager
OFFICIALS / OTHER	Sheldon Loughlin Angela McGrath Redacted Section 40(2) Lorraine Gallagher – DfC Louise Anderson – DfC PS Keith Brown - DfE		
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED: Meeting Welcomes and Introductions - Minister Lyons led the meeting <u>Agenda Item 1</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Confirmed a joint ministerial response to the report will not be provided at this stage. Departments will work separately on relevant recommendations			

- Key areas of progress – launch of social capital loan fund
- Evaluation of CAT due to be undertaken by DfC.
- JOD concurred with the remarks made by the DfC Minister and confirmed departments are continuing to work collaboratively and cited some of the work having been undertaken.
- DfE Perm Sec – referred to the Social Enterprise action plan published in December 2024
- Credit unions access to finance – will be consulting shortly.

Attendees

- BON confirmed the NW CWBP has already been engaging with credit units to fund loans and loan terms are key to the success of the initiative.

Agenda Item 2 Next Steps

- KB updated the work currently being undertaken by DfE to provide support to stakeholders in CWB.
- Event being held later in the week for officials to learn from stakeholders about the role and work of the CWBPs.
- QUB rep advised of support it is keen to provide to the partnerships.
- Value of joint projects is beneficial.
- Role of CWBP in city and growth deals. Need to ensure investment is filtered down to the communities the partnerships serve.

Agenda Item 3 – NICO

- JOD provided an overview of the level of funding that has been secured and invested.
- Next steps – engagement with MHCLG and Whitehall on ensuring the Labour party delivers on its commitment re EU replacement funding.
- Wants to ensure Executive is fully involved in new arrangements.
- CF provided an update on the engagement with Whitehall and DoF Committee – view is aligned with the Minister’s, important we have a say in how funding is spending/allocated.
- GL spoke to Capital investment fund – DfC keen to explore connections to see how communities can benefit.
- CF wants an overarching CWBP for NI.
- Alignment of CWBP with government objectives - keen to work collaboratively as targets are similar.
- GL wants to continue to work closely and to realise the benefits such a relationship can bring.

CF thanked for the time taken by the Minister and is aware of the constraints facing the Executive.

ACTION POINTS / ISSUES AGREED & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE – N/A

NOTE WRITTEN BY:

Paula Dawson

DATE:

3 March 2025

Document 7

DoF PRIVATE OFFICE - NOTE OF MEETING

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KN REF:	INV-0080-2025		
TITLE/ORGANISATION:	Mtg with Jack Chambers TD, Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Services, Reform and Digitalisation -		
DATE AND TIME:	4 March – 16:30 to 17:00		
VENUE:	<input type="checkbox"/> PB	<input type="checkbox"/> Clare House	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Teams
ATTENDEES: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jack Chambers TD• Andrew Condon – EU Cohesion Funds and North South• Catherine Clynes – PEACEPLUS and North South			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minister	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SpAd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PS	<input type="checkbox"/> APS <input type="checkbox"/> Office Manager
OFFICIALS / OTHER	Maryann Smith Dominic McCullough		
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED: <p>Meeting</p> <p>Welcome and introductions</p> <p><u>Peace Plus</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– JOD confirmed the programme has been working well for Northern initiatives.– Embedded in the peace process within communities for which it was intended. <p><u>NS Bodies Alternative Funding</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Redacted Section 27– Redacted Section 27– Redacted Section 27– Redacted Section 27– Redacted Section 27– JOD suggested a bilateral at the NSMC meeting on 2 April.– Redacted Section 27– Ministers look forward to meeting each other at the NSMC Sectoral for SEUPB on 2 April.			
ACTION POINTS / ISSUES AGREED & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE			

- Arrange a visit to a peace plus project with Minister Chambers.
- Redacted Section 27

NOTE WRITTEN BY:

Paula Dawson

DATE:

4 March 2025

Document 8

DoF PRIVATE OFFICE - NOTE OF MEETING

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KN REF:	INV-0016-2025		
TITLE/ORGANISATION:	Meeting Gerry Murphy, ICTU to discuss Civil Service Pay Negotiations		
DATE AND TIME:	5 March – 13:30 to 14:15		
VENUE:	<input type="checkbox"/> PB	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clare House	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
ATTENDEES: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gerry Murphy - Assistant General Secretary of ICTU• Jacquie White - Vice-chair NIC-ICTU• John Patrick Clayton - ICTU & UNISON			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minister	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SpAd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PS	<input type="checkbox"/> APS <input type="checkbox"/> Office Manager
OFFICIALS / OTHER	Tony Simpson Wendy Lecky		
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED: <p>Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– GM wants to raise the lag in payment of pay awards and the issues relating to ENIC.– Sought information from Minister on discussions with Treasury about the broader funding issue.– New jobs bill.– Offered to assist where possible in progressing negotiations with Treasury. <p>JOD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Currently preparing for the SR in June - concerned about cuts to spend in Whitehall which will impact the BCs.– Seeking to secure the mechanism as to how the LoN at 124 (as the fiscal floor) will operate.– Gerry Holtham is conducting a piece of work on level of need which is ongoing.– F:ISC – DAs all emphasised the need for uplift in public spending to stabilise public services.– GM - Expressed view that the model used to identify the level of need requires serious remodelling.– DoJ and Gerry Holtham will consider the unique circumstances in NI as part of the work being undertaken.			

- Queried the considerations of the H&SC system and agenda for change in NI which differs from other jurisdictions.
- TS confirmed DoF is working with Health, Justice and Education on the unique factors that affect the LoN.
- Seeking to identify any additional to these factors to provide independent evidence to support a raised LoN.
- Minister advised that any engagement politically and publicly from ICTU would be very welcomed.

Lag in public sector pay awards

- ICTU JPC – Raised how public finances in NI impact on public sector pay awards.
- PSPRB made its recommendations for health workers in July 2024 which were accepted quickly by UKG and paid thereafter.
- Delay for NI in health sector included autumn budget, confirmation of BCs and funding levels to facilitate pay award. Delay is also detrimental to value of pay award.
- Issues with maintaining parity with UKG.
- Requirement for early agreement of funding available
- ICTU and counterparts would like direct talks with UKG rather than via PSPRBs but no response yet from UKG.
- JW queried if there would really be any difference in process if a 3-year budget is introduced.

JOD

- Advised the 3-year SR period will assist in removing some of the delay discussed.
- Delays are not with DoF, more likely to be with the ALBs as they are not mobilising quickly enough once the Executive has confirmed the pay award funding.
- DoF has a limited role in the approval of business cases for pay awards to try to reduce delay in moving them forward.
- Guidance (pared back in content) has been issued to organisations/ALBs encouraging early engagement with the unions to facilitate reduced delay in pay awards.
- Some elements of the issue are political.

Good Jobs Bill

- JOD advised this was primarily a matter for DfE.
- GM raised the political element of the view of the business community.
- Cost of doing business and rates are concerns for the business community – queried if that is something the Minister is considering.
- JOD advised he is not involved in any negotiations around the GJB.
- JOD explained the review of rates ongoing and support measures in place.
- SpAd explained the differences between the business sector in UK and in NI. Advised there are significant reliefs in place for businesses already and the impact on the reduction in rates relief for UKG and direct impact on the Barnett consequential for NI.
- JPC referred to scoring social value as beneficial.

- SpAD suggested ICTU seek a meeting with DfE Minister to follow up on the issue.

ACTION POINTS / ISSUES AGREED & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE

- Arrange a meeting with ICTU after the SR in June.

NOTE WRITTEN BY:

Paula Dawson

DATE:

5 March 2025

Document 9

DoF PRIVATE OFFICE - NOTE OF MEETING

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KN REF:	INV-0028-2025		
TITLE/ORGANISATION:	Meeting with Gender Budgeting Project (Northern Ireland Women's Budget Group and Ulster University)		
DATE AND TIME:	5 March – 14:45 to 15:30		
VENUE:	<input type="checkbox"/> PB	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clare House	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
ATTENDEES: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alexandra Brennan – Coordinator NIWBG• Aoife Mallon - Ulster University• Professor Joan Ballantine - Ulster University			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minister	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SpAd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PS	<input type="checkbox"/> APS <input type="checkbox"/> Office Manager
OFFICIALS / OTHER	Jeff McGuinness		
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED: <u>Meeting</u> Welcomes and introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none">– JB provided an overview of three gender budgeting projects and work undertaken since 2020.– Referred to copies of papers provided to the Minister – provides background and insight into gender budgeting (GB).– AM provided an explanation of what GB is and the benefits of implementing it as part of the budget process.– Gave an update on the work the group has taken forward across the region, including working with the Assembly and Derry City Council, women's sector and youth sector.– Welcomed the gender budgeting motion being passed in the Assembly. <u>AB – International Dimension and work of OECD</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Provided an update on the OECD 2024 Network event attended by a wide range of international bodies.– Date has to be agreed for the next OECD network event. Would welcome the attendance of DoF officials at that event.– Offered a virtual event in the meantime as OECD are best forum for sharing learning.			

- JOD is keen to ensure the engagement and work continues between DoF and the GBG and OECD.
- Suggested Jeff should continue to engage with GBG in relation to the Scottish work.
- Offered to assist DoF to facilitate taking gender budgeting work forward.
- Jeff explained the work programme of the team and plan to address gender budgeting in the summer – a main concern is access to data and how it can be improved.
- GBG are willing to assist and have some suggestions as access to data is a major element of the work. Referenced earlier work with NISRA.
- Minister suggested that an agreed programme of work should be drawn up between GBG and the Budget Sustainability Team.
- Discussed the outcome of the motion and the need for gender mainstreaming encompassing gender budgeting and the ability to influence other NICS depts to adopt it.
- Appropriate use of the section 75 tools provide a floor to build upon.

ACTION POINTS / ISSUES AGREED & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE

- Jeff to engage with Gender Budgeting Group/OECD to agree a programme of work between both.

NOTE WRITTEN BY:

Paula Dawson

DATE:

5 March 2025

Document 10

DoF PRIVATE OFFICE - NOTE OF MEETING

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KN REF:	INV-0098-2025		
TITLE/ORGANISATION:	Mtg with Sean O'Brien, President of the Teamsters Union		
DATE AND TIME:	10 March – 14:30 to 15:15		
VENUE:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PB	<input type="checkbox"/> Clare House	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
ATTENDEES: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sean M. O'Brien, General President of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters• Fred Zuckerman, General-Secretary Treasurer Teamsters Union• Brian Rainville, Chief of Staff to the General President• Rob Colone, Executive Assistant & Counsel to the General Secretary-Treasurer• Will Petty, Director of the Strategic Initiatives at the IBT• Dave Suetholz, General Counsel• Dan Risteen and Mario Millett – security• Máirtín Ó Muilleoir			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minister	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SpAd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PS	<input type="checkbox"/> APS <input type="checkbox"/> Office Manager
OFFICIALS / OTHER	Leander Harding		
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED: <p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>Sean O'Brien</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Introduced all members of the delegation.– Provided an overview of the role of Teamsters Union and ambition to have an international approach to business. <p>Redacted Section 43(2).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Teamsters Union represents a significant number of workers in US and UPS is one of the biggest companies whose workers they represent – approx. 300,000.– Purpose of visit is a fact-finding mission to learn about other parts of the world. <p>JOD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Provided an overview of the challenges faced by the Executive and the Assembly.– Confirmed the importance of trade unions and the vital role they play in treatment of workers and securing employer rights.			

- Referred to the DfE Workers' Bill which is currently in train.
- Discussed impact of Brexit and relationship with EU on NI.
- Investment, growing the economy and the ability to attract inward investment.
- Referred to the number of American companies who have invested successfully in NI.

ACTION POINTS / ISSUES AGREED & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE

N/A

NOTE WRITTEN BY:

Paula Dawson

DATE:

10 March 2025

Document 11

DoF PRIVATE OFFICE - NOTE OF MEETING

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KN REF:	INV-0097-2025		
TITLE/ORGANISATION:	Mtg with Rt Hon. Nick Thomas-Symonds MP, Paymaster General and Minister for the Cabinet Office		
DATE AND TIME:	11 March – 11:15 to 11:45		
VENUE:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PB	<input type="checkbox"/> Clare House	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
ATTENDEES: Rt Hon. Nick Thomas-Symonds MP and officials			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minister	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SpAd	<input type="checkbox"/> PS	<input type="checkbox"/> APS <input type="checkbox"/> Office Manager
OFFICIALS / OTHER	David Hughes		
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:			
Meeting			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister NTS – outlined rationale of encouraging 3 DA’s to opt into legislation. Redacted Section 35(1)(a). Please pass on thanks to Executive colleagues for their support. Minister O’D – clarified Executive position, keen to work collaboratively – understand our officials are working well together, Executive support is conditional on scrutiny of LCM. Minister queried timeframes and if Scotland and Wales are joining LCM. Minister NTS – aim is to get on statute book this Parliamentary term subject to necessary support. Want to get on with it as soon as possible. Meeting Scotland and Wales later today so not in position to confirm at this stage. 			
ACTION POINTS / ISSUES AGREED & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officials to flag any areas of concern as LCM progresses and to check about any costs associated with reporting mechanisms mentioned – DH. Letter to be prepared by officials to go to UKG Minister from Minister setting out Executive position and flagging question of potential cost – DH. 			
NOTE WRITTEN BY:		DATE:	
Ciarrai Conlan		11 March 2025	

Document 12

DoF PRIVATE OFFICE - NOTE OF MEETING

<input type="checkbox"/> Internal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> External
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KN REF:		INV-0076-2025	
TITLE/ORGANISATION:		Roundtable - Business Sector	
DATE AND TIME:		12 March – 13:00 to 14:00	
VENUE:	<input type="checkbox"/> PB	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clare House	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
ATTENDEES:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development Services & Nations Director for NI – Sent apologies • Kailash Chada, NI Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Vice President; • Angela McGowan, Confederation of British Industry, Director; • Glyn Roberts, Retail NI, CEO; • Rachel McCorriston, Federation of Small Businesses, Head of Policy; • Neil Johnston, NI Retail Consortium, Director (attending via weblink); • Stephen Magorrian, Chair, Hospitality Ulster; and • Con O’Neill, Manufacturing NI, previous Chair of the Board. <p><u>Apologies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kirsty McManus, Institute of Directors NI. 			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minister	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SpAd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PS	<input type="checkbox"/> APS <input type="checkbox"/> Office Manager
OFFICIALS / OTHER	Wendy Lecky Andrew McAvoy Kerri Smyth		
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:			
Meeting			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Minister delivered opening remarks provided in the briefing and provided an overview of the work he and the department are carrying out currently. <p><u>SM – Hospitality Ulster</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Confirmed that consumer confidence is good, but the underlying issues still remain the same i.e. NIC, inflationary costs. – Smaller outlets are most impacted by economic situation. – Referred to the University of Stirling report on reform of licensing law in NI, and the potential issues this may cause for the local Hospitality industry. – Referred to the discount made within rates valuations coming to an end and the potential consequences for businesses and the economy. – Referred to VAT issues especially around the border issues – HU and UK Hospitality have been engaging about putting a case to Treasury and intend to use NI as a VAT reduction pilot case. <p><u>GR – Retail NI</u></p>			

- Set out concerns about rates (SBRR and vacant property) and referred to the survey the organisation conducted recently.
- High Street Summit set out a number of ideas which could assist and gain some short-term fixes.
- Considers rate relief needs to be targeted more appropriately for small to medium businesses.
- Referred to an issue with absentee landlords and suggested the vacant property rate relief criteria needs to be given consideration.
- Asked for consideration of flexibilities in payment terms for businesses – referred to rates hardship funds.
- Need to recall the High Street Taskforce – previous work was beneficial.

AM -CBI

- Referred to uncertainty and sporadic nature of provision of information
- Export market status.
- Construction costs have doubled and the biggest concern is cost of doing business.
- Bank default rates are at a healthy level.
- NICs and Living Wage from 1 April will result in significant costs rises.
- Working patterns of different generations and funding of universities are issues that need to be factored for.
- Waste water infrastructure – big impact on construction.
- Rates reliefs are essential to assist the industries with high productivity in the economy e.g. Industrial derating.
- Sought the Minister's view on corporation tax.
- Suggested the need for interaction on AI between public and private sector to help realise efficiencies within government.

JOD

- Minister acknowledged the concerns expressed.
- Advised some of them are outside the control of the Executive and Assembly.
- Executive needs to bring budgetary certainty and take the budget through the Assembly as quickly as possible.
- Advised the review of the rates will commence in the next few weeks.
- Minister cannot provide any further rate relief than that already provided. Cited some statistics around the monies provided to business.
- Engagement with CST has been challenging – Treasury position does not appear to be shifting.
- Government and sectors need to work together to address the concerns and challenges.
- Mindset needs to focus on what can be done with funding available with an evidence base to support decision making.
- Open to new ideas of how to use the rates system to stimulate growth.

CON – Manufacturing NI

- Welcomed stability of return of the Executive and the budget.
- Has provided more certainty on industrial derating which has assisted expansion/export for the sector.
- Programmes available - Innovate UK and Smart data hub have helped deliver real benefits to the sector.
- Discussed the challenges around training and growing skills base – apprenticeship levy.

- Need to provide opportunity to invest and grow business.
- Stephen Kelly is conducting a piece of work on the contribution of the manufacturing industry to the NI economy.
- More focus needed on decarbonisation and engagement with Utility Regulator and the challenges of layers of bureaucracy.
- Mechanism needs to be in place to support productivity.

KC – NI Chamber of Commerce

- Echoed the views of CON about stability both politically and financially.
- Would like to see an independent review of public spending.
- Approach to planning in NI needs to be addressed and on a long-term basis – at least 10 years.
- Scotland – New Deal with business. Including business in policy development and decisions/co-design process.
- Independent body to align employers with universities to address the requisite skills.
- Referred to increase in costs over the last few years

JOD

- Advised a number of the issues raise lie with DfE and will require further engagement with the Economy Minister.
- Will work with Exec colleagues and NICS to identify efficiencies and take action where required.
- Referred to the transformation funding programme and the collective approach taken by the Executive in the PfG e.g. addressing waiting lists.
- Open to ideas, change and challenge as long as outcome is going to result in making a difference.
- Welcomes more fiscal devolution for NI.
- Advised there are plans being taking forward in relation to procurement matters and referred to the recent changes to the PCLs – these have been increased which will be beneficial to SMEs.

ACTION POINTS / ISSUES AGREED & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE

- Follow up on potential to recall HST with TEO. PO to check and action.
- Send information to attendees about the increase to PCLs. CPD/PO

NOTE WRITTEN BY:

Paula Dawson

DATE:

12 March 2025

Document 13**DoF PRIVATE OFFICE - NOTE OF MEETING**

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KN REF:	INV-0078-2025		
TITLE/ORGANISATION:	Meeting with Sir Robert Chote, Chair and members of the NI Fiscal Council (FC).		
DATE AND TIME:	19 March – 13:30 to 14:15		
VENUE:	<input type="checkbox"/> PB	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clare House	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
ATTENDEES:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sir Robert Chote - Chair of the NI Fiscal Council • Maureen O'Reilly - NI Fiscal Council Member • Dr Esmond Birnie - NI Fiscal Council Member • Prof. Alan Barrett - NI Fiscal Council Member • Jonathan McAdam – Secretary to the Council 			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minister	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SpAd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PS	<input type="checkbox"/> APS <input type="checkbox"/> Office Manager
OFFICIALS / OTHER	Tony Simpson		
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:			
Meeting			
<u>Welcomes and introductions</u>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Minister thanked RC and the FC members for the support and the work undertaken by the Council to date. – RC confirmed there has been a very good working relationship between the Council and the department. – RC gave a brief outline of the FC work programme and confirmed it awaits the outcome of the SR and associated Fiscal Framework. – Long term programme of work will focus on sustainability. Current work is looking at Water initially and future plans for infrastructure will be taken forward beyond term of the current members. 			
<u>Fiscal Council Budget Report</u>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – JOD welcomed the FC's latest report on the budget. – There was discussion on the pending SR announcement and on LoN as aspects of FC reporting are hampered by the fact the methodology for 			

calculating need is not yet clear. Referred to Treasury's removal of ring fencing for agriculture and how this will affect calculations and impact for the cliff edge in 2026-27.

- TS confirmed work of Gerry Holtham on LoN is due to be completed by end of March.

– Redacted Section 28

– Redacted Section 28

– Redacted Section 28

- Discussed the cost of recent announcement of changes to welfare measures and its implication for the block.
- Discussed context for the water issues in relation to the budget position in NI – political and financial constraints and relationships with UR.
- Access to the reserve claim and Treasury stance. Issues for the NI budget have not yet crystallised ie PSNI data breach, holiday pay and McCloud injury to feelings.

Pay and Transformation

- MOR – Discussed the Minister's view on the pay issues for NICS.
- Minister's position is that a 3-year budgetary cycle will be beneficial to negotiating with TUS on pay.
- Impact on public services and cost of pay awards.
- Redacted Section 35(1)(a)
- Redacted Section 35(1)(a)
- JOD referred to date there has been crisis management with the institutions being down, but a 3-year budget cycle will permit opportunity to consider transformation in such a context.
- Discussed raft of policies that are also being considered alongside pay and need to be factored into conversation.
- Discussion took place on transformation funding more broadly.

General

- Timeline for delivery of a final budget for 2025-26 and a final Fiscal Framework.
- TS provided an overview of approach being taken forward and the plans to have the budget agreed by the Executive and taken forward before the SR in June.
- Legislation timetable for placing the Council on a statutory footing - TS provided an overview of the planned schedule. It is hoped to have the legislation enacted for February 2026.

- **Redacted Section 35(1)(a)**

Tenure

- Minister congratulated RC on his appointment to Trinity College, Oxford and his intentions around his tenure on the Council. Hopes to be able to stay in post on the Council but will be dependent on workload of the new role.
- Minister also thanked members for agreeing to the extension of their current appointments.
- MOR referred to the skills required by the support team to the Council and need to cultivate such a skills base in NI.
- EB referred to succession planning for membership of the Council.
- RC confirmed he wants to manage the FC work programme to align with tenure.

ACTION POINTS / ISSUES AGREED & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE

- Query if Welsh PFI model has ever been considered. TS

NOTE WRITTEN BY:

Paula Dawson

DATE:

19 March 2025

Document 14

DoF PRIVATE OFFICE - NOTE OF MEETING

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KN REF:	INV-0031-2025		
TITLE/ORGANISATION:	Mtg with Conradh na Gaeilge		
DATE AND TIME:	24 March – 10:15 to 11:00		
VENUE:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PB	<input type="checkbox"/> Clare House	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:
ATTENDEES: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conchúr Ó Muadaigh• Cuisle Nic Liam• Padraig Ó Tiarnaigh			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minister	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SpAd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PS	<input type="checkbox"/> APS <input type="checkbox"/> Office Manager
OFFICIALS / OTHER	Patrick Neeson		
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED: Meeting COM set out the issues on the agenda. Funding for Foras na Gaeilge <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Main concern for CnG is the funding crisis relating to Foras na Gaeilge.– Redacted Section 35(1)(a).– Redacted Section 35(1)(a).– Redacted Section 35(1)(a).– Redacted Section 35(1)(a).– Redacted Section 35(1)(a).– Redacted Section 35(1)(a).– Redacted Section 35(1)(a).– Redacted Section 35(1)(a).– Redacted Section 35(1)(a).– Redacted Section 35(1)(a).– CnG wanted to discuss the long-term future for funding FnG but Minister advised it was not appropriate to do so but agreed there is a need for a long-term strategy for funding the future of the Irish language in the North.– Discussed the possibility of alternative remedies to address funding for the Irish language rather than via the Executive.			

- CnG has advised they are unable to secure a meeting with the Communities Minister.
- **Redacted Section 35(1)(a)**
- RoI is now moving away from sole funding of FnG for Irish language related activities – CnG are of the view we need the same consideration for position in the North.
- CnG provided an update on the planned protest taking place on 25 March in relation to funding issues.

Stormont Estate Signage

- Referred to the petition provided to Caoimhe – Signage at Mo Mowlam Playpark.
- CnG ask is for the entire estate to have bilingual signage. Suggested using the playpark as a pilot and rollout from there.

Birth certificates

- Retrospective requests for birth certs – would require additional legislation to permit this to happen.
- Wills in Irish – clarification on responsibility for provision of wills in Irish – DoJ or DoF.
- Referred to repeal of older legislation regarding use of Irish in courts.

Irish Language Strategy

- **Redacted Section 35(1)(a)**
- CnG were involved in the co-design process.
- CnG will return to court for a third time on the issue if required.
- **Redacted Section 35(1)(a)**
- Asked Minister to be aware of the issues and the DoF representative on the CDWG.

ACTION POINTS / ISSUES AGREED & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE

- Arrange a meeting with Sharon Smyth (CPD) on bilingual signage on Stormont Estate and Philip Wales (GRO) on birth certificate registration. **PO**
- Check if written advice on funding for FnG being cross-cutting has been received from DSO. **PN**
- **Redacted Section 35(1)(a)**
- Clarify the position in relation to responsibility for the provision of wills in Irish – DoF or DoJ. **PD**
- CnG to provide a proposal for assisting groups across the North. (Check the detail from meeting last year **PD**).

NOTE WRITTEN BY:

Paula Dawson

DATE:

24 March 2025

Document 15

DoF PRIVATE OFFICE - NOTE OF MEETING

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Internal	<input type="checkbox"/> External
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KN REF:	INV-0117-2025		
TITLE/ORGANISATION:	Mtg with Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Darren Jones MP (CST) to outline some of the key points in the Chancellor's Spring Statement		
DATE AND TIME:	26 March – 11:00 to 11:15		
VENUE:	<input type="checkbox"/> PB	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clare House	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Teams
ATTENDEES: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Darren Jones MP, CST• Hilary Benn MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland• Felicity Slater (SpAd)• Maeve Connolly (Deputy Director, HMT)• Lucy Chaffey (PS)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Minister	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SpAd	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PS	<input type="checkbox"/> APS <input type="checkbox"/> Office Manager
OFFICIALS / OTHER	Neil Gibson Ciarrai Conlan Joanne McBurney		
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED: <p>Meeting</p> <p>CST welcomed Minister.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Thanked Minister for letter to CX ahead of Spring Statement which will be discussed in more detail when further meeting takes place.– Provided the Headlines for the CX's statement:– NI will receive an additional TDEL BCs of £14m comprising £12m RDEL and £2m CDEL.– Funding settlements will be confirmed at SR in June.– Welfare changes – funding is via AME and there will be a consequential dip in spend for 2026-27.– Whitehall dept DEL numbers for 25-26 will be published including figures for support for NICs will be included.– Barnett Consequentials for NICs will be confirmed and provided in main estimates.– CST confirmed there will be more detail on figures, profiles and transformation funding too. <p>Minister</p>			

- Welcomed the additional funding but referred to importance of need for spending on frontline services to support families and communities.
- Would like more detail on figures before commenting further on allocation.

ACTION POINTS / ISSUES AGREED & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE

- Officials to provide detail on figures following engagement with Treasury. JMcB

NOTE WRITTEN BY:

Paula Dawson

DATE:

26 March 2025