



Subject:	Response to Government Departments EQIA consultations
Date:	9th August 2023
Reporting Officers:	John Greer, Director of Economic Development Cathy Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and Development
Contact Officer:	Jamie Uprichard, Business Research and Development Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the draft Council responses to the Department for the Economy and Department for Infrastructure's Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) consultation on their 2023-24 budget.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to consider the attached draft responses and approve their formal submission, subject to any comments or amendments provided at the Committee meeting.

3.0	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	DfE launched an EQIA consultation on its draft budget for 2023-24 on 7 th June with a closing date of 30 th August 2023. DfI launched theirs on 15 th May with a closing date of 7 th August (though they also asked for initial responses to be submitted as soon as possible).
3.2	To meet the early deadline for DfI, council officers submitted a draft response for the DfI consultation on 12 th June (as attached at Appendix 2) stating that the submission was subject to approval by the CG&R Committee and ratification by the Council. DfI was informed that, should any changes be made at the Committee or Council meeting, it would be provided with an updated submission. This draft was also circulated to PGLs in June via email, with no requests for changes being received.
3.3	The DfE consultation response has not yet been submitted. It will be submitted following feedback and approval of this committee, again with the proviso of full approval or further changes following Council on 4 th September.
3.4	DfI state that their budget will be reduced by 0.4% when compared to their 2022-23 budget. However, they state that, in real terms, the reductions represent a 14% cut in its resource budget, which will require £167m of savings.
3.5	DfI proposed a number of options to help meet the new budget pressures. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A reduction in public transport provision;• Water and wastewater services impacted;• Road maintenance and flood risk management operational activities are reduced to emergency-only services;• Community transport is not funded;• Streetlights are switched off;• No road gritting service is provided this winter.
3.6	The draft response in Appendix 2, comments on these specific proposals and also answers the general areas where DfI requested feedback.
3.7	In contrast, DfE have only provided an overview of their proposed budget reductions. The draft response (attached at Appendix 1) therefore focuses on the general areas where DfE requested feedback.

3.8	In terms of the reductions, DfE state that their budget will be cut by 1.3% against their 2022/23 year-end position. However, they claim that their overall resource spending power is reduced by £130 million, or 16%.
3.9	DfE's largest proposed cuts are to HEI Postgraduate funding £17m, Reduction in Funding to Higher Education £14m, Invest NI in year reduction 22/23 £14m and Invest NI R&D funding £12m. Despite these changes, skills and education remains the largest part of the budget totalling £550m or 74% of the total.
3.10	In terms of % change to funding, a 33% Reduction in Funding to Tourism NI (equivalent to £9m) is the largest reduction.
3.11	<p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no direct implications associated with this report.</p>
3.12	<p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>There are no direct implications associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	<p>Appendix 1 – Draft response to DfE EQIA Consultation 2023</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Draft response to DfI EQIA Consultation 2023</p>