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Henry Downey  
Democratic Services Officer  
Belfast City Council  
Chief Executive's Department  
City Hall  
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23 August 2017

Dear Henry,

Thank you for your letter of 14 July to the Secretary of State about the Council's recent motion on the subject of donations to political parties.

You may be aware that in January 2017, the Secretary of State wrote to party leaders in Northern Ireland to seek views on whether to move to full transparency for political donations and loans to Northern Ireland political parties. This was in line with the Government's consistent emphasis on seeing the confidentiality arrangements around donations and loans removed as soon as circumstances allowed. All parties that responded expressed the view that full transparency should be introduced. The parties were also asked about the date from which transparency should take effect. Only one party proposed that transparency should be implemented retrospectively in response.

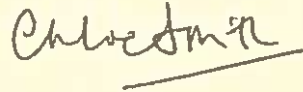
There remains widespread support for full transparency among the people of Northern Ireland and a welcome recognition by the parties of the importance of transparency to the broader political process. In line with that aim, and consistent with the commitment made in the Conservative Party Manifesto for Northern Ireland, the Secretary of State set out in a Statement to the Parliament on 3 July his intention to bring secondary legislation before Parliament that will provide for the publication of all donations and loans received by Northern Ireland parties on or after 1 July 2017. Having considered the representations of all parties, the Secretary of State did not believe it right to impose retrospective regulations on those who donated in accordance with the rules set out in law at the time.

The thresholds for reporting and publication of donations and loans will be the same as those that apply in the rest of the UK, which is currently donations or loans over £7,500 (or £1,500 for local accounting units). While there are no plans to change these thresholds, the

Secretary of State knows that the Northern Ireland parties have been considering the possibility of a reduction to the current thresholds and the Northern Ireland Office would be interested in hearing any representations from the parties on this issue.

As the Secretary of State indicated in his 3 July Statement, the Northern Ireland Office intend to bring forward the secondary legislation to provide for full transparency shortly with a view to ensuring that this is passed in the autumn.

Yours ever,



**CHLOE SMITH**  
**PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE**