



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

Committee for Finance

# OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

October 2021 Monitoring Round: Department  
of Finance

10 November 2021

# NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

## Committee for Finance

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**Members present for all or part of the proceedings:**

Dr Steve Aiken (Chairperson)  
Mr Keith Buchanan (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Jim Allister  
Mr Pat Catney  
Ms Jemma Dolan  
Mr Philip McGuigan  
Mr Matthew O'Toole  
Mr Jim Wells

**Witnesses:**

Ms Joanne McBurney	Department of Finance
Mr Jeff McGuinness	Department of Finance
Ms Anne Scott	Department of Finance

**The Chairperson (Dr Aiken):** I welcome, from the Department of Finance, Ms Joanne McBurney, Mr Jeff McGuinness and Ms Anne Scott. I remind members that the session will be reported by Hansard. Joanne or Jeff, who is doing the speaking for this one?

**Ms Joanne McBurney (Department of Finance):** Jeff will start.

**The Chairperson (Dr Aiken):** Over to you, Jeff.

**Mr Jeff McGuinness (Department of Finance):** Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to brief the Committee on the outcome of the Executive's 2021-22 October monitoring exercise. As usual, feel free to stop me and ask questions at any time.

**The Chairperson (Dr Aiken):** Thanks, Jeff.

**Mr McGuinness:** Following the conclusion of the June monitoring exercise, a number of changes have resulted in additional funding being available for allocation. The majority of the additional funding resulted from the UK Government's announcement on 6 September of extra funding for the NHS in England to help it tackle the COVID backlog and face the upcoming winter pressures. That was made available in October monitoring.

Her Majesty's Treasury did not confirm the precise level of Barnett consequential for the announcement. In order to ensure that our health service has access to the funding as quickly as possible, however, £160 million resource departmental expenditure limit (DEL) and £20 million capital

DEL was included in October monitoring. The variance between the actual funding that we will receive and that which was made available in October monitoring will be addressed in January monitoring.

Changes to central items, including regional rates forecasts, reclassification of financial transactions capital (FTC) repayments and EU match funding, resulted in an additional £20.8 million resource DEL and £6.5 million financial transactions capital DEL. Some £12.6 million financial transactions capital was received from the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Department in England in respect of repayments of launch investment funding provided for the Bombardier CSeries.

The Departments declared reduced requirements of £41 million resource DEL, £19.6 million capital DEL and £1.1 million financial transactions capital. Approval was provided to the Department of Education for the reclassification of £1.8 million resource DEL to capital DEL, primarily for Youth Service IT equipment. The result of those changes is that £223.6 million resource DEL, £31 million capital DEL and £66.7 million financial transactions capital was available for allocation.

Before turning to departmental allocations, I will highlight a number of specific areas, the first of which is the Northern Ireland protocol. The Department of Justice bid for £3.4 million for implementation of the protocol, and the Department of Health bid for £0.3 million. As negotiations to secure further funding are ongoing with Her Majesty's Treasury, neither bid was met in October monitoring.

I will turn to city deals. There was a requirement to use construction and procurement delivery as part of the quality assurance process for city deal projects, and £0.2 million has been held centrally for that purpose. DFE bid for £0.15 million of that funding in October monitoring, and that request was met from the earmarked centrally held funding. A further £5.8 million capital DEL continues to be held centrally for expected city deals expenditure in 2021-22, and that position continues to be kept under review.

Under New Decade, New Approach (NDNA), DFE was allocated £2.8 million capital DEL and £0.26 million resource DEL in June monitoring for the graduate-entry medical school. DFE has submitted a bid for a further £0.1 million for that project. It is anticipated that funding for it will be provided from the NDNA financial package, and funding for the bid was therefore not considered in October monitoring.

I will turn to departmental allocations. The resource DEL bids submitted by Departments amounted to £516 million, more than double the £223 million available. Full details of bids and allocations are set out in the tables that accompany the monitoring statements. I will highlight a few specific areas.

As the Executive's top priority, the Department of Health was allocated £200 million, or 89.4%, of the available resource DEL funding. That provides £80 million for COVID-19 hospital service pressures, £70 million for the pay award requested by the Health Minister, £30 million to aid with pressures in elective care, £15 million for health and social care trusts and £5 million to expand the mental health support fund.

The Department of Education receives £9.2 million: £6.8 million to support special educational needs, £1.7 million to assist with general school-based pressures and £0.7 million for substitute teacher cover.

**The Chairperson (Dr Aiken):** Jeff, just a quick one. There are significant pressures on the Department of Education, but I remember the Minister saying that he was going to address those in the next monitoring round. Are we beginning to get an indication that those pressures will be met from the next monitoring round?

**Mr McGuinness:** It will very much depend on the level of resources that are surrendered by Departments as part of the next monitoring round. We probably will not know that until the end of December or the start of January.

**The Chairperson (Dr Aiken):** Yes, but it is quite substantial. The Department of Education is looking for about £32 million, is it not?

**Mr McGuinness:** My understanding is that it is around that quantum. Yes, Chair.

**The Chairperson (Dr Aiken):** OK. Cheers. Keep going, Jeff. Sorry.

**Mr McGuinness:** OK. Some £6 million was provided to the Department for Infrastructure. That included £4 million for roads, routine maintenance and winter pressures, £1.5 million for Northern Ireland Water to aid with increased energy costs and £0.5 million for support to taxi services. Some £3.2 million was allocated to the Executive Office for lost FTC loan interest repayment income due to the revision of loan terms and holiday payment arrangements that impact on the timing of interest repayments. Some £3 million was allocated to the Department of Finance to conclude the COVID-19 local restrictions support schemes. Some £2 million was allocated to the Department of Justice, of which £1.5 million is for the Legal Services Agency and £0.5 million for the safer communities programme. Some £0.2 million was allocated to the Assembly to cover Members' costs, including allowances and pensions.

I will now turn to capital DEL. All bids for capital DEL that were submitted by Departments were met. Those totalled £27.8 million. Some £8.6 million went to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for COVID-19 recovery through a small settlements regeneration programme and rural community schemes. The Department of Education received £11.5 million, of which £8.2 million was for minor works, £1.3 million was for IT equipment and £2 million was for CO2 monitors. The Department of Health received £6.7 million of additional capital DEL: £3.1 million for COVID-19 health support services and £3.6 million for health and social care trusts. Some £1 million was provided to the Executive Office for the social investment fund.

At the conclusion of the October monitoring exercise, £3.2 million of conventional capital funding remains unallocated. As it was an area of interest before, I want to mention to the Committee that specific reference was made in the October monitoring commissioning letter that was sent to Departments to allow them to reflect any impact on capital spending as the result of the construction materials prices increases and the published procurement advisory note. As all capital bids were met in the October monitoring round, the level of borrowing required continues to be kept under review.

Departments submitted no bids for financial transactions capital in the October monitoring round. Departments are on track to spend £68.1 million; however £66.7 million of FTC —

**The Chairperson (Dr Aiken):** Sorry, Jeff. Did you say that no bids were received?

**Mr McGuinness:** No bids were received, Chair. No.

Some £66.7 million FTC remains unallocated. Ministers have again been asked to actively seek opportunities in their Departments to come forward with proposals to spend that funding.

At the conclusion of the October monitoring round, there was no surplus funding in ring-fenced resource DEL for depreciation and impairments, and there are unmet pressures of £21.9 million. Historically, underspends materialise during the latter part of the financial year. As such, we expect that situation to resolve itself in January.

There remains £443.8 million of unallocated funding for student loan impairments. That funding may be used only for that specific purpose and is, therefore, not available for allocation by the Executive.

Full details —

**The Chairperson (Dr Aiken):** Jeff, have we done any analysis of that? Is that a quantum that we recognise, or is it just because that is the Northern Ireland proportion via the Barnett formula?

**Mr McGuinness:** You are right, Chair, in that it is the latter. It is really just a running through of the Barnett formula on the English costs. Obviously, their repayment is less and their loans are higher. That is why we have a huge amount that we may not necessarily think should or would be allocated here during the year.

**The Chairperson (Dr Aiken):** OK. Cheers. Thanks. Keep going.

**Mr McGuinness:** Full details of all the transactions are set out in the tables that accompanied the October monitoring round statements. Those tables include detailed spending area changes. We are happy to take further questions, Chair.

**The Chairperson (Dr Aiken):** OK. Jeff, thanks very much, indeed, for your usual comprehensive brief.

In respect of resource DEL, departmental bids are quite high at over £550 million. I know that some of those include inescapable costs associated with Education, COVID measures etc, but are we heading for difficulties with the resource budget towards the end of the financial year? Are we heading for a crunch?

**Mr McGuinness:** Chair, Departments will always bid for anything that they think that they may be able to spend. When the outcome of October monitoring is known, Departments will be able to adjust their budgets and plans accordingly. I would not be overly concerned. Joanne may correct me on that one, but I would not be overly concerned that we are heading for a crunch. We have another opportunity in January to reallocate resources where resources are available. I believe that Departments will make plans to ensure that they live within their budgets.

**The Chairperson (Dr Aiken):** I do not expect an answer, but I will ask the question anyhow: do we expect any more Barnett money to come through?

**Mr McGuinness:** We expect around £14 million from a home support fund in England. We did not have precise details on that for October monitoring, and that is why it was not included. We expect that to come through before the end of the financial year. At the minute, we are engaged in a process to finalise the funding that is coming from England through the supplementary process there. Once that process is finalised, we will have a better understanding of what is available for January monitoring.

**The Chairperson (Dr Aiken):** OK. I have a final question. Previously, the Minister stated that the Secretary of State had not signed off all the money that was coming through in various allocations. Has that now happened?

**Mr McGuinness:** The Secretary of State has provided a letter confirming the amounts that were in the spending review and a number of other additional financial packages. That letter has now been received, and the Minister has laid a corresponding note in the Assembly.

**The Chairperson (Dr Aiken):** Does that note refer to in-year funding or funding for the full three years? Did the Minister write, "This is what we expect over the next three years"?

**Mr McGuinness:** That is for the next three years. There is no requirement for the Secretary of State to write to us in year to confirm funding.

**The Chairperson (Dr Aiken):** So that is it: the next three years' funding has been confirmed on the basis of what the Secretary of State has written.

**Mr McGuinness:** Yes.

**Mr O'Toole:** Thank you, Jeff. You said that the bulk of the money that was allocated came from the Department's estimate of what a Barnett consequential would be based on an announcement that was made on spending on the NHS in England on 6 September. Is that right?

**Mr McGuinness:** That is correct, yes.

**Mr O'Toole:** Remind me what that was in terms of our DEL.

**Mr McGuinness:** Our estimate of it was £160 million resource and £20 million capital DEL. Since then, we have had confirmation of the numbers. It was too late for October monitoring, but we are able to say that an additional £0.772 million resource DEL will come forward in January monitoring, and there will be a reduction of £3.659 million in capital. We overestimated on the capital side by £3.7 million.

**Mr O'Toole:** So, basically, there is an additional £700,000 resource and £3 million less capital.

**Mr McGuinness:** Yes.

**Mr O'Toole:** In relation to some of the decisions that were made, it is not uncommon for a Finance Minister to make an overcommitment in October monitoring that can be corrected or changed in subsequent allocations; ie in January.

**Ms McBurney:** I can jump in on that one, Jeff. While overcommitments are not necessarily uncommon, at this stage of the year, it would be difficult to have an overcommitment, especially when you are looking at the levels of pressures that have been put forward by other Departments. Obviously, we have to make sure that we balance the books by the time that we get to the end of the year. We have one more monitoring round to go. We have no expectations of receiving additional Barnett money. We will largely rely on Departments to surrender money or to consume their own pressures. Given that, it would not have been realistic to introduce an overcommitment at this point in the year.

**Mr O'Toole:** Is there any flexibility at all? Now that you know what the position will be for 2022-23 and some subsequent years — I know that there is a debate between DOF and the Treasury about what that means and where the baseline is, but there will be more in our DEL terms — does the budget exchange scheme allow for any flexibility for in-year spend that can come off now? Is there nothing in the budget exchange scheme?

**Ms McBurney:** No. Budget exchange allows us to carry unspent moneys forward up to a certain limit. It does not allow us to bring spending forward.

**Mr O'Toole:** There is no way in which the Finance Minister could —

**Ms McBurney:** No.

**Mr O'Toole:** None whatsoever.

**Ms McBurney:** None whatsoever. You could go to Treasury, but we know what the answer would be on that one.

**Mr O'Toole:** In relation to the other Barnett consequentials that have been announced for the next monitoring round, Jeff, you mentioned £14 million from a home support scheme. Is that an estimate or has it been confirmed by the Treasury.

**Mr McGuinness:** That is my estimate. I think that the number has been confirmed. It is £14 million-and-something, but that has been confirmed only recently. I do not have the precise number here.

**Mr O'Toole:** In relation to the money that has been allocated to the Health Department, is the expectation that that all relates to current in-year pressures, or are there longer-term pressures? I am talking about resource rather than capital. Is that all to deal with in-year pressures?

**Mr McGuinness:** It is all for in-year pressures. Obviously, the pay award pressure will give rise to a longer-term commitment going forward, but it is all in-year pressures at this point.

**Mr McGuigan:** Thanks for the briefing. I will follow on from Matthew's points about overcommitment, which he has raised publicly in other forums. He has said that the Finance Minister has the power, particularly with regard to the disgraceful universal credit cut at Westminster, to fund an uplift in universal credit through an overcommitment, which can be covered from next year's Budget. Does the Finance Minister have the power to make allocations, as Matthew has claimed, or does it require Executive agreement?

**Ms McBurney:** You are absolutely correct. The Finance Minister does not have the power either to make allocations or to have an overcommitment. That has to be agreed by the Executive. On the matter of an overcommitment, we have to balance the books by the end of the year, so we have to make sure that whatever we build in is reasonable. Considering the level of pressures that Departments are putting forward, an overcommitment would not have been reasonable at this stage of the year.

**Mr McGuigan:** For clarity, the answer to both questions is no. The Finance Minister does not have the power, and you cannot have the overcommitment from next year.

**Ms McBurney:** Yes, that is right. The answer to both of those questions is no.

**Mr McGuigan:** Thank you. I will move on to other subjects. On the £12.3 million of Community Renewal Fund, Shared Prosperity Fund, new deal fund or the new circumstances, have officials any sight or visibility of those funds yet?

**Mr McGuinness:** No, we do not have sight or visibility on those funds. That funding is administered by the UK Government centrally and is not directed through the Executive.

**Mr McGuigan:** You do not have any visibility of it, but do you think that it will be funding that will coincide with current Executive priorities?

**Mr McGuinness:** I am not aware. I do not think that they consider current Executive priorities when they consider bids for that funding, so I suspect not, but I am not able to talk from a position of knowledge on that.

**Ms McBurney:** I will come in behind what Jeff said. It is not an area for us, but our understanding is that, in some cases, the UK Government may come to the Executive and ask for views at a very late stage in the bidding process. That does not really allow the Executive's priorities to be taken into account. It is very much managed by the UK Government, without the Executive's involvement, despite the funding going to devolved areas.

**Mr Catney:** My point is a small one, and it is to deal with what Philip asked about the Finance Minister and the uplift of universal credit. Before those powers were handed back by the two larger parties, did we have the power to address that problem that arises now?

**Ms McBurney:** I do not think that the question is so much about the power to make changes to provide additional funding for welfare because we do that through the welfare mitigations that are already in place. I think that the question this time is about affordability, and, from looking at figures in the October monitoring round, the Executive quite simply did not have enough money to fund everything that we may have wanted to fund, and there was not the opportunity to have an overcommitment.

**Mr Catney:** I am talking about before those powers were handed back to the British Government.

**Ms McBurney:** The Executive still have the powers over welfare. We would need DWP to agree to our doing that, otherwise we would be disproportionately affected. The issue is not about the power over the benefit system but about the affordability of that. If we do anything that breaks parity with GB, that comes out of the Executive's DEL budget. The simple fact was that, at this point, it is not affordable unless we reduce other Departments' budgets.

**Mr Allister:** I have two quick questions. Some time ago in the House, I asked the Minister for an update on the figures for the Barnett consequentials granted to Health and those that were actually spent on Health. He promised to write to me with that update; I do not believe that that has happened. Maybe you have those figures. If you do, give them to me. Otherwise, can you make sure that that happens?

**Ms McBurney:** I do not have those figures in front of me. That has been an oversight on our behalf. If we have not already provided a response, we will look to do that as quickly as we can.

**Mr Allister:** Thank you. My second question is on the victims' pension fund. Has there been any change as to who will fund that long term?

**Ms McBurney:** No. We are still in dispute with the Treasury. We are still going through that process with it.

**Mr Allister:** Is that a formalised dispute process or just a negotiation?

**Ms McBurney:** It is a formalised dispute process. We have gone through the official stage, and it is now with Ministers. The Chief Secretary is considering that. If that is not successful, we can take it to the Joint Ministerial Committee. We are still working through that process.

**Mr Allister:** From past experience, what is the normal time frame for that sort of thing?

**Ms McBurney:** It is not a process that we have been through frequently, so I am afraid that I do not have any idea of the time frame at this point. There has been correspondence at ministerial level. The Chief Secretary has committed to looking at it. We are just waiting for that to conclude. In the interim, we are keen to ensure that the funding is provided to victims and that there is no uncertainty.

**The Chairperson (Dr Aiken):** I have another quick question on the victims' pension scheme. I think that that was due to start paying out in November. Are we saying that that is not going to happen, because we are still in dispute with the Treasury about who is paying for it?

**Ms McBurney:** Absolutely not, Chair. The money has been set aside for this year, so if there is any delay in the payments, it is not down to the funding. We will look to provide that funding while the dispute is ongoing. The dispute with Treasury will absolutely not impact on victims.

**The Chairperson (Dr Aiken):** OK. Thanks.

**Mr Wells:** Yet again, we have a situation where more capital has been given back to the central pool than has been bid for. If we did not tell anybody, could you slip that into resource to meet the pressures? Surely if you have a pot —

**Mr Allister:** What about old-fashioned honesty, Jim? *[Laughter.]*

**Mr Wells:** I will be a bit more serious about it. We would not tell — honestly, we would not.

I am being serious: what is the sense in having that surplus sitting there when there are so many demands on resource that could be met by using it? If you have met all the demand, are you under a legal obligation that means that you cannot move it?

**Ms McBurney:** We cannot do that, because we are constrained by the Treasury's public expenditure rules, which do not allow you to convert money from capital to resource. We can put resource money into capital if we wish to do so, but we cannot move it in the opposite direction. Those rules are set by Treasury. It is because of the impact on its fiscal rules. In some ways, it is Treasury borrowing to fund spending. While it is acceptable, in normal circumstances, to borrow in order to fund a capital asset that will last you 25 years, it is not generally acceptable to borrow in order to fund your day-to-day spending. Those are Treasury's rules, and, much as we may like to subvert those rules, we really cannot do so.

**Mr Wells:** Yes, but that assumed a situation in which there was a deficit in the capital funding available. You are sitting on a pot of money here that you cannot spend on capital items.

**Ms McBurney:** There are two issues. First, we have borrowing there, so, if we have capital unallocated, we will reduce the borrowing and therefore save on our resource cost. Secondly, the Treasury is looking at the overall picture, not at whether or not we can spend the money. In Treasury's eyes, if we cannot spend the capital, we can carry that forward up to a certain limit. If we cannot carry it forward, Treasury would be quite happy, because that would save it some money.

**Mr Wells:** I have a more detailed question. Most of this distribution is a result of the Barnett consequential of decisions made at Westminster so, to some extent, it is a bit of a windfall. I presume, then, that before this was even known, Departments already had their shopping lists of pressures that they wished to be met. Normally, those would not have been met at this stage. Will that free up money in future monitoring rounds, in the sense that some of the demand will be soaked up as a result of the Barnett consequential money, and, therefore, there will be extra in January, which can be used to meet some of the pressures that are so evident?

**Ms McBurney:** Unfortunately, we do not have any insight into what Departments may surrender in January. The Barnett consequentials that came were mostly for Health — in fact, entirely for Health — and the health service, as we know, is facing unprecedented pressures. The money went to Health, so we would not expect that that would free up anything in other Departments. Our hope at this stage is that Departments will take action to manage within the budgets that they have. I do not expect a huge windfall in January monitoring, but, as Jeff said, we will not know until the end of December or the beginning of January.

**Mr Wells:** Nevertheless, you have allocated to some other Departments. Normally, that level of money would not be available at this stage. Does that take the pressure off in January?

**Ms McBurney:** Departments would be very keen to point out that we did not allocate enough to cover all their pressures and that some of those pressures will remain going forward. Like the public, Departments are also facing increased energy costs etc, so I do not think that we will have a windfall in January monitoring.

**Mr Wells:** OK.

**Ms McBurney:** I may be proved wrong.

**Mr K Buchanan:** Thank you, Jeff, Joanne and Anne. My question is about financial transactions capital. There is a figure of around £66 million. What has the uptake been in the past on that figure year-on-year, and what happens to that figure now? Let us say that nothing happens between now and the end of March: where does that figure go? What has happened in previous years, and is that figure a normal figure? What happens in the future if that figure is not used?

**Mr McGuinness:** For a number of years previously, we would have run with some unallocated financial transactions capital. The Committee is very well aware of that position. When we come to the end of the financial year, should that not be used, it will be surrendered to the Treasury. It is imperative that, as the Minister has requested of his ministerial colleagues, all Departments look for ways to use that funding because it represents a lost opportunity if we are not able to provide loans to or equity investment in the private sector with that funding.

**Mr K Buchanan:** What figure is that approximately, year-on-year?

**Mr McGuinness:** I am not aware of the precise figure, but we can get that for you.

**Mr K Buchanan:** OK. I just want to know what available figure was there and what was used, which would give us an indication of the uptake. I presume that the uptake this year is not good. Do you expect anything to happen between now and March?

**Mr McGuinness:** It is around the same level of funding that is out with Departments at the moment. There is about £68.1 million on track for spend in this financial year. However, additional money has come back through the budget exchange scheme and the £12.6 million that was mentioned earlier from the launch funding return from the Treasury. Additional funding has come in that we have been unable to spend so far. The Strategic Investment Board (SIB) is looking at different projects with Departments and different ways in which we can spend that. It very much depends on the timelines of those projects, how quickly business cases can be put together and how funding can be issued and used. I suspect that we will not be looking at allocating all that in January monitoring.

**Mr K Buchanan:** OK. Thank you.

**Mr O'Toole:** I just want some brief clarification on the question of making an overcommitment. Joanne mentioned that the Finance Minister does not make allocations; he makes recommendations to the Executive. The Minister has made that point at the Dispatch Box. That is a factual point. He is the Finance Minister and, technically, yes, he makes recommendations; that is accepted. However, it is factually the case that he could have recommended to the Executive that they make an overcommitment in order to pay for the bid that was made by his party colleague the Communities Minister to provide £55 million to prevent the universal credit cut happening until the end of the financial year. To be perfectly factually accurate, it was within the Finance Minister's power to make that recommendation to the Executive. Is that correct?

**Ms McBurney:** Technically, the Finance Minister could have made that recommendation, but it would have been financially imprudent. I draw your attention again to the levels of pressure being identified by Departments and the fact that there will be one more monitoring round to go before the end of the year, and the expectation that we will get additional funding is very low. It would be irresponsible for any Finance Minister to make an overcommitment when you have no concept of whether that overcommitment will be covered in January monitoring.

**Mr O'Toole:** I take your point, but, factually, he could have made that recommendation. It has been implied that he could not have done so. He could have made that recommendation, and, obviously, he chose to make recommendations on other allocations. I am not saying whether those are right or wrong, but we have made our position clear. I just wanted to clarify that.

**Ms McBurney:** I would also like to make the position clear that, had he done so, it would have been against the advice of his officials at this stage in the year because we have a duty to come within Treasury controls by the end of the year. If we breach Treasury controls, Treasury will reduce that money from next year's Budget, so that would have exacerbated the issue.

**Mr O'Toole:** We are still in the middle of the financial year.

**Ms McBurney:** We are coming close to the end of the financial year. We have one more monitoring round to go. We have no expectation of getting a high level of funding through Barnett, and Departments are predicting significant pressures. They have been very vocal about the pressures that they face, particularly because of rising energy costs. Jeff, you might want to jump in there.

**Mr O'Toole:** One of those bids was made by the Communities Minister and would have helped to pay for rising energy costs. Anyway.

**The Chairperson (Dr Aiken):** Jeff, are you going to say something about rising energy costs and the bid for Northern Ireland Water? It needs an extra £1.5 million.

**Mr McGuinness:** Just on that one, one of the issues that I tried to address in my opening statement was around the ring-fenced resource DEL, where we have an additional £21 million of pressure. If we are unable to control that within the ring-fenced resource DEL control that we have, it is a further call on our non-ring-fenced resource DEL. That is another element to the assessment that we would be doing around levels of overcommitment, had we done that.

**The Chairperson (Dr Aiken):** Philip, do you want to come in?

**Mr McGuigan:** Given that we are putting things on the record —

**The Chairperson (Dr Aiken):** We have an election coming. Of course everybody is putting everything on the record.

**Mr McGuigan:** It is clear that we have an election coming. Matthew and his colleagues tried to land blows on this subject in the Chamber.

**Mr Catney:** Not at all.

**The Chairperson (Dr Aiken):** Through the Chair. I am giving everybody a lot of latitude.

**Mr McGuigan:** They were unable to do so, and we have factually put the record straight because a number of inaccurate things were said. Those have been cleared up today and put on the record. Not that Matthew or Pat will take my advice, but I suggest that they stop digging on this matter because the hole that they are creating is just getting deeper.

**Mr Catney:** For your Minister to fall into.

**The Chairperson (Dr Aiken):** We have all had our 30-second sound bites for Twitter. Congratulations. Well done, team. Jeff and Joanne, thank you very much. Sorry that we did not get to hear from you, Anne, but thank you very much for coming along as well. No doubt we will talk again fairly soon.