

An Roinn Sláinte
Department of Health
Secretary General



Ms Sarah Cremin
Committee Secretariat
Committee of Public Accounts

By email: PAC@oireachtas.ie

17 April 2023

Ref: S1249 PAC33

Dear Ms Cremin,

I refer to your letter of 21st March, following the Committee of Public Accounts meeting of 2nd March 2023 and consideration of my earlier correspondence dated 9th February 2023, requesting further information from the Department for the Committee in relation to the following:

- A timeline for when the EAP review on the business case documentation for the relocation of the National Maternity Hospital will be completed and available for the Committee to review.

The details of the EAP/MPAG review are set out in Appendix I to this letter. Amendments to the Public Spending Code by means of Circular 06/2023 from D/PENDPDR on 29th March 2023 have also been reflected in this note.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Watt
Secretary General

Appendix 1

External Assurance Process under the Public Spending Code

The Public Spending Code (PSC) is designed to ensure that capital investment decisions are underpinned by a clear policy rationale, and that costs are well understood. In 2019, the PSC was updated and introduced a new project lifecycle, tightening the arrangements for project decision-making, and clarifying the roles of the parties involved including the responsibilities for Sponsoring Agencies and Approving Authorities. The PSC also provided detail on the business case requirements at each stage of the new project lifecycle.

On 29 March 2023, further changes were made to the Public Spending Code by means of Circular 06/2023 from D/PENDPDR. However, the content of business case documentation and the EAP/MPAG process that is underway for the relocation of the National Maternity Hospital (NMH) to Elm Park project is not directly impacted by these amendments.

The External Assurance Process (EAP) and subsequent review by the Major Projects Advisory Group remains a key tenet of the PSC lifecycle.

All capital development proposals must progress through several approval stages, in line with the new 3-stage lifecycle (reduced from 5) of the March 2023 amended PSC. This includes investment proposals that were in train prior to the updates to the process.

The relocation of the NMH to Elm Park project was initiated prior to the publication of the 2019 and 2023 updates to the PSC. The NMH Project Board undertook additional work on the suite of business case documentation to ensure full compliance with the PSC requirements.

The PBC and pre-tender FBC for the relocation of the NMH were submitted to the Department of Health by the NMH Project Board for combined review at Decision Gates 1 and 2 of the 2019 PSC lifecycle process. Under the March 2023 update to the PSC, this review most aligns with Stages 1 and 2 and as such will continue through the current process of presentation to the MPAG and seeking consent of Government to proceed.

The EAP Review of the NMH business case documentation at Gates 1 and 2 of the PSC has been completed and the relevant documentation was submitted to the MPAG on the 22 March 2023. The EAP Review does not stand alone and forms the basis of the MPAG Review. Following the requisite review by the MPAG (a 6–8 week process), subject to any amendments or updates recommended by the MPAG, it is expected that the business case can be brought to Government for information and consent to proceed to tender. The findings and report of the MPAG are published.