The Committee on Budgetary Oversight - June 2026

Opening statement by Ian Talbot, Chief Executive of Chambers Ireland

A Chathaoirligh, Members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to appear before you today to present Chambers Ireland's priorities for Budget 2027.

Chambers Ireland represents a network of 36 affiliated Chambers nationwide that in turn represent over ten thousand businesses. This ranges from start-ups, micro-enterprises and SMEs to large indigenous firms and multinationals. We aim to take a whole of Ireland approach and represent the consensus of our network in our Pre-Budget Submission.

Today, our message is straightforward. We are calling for Budget 2027 to tackle Ireland's competitiveness gap. We urge the Government to prioritise spending and taxation measures that protect and promote business sustainability.

I will set out four priorities from our network.

1. The cost of doing business

Businesses are facing sustained increases in energy, labour, regulatory and operating costs, placing real pressure on our competitiveness.

As a priority, Budget 2027 should fund and implement the recommendations of the Cost of Business Advisory Forum, with clear ownership and public reporting on progress.

It should also ease labour and compliance costs through double indexation of income tax bands, a temporary exemption from National Training Fund levy contributions until the surplus is actively deployed, and a programme to simplify business taxation and supports, including the R&D tax credit, KEEP and EIIS.

Finally, Government should support investment and productivity by increasing accelerated capital allowances for plant and machinery to 25%, reducing the Capital Gains Tax rate of 33% for non-passive investment, increasing the lifetime limit of €1.5 million in qualifying capital gains under Entrepreneur's Relief, and modernising enterprise support eligibility so it better reflects turnover, value creation and economic impact.

These are practical steps that can ease cost and compliance pressure quickly while strengthening long-term competitiveness. It will not be about one quick fix but requires immediate, medium and long-term action, with a focus on system-level simplification and consolidation.

2. The State must turn investment into visible results

Government has committed significant public investment to a programme of energy, grid, water, wastewater and transport infrastructure over the coming years, but delivery remains too slow and inconsistent.

The priority now is execution and accountability. Budget 2027 should ringfence resources and introduce binding delivery targets under the Accelerating Infrastructure Action Plan, with public reporting every six months. It should support reform of judicial and planning delays, including progress on the Civil Reform Bill and stronger planning capacity across the system. It should also move infrastructure funding onto a multi-annual basis, particularly for water, transport and energy, so delivery is planned, funded and managed over the long term.

Housing and infrastructure deficits are direct constraints on business expansion and regional development that require a step-change in ambition and delivery. Housing output must be scaled to more than 60,000 homes a year, using every available fiscal and policy tool. Government should also expand strategic landbanking and introduce Compulsory Sales Orders to unlock development-ready land and bring stalled sites into productive use.

Without action on infrastructure, progress on competitiveness, labour supply and regional growth will continue to stall. Budget decisions must translate into delivery on the ground. This means faster and more predictable progress that can be scaled.

3. Climate and energy policy must move from ambition to delivery

Businesses support the green transition but it must be practical and affordable. Energy security needs to be a fundamental priority for this government, as security promises greater price stability and resilience against global shocks.

Budget 2027 should prioritise the acceleration of wind energy deployment and designating offshore transmission as critical infrastructure. It means investing in grid capacity, storage and interconnection to reduce constraints and bring down energy costs. It also means introducing fast-track planning for on-site renewable energy, so businesses can reduce costs and play their part in the transition. At the same time, supports for decarbonisation must be scaled so businesses can transition without undermining viability.

4. Faster policymaking and skills delivery are essential to keep pace with change

Economic and technological change is accelerating and current policy responses are too slow.

The focus must be on unlocking capacity and being proactive, rather than reactive. To keep pace with change, Budget 2027 must strengthen the resourcing of departments, local authorities and public bodies so decisions are faster, delivery is more predictable and outdated processes no longer hold back investment. At an employer level, we also recommend the creation of a SME Skills Fund to support the digital and green transitions. SMEs need practical AI adoption supports now. Workforce planning and apprenticeships must also be strengthened, with increased employer supports to build the critical skills pipelines Ireland needs. This is essential to ensure businesses can adapt, invest and remain competitive.

In conclusion, Budget 2027 must shift from ambition to delivery. Ireland has the resources. The priority now is to reduce the cost of doing business, deliver infrastructure and housing at scale, make the climate and energy transition practical, and build the skills and systems needed for a fast-changing economy. If we get this right, we can restore business confidence and support sustainable growth across all regions.

Thank you.