 November 2024

Mr. Seán Ó Fearghaíl, TD,
Ceann Comhairle,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

A Cheann Comhairle,

I regret that yet another complaint has been raised with you by Deputy Ó Broin around the information available in the Abridged Estimates Volume (AEV) and Revised Estimates Volume (REV) and Deputy Ó Broin's contention again that the Parliamentary Questions did not again elicit the responses, and the contention that the information was provided by way of Freedom of Information. I wrote to you earlier this year on 21 May 2024 and explained why it was and is not the case.

I wish to acknowledge your efforts in examining the issue under the terms of SO54 – Adequacy of replies to Questions and topical issues. I note the decision you came to and the points to which you took into account. I do however disagree and will explain why the reply does in fact comply with the provisions of the standing order and in particular in relation to the points outlined.

My position remains unchanged and I would like to restate that I have endeavored at all times to be completely transparent and to answer all PQs in a full and timely manner. I strongly hold the position that my reply to the PQ was fully accurate and informative.

I would now like to address the specific points, which you have set out supporting your decision arising from your examination of the issue.

- In relation to Deputy Ó Broin having previously been provided with initial (unpublished) workings towards a draft REV i.e. provisional breakdowns of the programme level allocations, I explained in May of this year that decisions around some of the interim processes and substantive elements were known at an earlier point in those years, thereby facilitating a more complete exercise being undertaken then but has not since been possible due to the complexity and timing of matters under consideration between AEV and REV times.



- In relation to the point that the information was subsequently sought and received under FOI from both the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, this was also clarified in my letter of 21 May 2024. The FOI submitted followed the publication of the REV in December. The Deputy again asked for a subhead level breakdown of the AEV figures. In order to be helpful to the Deputy, officials created a new record following the finalisation of the REV process, noting that the AEV is a programme level only publication with the cover response to the FOI specifically clarifying this.

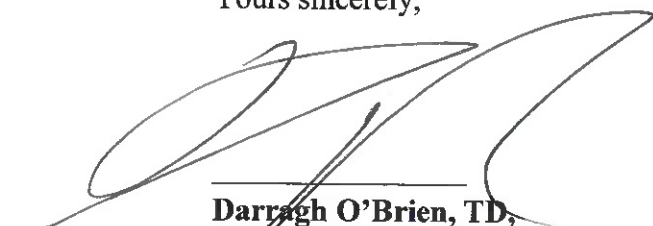
I also explained at that time that the Programme level published in the AEV is further broken down into subhead level allocations and is finalised across the period between October and December, through a number of interim processes and decision points, which take place and influence the outcome of the final REV allocations.

In respect of the FOI request to Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform, it was explained that as part of the deliberative process indicative numbers below programme level were shared between the two Departments but were as noted above, the subject of interim processes and decision points not finalised for the AEV at budget time. These were working documents to facilitate the preparation of the Budget and associated Estimates publications. As such the subhead allocations were draft only and subject to change. The reason for the subsequent provision of information is not because the Deputy asked under FOI but rather because of the passage of time and the completion of the processes and finalisation of the detail as listed above.

In conclusion and as explained in the PQ, the Revised Estimates Volume for Public Services for 2025 (REV) will be published by the Minister of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and & Reform later this year. The REV will provide more detail than the AEV including complete subhead level allocations and performance metrics. While the programme level allocations are broadly finalised, I am in the deliberative process of considering subhead level allocations and these finalised subhead allocations will be provided at the point of REV publication.

I trust that the above clarifies the situation.

Yours sincerely,



Darragh O'Brien, TD,

Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage