

SNP MP probes the cost of CSA computers

✘ A parliamentary question asked by SNP MP Dr Eilidh Whiteford has revealed that the cost of a computer case management system purchased by the UK Government for the Child Support Agency has more than doubled from its original budget of £94 million to more than £225 million.

The PQ also revealed that the cost of subsequent improvements to the CS2 system, used by the CSA, have totalled more than £117 million extra on top of the development costs since 2006.

The cost of the CSA system follows revelations over recent weeks that the cost of the Libra IT scheme used by the Department of Justice had trebled from its original budget of £146 million to more than £444 million; while another IT system, purchased for the Passport Agency, had quadrupled to £365 million.

Commenting, SNP Work and Pensions spokesperson Dr Eilidh Whiteford MP, whose question uncovered the figures, said:-

“Given the catalogue of IT cost overruns, we would all be better off if Westminster got a calculator rather than another computer. It seems the Westminster government is incapable of delivering big projects on time or on budget. At a time when household budgets are under real pressure, revelations over how wasteful Westminster has been with taxpayers’ money are an absolute scandal.

“Serious questions must be asked about how the cost of the CSA computer system was able to more than double – and the first of those questions should be raised with the former Labour Ministers who signed the contracts.

“When it comes to efficiency, Westminster needs to take a leaf

out of the Scottish Government's book. The SNP Government has pursued a vigorous programme of efficiency and public sector reform that is delivering results and driving improvements. In the first two years of the programme, it has exceeded its targets by £300 million and £400 million. Last year, £2.276 billion of efficiency savings were made – £673 million above the target – through new ways of using resources, collaborating across public services or improving procurement. That money is being reinvested in the public sector to deliver frontline services or lever in new efficiencies. This is a level of delivery that wasteful Westminster should learn from.”