

## Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 5 May 2004

[R] signifies that the Member has declared an interest.

[W] signifies that the question was tabled in Welsh.

### Contents

- 1 Questions to the Finance Minister on Local Government
- 2 Questions to the Minister for Culture, the Welsh Language and Sport

### Questions to the Finance Minister on Local Government

#### Best Practice in Budgeting

**Q7 John Griffiths:** Will the Minister make a statement on Assembly Government policy to spread best practice in budgeting throughout the public sector in Wales? (OAQ34490)

**The Finance Minister (Sue Essex):** Training and guidance are already in place from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, and I hope initiatives such as Excellence Wales will take good practice forward.

#### Grant Funding for Theatr Clwyd

**Q8 Mark Isherwood:** Will the Minister make a statement on the administration by the finance ministry in the year 2002 of grant funding for Theatr Clwyd? (OAQ34433)

**Sue Essex:** In 2002, the Assembly Government agreed a one-off grant of £560,000 to Flintshire County Council to remove Clwyd Theatr Cymru's accumulated debt to the council.

*Question 9 (OAQ34429) withdrawn.*

#### Local Government Elections

**Q10 Nick Bourne:** Will the Minister update us on preparations for the local government elections? (OAQ34500)

**Sue Essex:** Preparations for local government elections are a matter for local authorities, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Electoral Commission. We are, however, working with the Welsh Local Government Association to raise awareness of the functions and responsibilities of local authorities prior to the elections in June. The First Minister has also lent his support to the 'Get the Vote Out!' campaign by the Institute for Citizenship and the Electoral Commission, aimed at maximising turnout on 10 June.

#### The Supplementary Budget

**Q11 Lynne Neagle:** Will the Minister make a statement on the impact of the supplementary budget on local government and public services in Wales? (OAQ34423)

**Sue Essex:** The supplementary budget reflects an average local authority revenue settlement increase of 5.2 per cent for 2004-05, after adjusting for transfers, which is well above inflation. This reflects my view

that Welsh authorities need to be properly resourced. A further £0.5 million was added to the deprivation grant.

### **Past Service Awards for Local Authorities**

**Q12 William Graham:** Will the Minister make a statement concerning the impact of past service awards for local authorities in Wales? (OAQ34426)

**Sue Essex:** The impact of the past service awards scheme for local authorities will not be known until after next month's local government elections. Once they are over, we will be able to see how successful the awards have been in helping to bring about greater diversity to local government in order to make the council chamber more representative of the community it serves.

### **Questions Raised with Local Authorities**

**Q13 Owen John Thomas:** What steps is the Minister taking to ensure that questions raised by National Assembly Members with local authorities are dealt with promptly and effectively? (OAQ34495)

**Sue Essex:** I would encourage local authorities to deal with all correspondence promptly and effectively. However, I have no powers to intervene on this issue, which is a matter for individual local authorities.

### **The Cost of Re-organisation (Gwynedd County Council)**

**Q14 Lisa Francis:** Will the Minister make a statement on the cost of re-organisation at Gwynedd County Council? (OAQ34425)

**Sue Essex:** Gwynedd County Council is an independent, democratically elected body. Its internal reorganisation is entirely a matter for the council.

### **Public Services**

**Q15 Elin Jones:** What new measures will the Minister introduce this year to improve public services? (OAQ34420)

**Sue Essex:** The Welsh Assembly Government will continue to develop a distinctively Welsh approach to improving the delivery of public services. For example, we are developing the public sector management initiative in partnership with public service organisations across the public sector. This is designed to play a leading role in creating a stronger Welsh public service by developing the leadership and management capacity of public service organisations and individuals.

Subject to the outcome of our present consultation, we shall also start to implement the proposals in our draft sustainable development action plan on organisational excellence, delivering through our agents, and delivering with local government.

## **Questions to the Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport**

### **Free Swimming Programme**

**Q12 Rosemary Butler:** Will the Minister give an update on the Assembly's free swimming programme? (OAQ34446)

**The Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport (Alun Pugh):** The Welsh Assembly Government will again be investing £2.5 million this year to provide free swimming for children and

young people across Wales during all school holidays. The scheme began at Easter. We will also be providing funding for an older people's national pilot in the autumn.

### **Dathliadau Caerdydd 2005**

**C13 Owen John Thomas:** Pa drafodaethau y mae'r Gweinidog wedi eu cael yn ddiweddar gyda Chyngor Sir Caerdydd ynglyn â dathliadau 2005 i goffáu hanner canmlwyddiant Caerdydd yn brifddinas a chanmlwyddiant Caerdydd yn ddinas? (OAQ34518) [W]

**Alun Pugh:** Fis Gorffennaf 2003 oedd y tro diwethaf i mi gyfarfod â chynrychiolwyr Cyngor Sir Caerdydd i drafod dathliadau 2005, gan ofyn iddynt gyflwyno cynnig am ddiwyddiad yn 2005 i ddathlu hanner canmlwyddiant Caerdydd yn brifddinas Cymru. Yr wyf yn aros manylion gan Gaerdydd.

### **The 2005 Celebrations**

**Q13 Owen John Thomas:** What recent discussions has the Minister had with Cardiff County Council regarding the 2005 celebrations to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of Cardiff as a capital city and its hundredth anniversary as a city? (OAQ34518) [W]

**Alun Pugh:** I last met representatives of Cardiff County Council to discuss the 2005 celebrations in July 2003 and invited them to submit a proposal for an event during the course of 2005 to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Cardiff's status as the capital of Wales. I await details from Cardiff.

### **Amgueddfeydd ac Oriolau Cenedlaethol Cymru**

**C14 David Lloyd:** A wnaiff y Gweinidog ddatganiad ynglyn â nifer y bobl sydd yn ymweld yn flynyddol ag Amgueddfeydd ac Oriolau Cenedlaethol Cymru? (OAQ34470) [W]

**Alun Pugh:** Mae nifer yr ymweliadau ag Amgueddfeydd ac Oriolau Cymru wedi cynyddu'n sylweddol ers i gyllid ychwanegol gan Lywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru alluogi'r amgueddfa genedlaethol i gynnig mynediad am ddim i bob ymwelydd â phob safle ers 1 Ebrill 2001. Mae nifer yr ymweliadau fel a ganlyn:

2000-01	745, 235
2001-02	1, 450, 428
2002-03	1, 257, 471
2003-04	1, 222, 206

### **The National Museums and Galleries of Wales**

**Q14 David Lloyd:** Will the Minister make a statement regarding the number of people who visit the National Museums and Galleries of Wales on an annual basis? (OAQ34470) [W]

**Alun Pugh:** The number of visits to the National Museums and Galleries of Wales has risen dramatically since additional funding from the Welsh Assembly Government enabled the National Museum to introduce free entry for every visitor to all its sites from 1 April 2001. The number of visits are shown below :-

2000-01	745, 235
2001-02	1, 450, 428
2002-03	1, 257, 471
2003-04	1, 222, 206

### **The Director of Ofcom Wales**

**Q15 Leighton Andrews:** When does the Minister next expect to meet the Welsh director of Ofcom?  
(OAQ34475)

**Alun Pugh:** The Minister for Economic Development and Transport and I will meet the director of Ofcom Wales on 7 June 2004.