

Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 11 May 2004

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

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

Questions to the First Minister

Adequate Social Housing

Q11 Lorraine Barrett: What action is the Welsh Assembly Government taking to ensure adequate social housing in Wales? (OAQ34825)

The First Minister (Rhodri Morgan): In 2004-05, we are providing £59.4 million through the social housing grant programme to support the provision of social housing. Together with private funding, this will generate investment of around £100 million and should provide around 1,000 homes, all of which must comply with our rigorous development quality requirements.

Anti-social Behaviour

Q12 Ann Jones: Will the First Minister make a statement on the take-up of the new powers to tackle anti-social behaviour in Wales? (OAQ34807)

The First Minister: The anti social behaviour order provision is being used increasingly across Wales to curb the actions of those who make life a misery for others. In addition, police may now issue on-the-spot fines for a wide range of nuisance behaviour. The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 provides for a raft of further provisions that are gradually being introduced; new powers relating to noise, graffiti and litter were introduced in Wales on 31 March. It is too early to judge what the take-up will be for these latest provisions.

Council Tax Levels

Q13 Glyn Davies: What is the First Minister's policy on restricting the increase in council tax levels to the rate of inflation? (OAQ34812)

The First Minister: The average increase in band D council tax in Wales for 2004-05 is 6.0 per cent. This is the lowest increase since the introduction of unitary authorities in Wales in 1996-97. These are circumstances in which I could have no reason for using the reserve powers available to limit council tax rises.

Arriva Trains

Q14 Peter Law: What discussions has the First Minister had with Arriva Trains regarding the provision of service in Wales? (OAQ34801)

The First Minister: I have not had any formal discussions with Arriva Trains. The Minister for Economic Development and Transport met with Bob Davies, Arriva's chief executive, on 11 November 2003 and discussed with him the provision of rail services in Wales. He also keeps regularly in touch with Peter Strachan, the managing director of Arriva Trains Wales, on an informal basis. Arriva has carried out a consultation exercise on its proposals for a standard pattern timetable and presented evidence for discussion to Members of the Economic Development and Transport Committee on 1 April 2004. Arriva is now evaluating responses to the consultation.

Affordable Housing

Q15 Peter Black: Will the First Minister make a statement on affordable housing? (OAQ34808)

The First Minister: Our position was set out during the debate on affordable housing, which took place on 16 March. The resolution passed that day reaffirms the vision set out in our national housing strategy that everyone should have the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable, housing, be able to choose where they live and decide whether buying or renting is best for them and their families. It also supports the action that we have taken to create opportunities for people to access affordable housing.