

Answers to Questions not reached in Plenary 09/12/2009

[R] signifies that the Member has declared an interest.
[W] signifies that the question was tabled in Welsh.

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Questions to the Minister for Finance and Public Service Delivery

Funding Allocation

Q11 Chris Franks: Will the Minister make a statement on the overall funding allocation for the children, education, lifelong learning and skills portfolio? OAQ(3)0893(FPS)

The Minister for Finance and Public Service Delivery (Andrew Davies): The final budget for 2010-11 was approved by the Assembly yesterday. On the children, education, lifelong learning and skills portfolio, the total revenue budget is almost £1.7 billion and the capital budget is nearly £183 million.

Funding Allocation

Q12 Leanne Wood: Will the Minister make a statement on the overall funding allocation for the health and social services portfolio? OAQ(3)0900(FPS)

Andrew Davies: The Final Budget for 2010-11 was approved by the Assembly yesterday. On the health and social services portfolio, the total revenue budget is around £5.8 billion and the capital budget is £297 million.

Budget Allocation

Q13 Dai Lloyd: What consideration has the Minister given to increasing the budget allocation to the children, education, lifelong learning and skills portfolio? OAQ(3)0888(FPS)

Andrew Davies: The budget allocation to the children, education, lifelong learning and skills portfolio was developed in close consultation with my colleague the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills. Excluding the 2009-10 supplementary budget allocation, the cash increase in the CELLS revenue budget is 2.5 per cent excluding transfers.

Procurement Processes

Q14 Darren Millar: Will the Minister make a statement on the Welsh Assembly Government's procurement processes? OAQ(3)0911(FPS)

Andrew Davies: Robust processes ensure that our procurement activities are ethical, sustainable, transparent and legally compliant. We are introducing new technology to reduce bureaucracy and open competition for smaller suppliers, while continuing to achieve value for money for the goods and services we purchase, based upon quality and whole life cost.

Public Service Delivery

Q15 Darren Millar: What assessment has the Minister made of the impact on public service delivery in Wales of the reversion to a value added tax rate of seventeen and a half percent? OAQ(3)0919(FPS)

Andrew Davies: No overall assessment has been made. Most of the Welsh Assembly Government's £15 billion funding of public services is outside the scope of VAT. Where VAT of around £300 million is charged on our goods and services we are able to reclaim substantial VAT costs. Rate changes do not therefore have a significant impact in terms of our support to public service delivery.

Questions to the Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills

School Building Repairs

Q9 Peter Black: Will the Minister make a statement on school building repairs? OAQ(3)1169(CEL)

The Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills (Jane Hutt): My statement to Plenary in February set out our reforms to deliver schools investment for the twenty-first century. I have already announced transitional funding of £204.8 million to assist local authorities in delivering both new build and major refurbishment capital projects.

The Foundation Phase

Q10 Alun Cairns: Will the Minister make a statement on any analysis that has been conducted on the success of the foundation phase? OAQ(3)1140(CEL)

Jane Hutt: My monitoring confirms that the average adult/pupil ratio of 1:8 for three to five-year-olds is being achieved. Estyn's recent play and active learning toolkit identifies many examples of children flourishing under the foundation phase. Further analysis of the foundation phase roll-out will be in the chief inspector's annual report.

Basic Skills

Q11 Brynle Williams: Will the Minister make a statement on the Welsh Assembly Government's plans for the teaching of basic skills in North Wales? OAQ(3)1170(CEL)

The Deputy Minister for Skills (John Griffiths): We are committed to raising basic skills levels across Wales. We are currently considering the achievements of the existing national strategy, 'Words Talk Numbers Count', to decide how best to take forward the basic skills agenda from April 2010. The findings of a formal evaluation will inform this process.

Educational Attainment

Q12 Jeff Cuthbert: Will the Minister make a statement on educational attainment levels in Wales? OAQ(3)1175(CEL)

Jane Hutt: Pupils in Wales continued to make positive progress in 2009 with improved results across the key stages. This year 61 per cent of 15-year-olds achieved the level 2 threshold—a volume of learning equivalent to five GCSEs at grades A*-C—which is 3 percentage points up on 2008.

Sport in Schools

Q13 Irene James: Will the Minister make a statement on sport in Welsh schools? OAQ(3)1147(CEL)

Jane Hutt: Sport makes a central contribution to health, fitness and well being. It is an integral part of the physical development and education provided for pupils in the foundation phase and the revised school curriculum. I am supporting schools in improving standards through the physical education and school sport initiative.

Vocational Subjects

Q14 Dai Lloyd: Will the Minister make a statement on provision for vocational subjects in school curriculums? OAQ(3)1143(CEL)

Jane Hutt: The Assembly Government recently introduced the Learning and Skills (Wales) 2009 Measure to ensure that young people, at both key stage 4 and post 16, are able to elect a course of study from a wide range of courses including an increased number of vocational subjects.

‘One-Wales’ Commitments

Q15 Andrew R.T. Davies: Will the Minister make a statement on progress towards meeting the ‘One Wales’ commitments in the children, education, lifelong learning and skills portfolio? OAQ(3)1136(CEL)

Jane Hutt: Good progress has been made in delivering ‘One Wales’ commitments in my portfolio. A delivery plan update was published on 22 October. The final budget increases support for the foundation phase, schools counselling, youth support strategy, welsh-medium education and measures to mitigate the impact of the recession.