

## **Information Further to Ministerial Answers**

### **Information further to OAQ40008 issued by Sue Essex, the Finance Minister, on 20 December 2004**

#### **To Michael German:**

In the First Minister's questions on 30 November, you raised a question about the Wales Office final budget increase. The First Minister promised that you would receive a written answer. Given that this related to a detailed budget issue, which falls to me as Finance Minister, it is appropriate for me to reply.

Wales Office is very aware of the need to control its costs. There has been no increase in the running costs of the Wales Office.

Peter Hain covered this issue in his response to you in the Assembly's Queen Speech debate the following day. The change in the final budget reflects the cost of certain services which until last year used to be provided to the Wales Office by the Assembly. The Wales Office now obtains these services from the Department of Constitutional Affairs or from third parties and relevant budget provision has been transferred from the Assembly. These services include information technology, service changes, telephones, accommodation, rent, translations and related capital changes.

If you have any further questions about the details of the Wales Office budget, you should address these to the Secretary of State for Wales.

### **Information further to the debate on the Higher Education Act 2004 on 30 November 2004 issued by Jane Davidson, the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning, on 21 December 2004**

#### **To Peter Black:**

During the debate on the approval of the Higher Education 2004 (Commencement No. 1 and Transitional Provision) (Wales) Order I said that I would write to you with details of the handling of cases that predated the designation of an adjudicator under the Act. Your question specifically focused on cases in institutions without a visitor and so it is to those cases that I address my response.

The scheme which the Office of the Independent Adjudicator has submitted for approval under the terms of the Act includes provisions relating to eligibility of cases and time limits for the submission of cases. The proposed scheme sets a three-month time limit for submitting a case to the adjudicator once the internal processes have been exhausted without the complainant being satisfied. The rules do incorporate flexibility to allow the reviewer to extend the time limit where he/she feels there is a good reason to do so. However, it is not the intention that this provision would routinely be used to accept cases which were two or three years old. It is customary practice in the establishment of similar bodies to set a time limit for retrospective cases.

With regards to transitional arrangements, the adjudicator would not be able to consider cases that are already being considered by the courts, having exhausted internal procedures or which had been submitted to a visitor before 1 January 2005. Although under its transitional rules, the adjudicator will be able to continue to consider cases submitted under the voluntary

scheme, including by the visitor. With regards to new cases, the adjudicator will be able to accept cases where internal procedures were exhausted on or after 1 October.

I trust that this answers your query.