

Finance Committee

Meeting Venue:
Committee Room 2 – Senedd

Meeting date:
Thursday, 11 June 2015

Meeting time:
09.00

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



For further information please contact:

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Agenda

At its meeting on 21 May 2015 the Committee resolved under Standing Order 17.42 to exclude the public for item 1 of today's meeting

1 Future Funding: Expert adviser briefing session (09.00 – 10.00) (Pages 1 – 3)
Gerald Holtham

Paper 1 – Future Welsh Government Revenue

Public

2 Motion to elect Temporary Chair under Standing Order 17.22 (10.00)

3 Introductions, apologies and substitutions (10.00)

4 Papers to note (10.00 – 10.05) (Pages 4 – 6)

5 Future Funding: Evidence session 1 (10.05 – 11.00) (Pages 7 – 28)

Alan Bermingham, CIPFA

Paper 2 – CIPFA consultation response

Research briefing

6 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for the following business:

Items 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 of today's meeting and items 1 and 2 of the meeting scheduled for 17 June 2015.

7 Future Funding: Consideration of evidence (11.00 – 11.30)

8 Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Bill: Consideration of the Committee's response (11.30 – 11.45) (Pages 29 – 31)

Paper 3 – Draft letter

9 Welsh Tax Forecasts (11.45 – 12.00) (Pages 32 – 35)

Research briefing

10 Budget Procedures: Correspondence with the Presiding Officer (12.00 – 12.15) (Pages 36 – 41)

Paper 4 – Letter from Chair of the Finance Committee to Presiding Officer

Paper 5 – Letter from Presiding Officer to Chair of the Finance Committee

11 Forward work programme (12.15 – 12.30) (Pages 42 – 48)

Paper 6 – Forward work programme

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Agenda Item 4

Finance Committee

Meeting Venue: **Committee Room 2 – Senedd**

Meeting date: **Thursday, 21 May 2015**

Meeting time: **09.00 – 10.31**

This meeting can be viewed on [Senedd TV](http://senedd.tv/en/3036) at:
<http://senedd.tv/en/3036>

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Concise Minutes:

Assembly Members:

Jocelyn Davies AM (Chair)
Peter Black AM
Christine Chapman AM
Mike Hedges AM
Alun Ffred Jones AM
Ann Jones AM
Julie Morgan AM
Nick Ramsay AM

Witnesses:

Huw Vaughan Thomas, Auditor General for Wales, Wales Audit Office
Kevin Thomas, Wales Audit Office
Gillian Body, Assistant Auditor General, Wales Audit Office

Committee Staff:

Bethan Davies (Clerk)
Tanwen Summers (Deputy Clerk)
Martin Jennings (Researcher)
Helen Jones (Researcher)
Joanest Varney-Jackson (Legal Adviser)

View the [meeting transcript](#).

1 Introductions, apologies and substitutions

1.1 The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting.

1.2 No apologies were received.

2 Papers to note

2.1 The papers were noted.

3 Auditor General for Wales Annual Plan 2015–16

3.1 The Committee took evidence from Huw Vaughan Thomas, Auditor General for Wales, Kevin Thomas and Gillian Body, Wales Audit Office.

4 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for the following business:

4.1 The Motion was agreed.

5 Auditor General for Wales Annual Plan 2015–16: Consideration of evidence

5.1 The Committee considered the evidence received and agreed to write to the Wales Audit Office for further information.

5.2 The Committee also agreed to write to the Welsh Local Government Association and the Welsh Government.

6 Collection and management of devolved taxes in Wales: Consideration of draft report

6.1 The Committee agreed the draft report with some minor amendments.

7 Renting Homes (Wales) Bill: Consideration of the Committee's response

7.1 The Committee agreed the draft letter.

8 Environment (Wales) Bill: Initial consideration

8.1 The Committee considered the financial implications of the Environment (Wales) Bill and agreed to invite the Minister for Natural Resources in for further scrutiny.

9 Historic Environment (Wales) Bill: Initial consideration

9.1 The Committee considered the financial implications of the Historic Environment (Wales) Bill and agreed that it would not undertake any further financial scrutiny on the Bill.

9.2 The Committee agreed to write to the Chair of the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee.

10 Welsh Tax Forecasts

10.1 The Committee agreed to return to the issue at the next meeting.

National Assembly for Wales Finance Committee – Consultation on Future Funding

A Submission by:

**The Chartered Institute of Public
Finance and Accountancy**

June 2015

CIPFA, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, is the professional body for people in public finance. CIPFA shows the way in public finance globally, standing up for sound public financial management and good governance around the world as the leading commentator on managing and accounting for public money.

Further information about CIPFA can be obtained at www.cipfa.org

Any questions arising from this submission should be directed to:

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 Reflecting on the focus of the Committees inquiry into future funding considerations, this submission will concentrate on the following areas:

- The key weaknesses and limitations (*see appendix 1*) in the current Welsh funding settlement and how these should be addressed
- What type of financial information is needed by the Welsh Government to provide appropriate support for and scrutiny of future funding arrangements
- The relevance of the Barnett Formula funding arrangements and;
- The principles that should be adopted to underpin further devolution of fiscal powers to Wales

1.2 CIPFA would make the following conclusions and recommendations to the Committee for consideration in its inquiry.

- The current funding settlement for Wales sets out prescribed borrowing limits set by the UK Government.¹ These limits are already significantly lower than levels of affordable borrowing in Local Government in Wales. A prescribed level of borrowing sets limits on the fiscal levers available to the Welsh Government.
- CIPFA would support the implementation of borrowing supported by a prudential management regime as recommended by the Smith Commission in Scotland.²
- CIPFA believes that the funding through the mechanism of the Barnett Formula is inconsistent with a position of further devolution of tax powers to devolved administrations.
- CIPFA advocates a position where further resource allocation across the UK should be principles based, transparent, accountable and should seek to address relative need as well as promotion of equity.³

¹ Wales Act 2014, Section 20 'Borrowing'

² The Smith Commission Report, paragraph 95 (5) (b) http://www.smith-commission.scot/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/The_Smith_Commission_Report-1.pdf

³ CIPFA Briefing – Funding Devolved Government - <http://www.cipfa.org/cipfa-thinks/briefings>

- In order to support the devolved financial powers and enhanced accountability of the Welsh Government, there needs to be an appropriate robust system of financial reporting at a whole of Wales public sector level. This would include a balance sheet for Wales to assess the state of public finances in Wales and underpin enhanced scrutiny arrangements.⁴
- The Welsh Government should plan for a robust system of public financial management that includes an enhanced fiscal framework, independent scrutiny of Welsh Government tax and spending forecasts, all of which is support by legislative arrangements.

2. Borrowing and Prudential Management

- 2.1 The current financial settlement includes borrowing powers of up to £500m for current revenue spending shortfalls, which remains unchanged from the Government of Wales Act 2006.⁵ Capital borrowing powers providing a borrowing limit of £500m have been introduced in the Wales Act 2014.¹
- 2.2 The limits are set taking account of the ratio between devolved tax revenues and borrowing. Taking account of this, it is put forward by the UK Government that the current settlement for Wales is more generous than that proposed for Scotland.⁶
- 2.3 CIPFA would support the approach taken by the Smith Commission in Scotland.² This would mean that the Welsh Government should also have sufficient borrowing powers to support capital investment, consistent with a sustainable overall UK fiscal framework. The Welsh and UK Governments would need to consider the merits of undertaking such capital borrowing via a prudential borrowing regime, similar to Local Government,⁷ and consistent with a sustainable overall UK framework.
- 2.4 We believe that this approach would facilitate a greater focus on medium to long term planning for Wales in its approach to Capital Investment. It would provide for greater accountability and transparency to the Welsh Assembly and Welsh Electorate, given that supporting prudential indicators are agreed, reviewed and published, and it would place the

⁴ CIPFA Manifesto – things can only get worse, A call for sustainable public finance - <http://www.cipfa.org/cipfa-thinks/manifesto2015>

⁵ Government of Wales Act 2006, Section 122 (2)

⁶ HM Government, Wales Bill: Financial Empowerment and Accountability, para 88-90 - https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/294421/Wales_Bill_Command_Paper_-_English.pdf

⁷ CIPFA, The Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities (2011 Edition)

significant fiscal lever of borrowing for investment fully within the hands of the Welsh Government.

- 2.5 Within Local Government in Wales a similar prudential regime has been successfully in place for a number of years. A key element of the prudential regime is that Local Authorities set their authorised borrowing limit annually. Essentially this limit is the maximum that the elected members will allow executive officers to borrow and it is set in the context of its affordability on local taxation.
- 2.6 For an indication of the scale of borrowing in Local Government; in the 2010/11 financial year the total authorised limit across local government in Wales was over £5.0bn,⁸ significantly greater than the limit being imposed by the UK Government on Capital Borrowing for the Welsh Government. As at the 31st March 2013, outstanding loan debt on the balance sheets of Local Authorities in Wales stood at £2.4bn.⁹
- 2.7 In order to fully support this approach, CIPFA advocates putting in place the following:
- A formal updated fiscal framework for Wales, supported in legislation
 - An agreed set of Prudential Indicators, measuring affordability, sustainability and prudence of the medium term to longer term investment decisions of the Welsh Government
 - An agreed method for Independent Scrutiny of the revenue and spending forecasts of the Welsh Government

3. Barnett Formula Funding

- 3.1 CIPFA believes that continuation of the use of the Barnett Formula to deal with further devolution is not feasible. Further, we believe that the Barnett Formula in its current form should be withdrawn.
- 3.2 A way forward was outlined by the Steele Commission¹⁰ which drew attention to the arrangements put in place when Australia introduced a major package of reform to its fiscal system in 1999. The changes came with a guarantee that each state would not be worse off during the transitional period than it would have been had the changes not been implemented. The transition period was approximately 8 years and during

⁸ Prudential Borrowing and innovative approaches to capital funding Welsh Local Government Association – 2 March 2012 – paper to the Finance Committee of the National Assembly for Wales

⁹ Capital and Treasury Management Statistics 2013/14, CIPFA.

¹⁰ Moving to federalism – A New settlement for Scotland March 2006

this time states whose income fell below the guaranteed level were given non ring fenced grants to maintain overall revenue levels.

3.3 CIPFA believes that any future funding solution would have to consider relative public service needs. For example, a recent report on fiscal devolution concluded: 'for a system of fiscal devolution to balance equalisation and incentives it has to start with an assessment of need and resources; have a mechanism for reallocating disproportionate tax yield growth and include periodic reassessments'.¹¹ Any solution would also need to factor in the extent of local control over taxation including for example over non-domestic and domestic rates.

3.4 A clear case for a principles based approach to funding devolved government across the UK emerges from CIPFA's assessment of reviews of the Barnett Formula and consideration of International evidence. CIPFA has proposed four simple principles which would underpin the funding for all devolved government across the UK:³

- **Need** – the relative need and assessment of the socio-economic circumstances of each of the devolved government areas should be assessed;
- **Equity** – this would be the cornerstone principle promoting equalisation across the nations of the UK.
- **Accountability** – the devolved administrations should have some powers over taxation to provide a direct relationship between services provided and taxes paid, this making them more directly accountable, and
- **Transparency** – any funding mechanism should be transparent in its operation and should be the responsibility of a body independent of government.

3.5 We note that the UK Government has committed to establishing a process to review relative levels of funding within the block grant with the potential of introducing a floor in funding.¹² This will provide a Wales with a method to alleviate the process of future funding convergence under the Barnett Formula arrangements.

3.6 Placing a floor into the relative funding mechanism under Barnett for Wales does however raise the question of the funding position for the

¹¹ House of Commons, Communities and Local Government Committee Report, Devolution in England: the case for Local Government, June 2014

¹² UK Government: Powers for a Purpose: Towards a Lasting Settlement for Wales, (Chapter 4, para 4.9), February 2015,

other devolved regions funded under Barnett Formula arrangements. This would put the regions on a different funding basis, if not implemented elsewhere, and further undermine the relevance of the current funding mechanism.

- 3.7 CIPFA supports the view taken by the UK Government which has stated that they will work with the Welsh Government to develop sustainable long-term funding arrangements within a robust fiscal framework that reflect the changes made.¹³

4. Financial Information to Support Future Funding Arrangements

4.1 An important component of supporting further devolution of powers to Wales is the quality of state level financial information and governance. Without good financial information and advice, policy makers and managers of public services fail to make sound decisions, leading to poor use of public money.

4.2 Robust financial reporting at a state level will be important for Wales for a number of reasons:

- To provide markets with an understanding of the state of public finances in Wales, supporting any move by the Welsh Government to raise finance through commercial markets.
- To provide transparency which helps inform voters and other stakeholders about the financial stewardship of the Welsh Government.
- To underpin sound decision making and scrutiny arrangements under any revised fiscal framework and;
- To enable medium to longer-term planning

4.3 CIPFA would advocate the development and use of projected combined Welsh public sector level balance sheets¹⁴ as an integral part of the Welsh Governments fiscal and budgetary frameworks.

5. Reserved Powers Model

5.1 CIPFA, having taken note of the available research,¹⁵ supports the view that the Reserved Powers Model offers a number of advantages over the

¹³ UK Government: Powers for a Purpose: Towards a Lasting Settlement for Wales, (Chapter 4, para 4.11), February 2015,

¹⁴ CIPFA Manifesto 2015, section 6, page 18

¹⁵ Scottish Law Commission, Comments on White Paper 'Our Changing Democracy: Devolution to Scotland and Wales' Memorandum no. 32, June 1976

Conferred Powers Model that is contained within the Government of Wales Act 2006.

- 5.2 The key advantage is to provide legal clarity over what powers the Welsh Assembly has and to remove any uncertainty in areas where it may be difficult under the Conferred Powers Model to specifically define all the areas of responsibility that the Welsh Government should have. The Reserve Powers Model has been previously proposed by the Richard Commission 2004,¹⁶ based on the Scottish Model of legislative powers.
- 5.3 Adoption of a Reserved Powers Model in Wales will also bring an element of consistency in approach to devolution across the regions of the UK. CIPFA does not expect full co-ordination of devolution settlements across the regions as it would be expected that regions will move at different paces and the appetite for devolved powers within the electorate in each regions may well differ. However, we do believe that it would be appropriate and fair if the model for devolution settlements had a degree of consistency.

¹⁶ Report of the Commission on the Powers and Electoral Arrangements of the National Assembly for Wales
<http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN03018/SN03018.pdf>

APPENDIX 1 – Summary of Limitations in the current funding system

<p>Block grant calculated by Barnett formula</p>	<p>The Welsh Government has no control over the level of funding available and must ensure public services are affordable within the funding envelope provided. Some control can be exercised over levels of local taxation and other funding sources; the block grant provides the majority of income for the Welsh Government.</p> <p>The Wales Act 2014 provides that a referendum can be held to give Welsh Ministers the power to vary income tax, and gives the Welsh Government control of stamp duty land tax and landfill tax. These measures may provide some additional funding depending on the choices made.</p>
<p>Limitations on how block grant can be spent</p>	<p>As the UK Government retains control over fiscal policy, HM Treasury imposes controls on the block grant. Under a reserve powers model the Welsh Government has discretion over how to spend the majority of the block grant in relation to devolved areas.¹⁷</p> <p>Some more volatile elements of expenditure are restricted.¹⁸ Spending in these areas is not within the discretion of the Welsh Ministers, and this funding must be used for the purpose for which it is provided, or returned to HM Treasury. Although this provides the Welsh Government's funding with an element of protection from the risks associated with such volatile, demand-led elements of spending, it also removes an element of control over the totality of their available funding.</p>
<p>Inability to hold reserves</p>	<p>Funding received in the block grant cannot be held in 'reserve' to be carried over into future financial years.¹⁹ Any unspent grant must be returned to the Treasury at the end of the financial year.</p> <p>There is a system by which the Welsh Government can ask to carry forward any unspent grant, the budget exchange mechanism.²⁰ However, this is subject to limits, and is designed to avoid the 'use it or lose it' effect where money is spent merely to avoid being lost,</p>

¹⁷ The departmental expenditure limits (DEL).

¹⁸ Included in the annually managed expenditure (AME).

¹⁹ It should be noted that local government in Wales can hold reserves.

²⁰ As detailed in HM Treasury's [Consolidated Budgeting Guidance](#).

	<p>rather than to manage financial pressures across years. This does not enable the funds to be held in a 'reserve' but rather allows access to the agreed amount in the next financial year.</p>
<p>Inability to borrow over the long term</p>	<p>Local government in Wales can borrow money, as long as this is affordable and prudent.²¹ This enables authorities to spread the cost of capital investment in schools, roads and other infrastructure, over a number of years.</p> <p>Under the current settlement, the Welsh Government has only limited ability to borrow money, with the power to borrow up to £500m to cover temporary shortfalls in revenue spending and £500m for Capital Investment¹</p>
<p>Limited information on future funding levels</p>	<p>In terms of financial planning for the future, the Welsh Government has only restricted information on its future level of funding. Although the block grant does provide a level of certainty, the amount of grant to be received is indicated as part of the UK Government's Spending Review process, which intends to provide figures for three financial years, to enable financial planning.²²</p> <p>The timing and lengths of Spending Review periods have varied, with the Spending Round 2013 providing figures for only two years (2014-15 and 2015-16), with no forecasts for financial years beyond the UK general election.</p> <p>Spending Reviews provide an indication of what the block grant is likely to be, these plans are often altered by decisions in UK Government Budgets and Autumn Statements, and therefore the block grant figures are subject to change, in either direction. These issues of timing and changes to the level of grant present difficulties in the ability of the Welsh Government to establish medium or long term financial plans.</p>

²¹ Local Government Act 2003, Chapter 1 Capital Finance, sections 1 - 6

²² Three year plans apply to the bulk of the grant, the departmental expenditure limit (DEL). However, the more volatile annually managed expenditure (AME) is planned for on an annual basis.

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

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Agenda Item 9

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

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Rosemary Butler AM
Presiding Officer

5 May 2015

Dear Rosemary

Budget Procedures

As you will be aware the Finance Committee have published two reports on the new budget procedures that will need to be implemented following the devolution of fiscal powers. We published our [part 1 report](#) in July 2014 and followed this up with a [part 2 report](#) in March 2015.

Whilst primarily these report make recommendations to the Government, there is clearly a responsibility on the Assembly to ensure the new procedures are fit for purpose whilst ensuring the procedures include provision for effective scrutiny by the Assembly.

Specifically in the part 1 report Conclusion 14 said:

The Committee will look further at the capacity issues of the Assembly and the Welsh Government during the second part of the inquiry. However, the Committee recommends that both the Assembly Commission and the Welsh Government commence work to look at the capacity available to undertake work in relation to the devolution of further fiscal powers to Wales.

Whilst in the part 2 report Recommendation 1 said:

The Committee recommends that the Welsh Government and the Assembly should work together to develop a new budget process, which allows for:

UK budget announcements,



a two part process,

the need to provide an early indication to other public bodies of their budgets for the following financial year,

adequate time for Assembly scrutiny, and

“future proofing” for any further fiscal devolution.

Throughout this process the Committee have worked closely with Jane Hutt AM, Minister for Finance and Government Business to ensure that the work of the Committee is informed by the Government and conclusions and recommendations have been shaped to ensure the needs of both the Assembly and the Government have been considered. The recent debate on the part 2 report was testament to our joint working, and as a Committee we hope this effective relationship with the Minister continues.

I would be grateful if you could provide the Committee with an update on the work the Assembly is undertaking:

1. to ensure there is capacity in the Assembly to undertake this important work on fiscal devolution in the coming years
2. with the Government to take forward the work required to implement new budget procedures.

I am copying this letter to Jane Hutt AM in view of the Governments role in this work. In addition as the Constitutional and Legislation Affairs Committee has shown an interest in this area as part of their current inquiry I am also copying it to David Melding AM.

Yours sincerely



Jocelyn Davies

Chair



Jocelyn Davies AM
Chair
Finance Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

Your ref:
Our ref: PO1008/RB/ER

19 May 2015

Dear Jocelyn

Thank you for your correspondence dated 5 May in relation to preparations within the Assembly for the devolution of fiscal powers.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee for its extensive work in this area; in particular the two reports on Best Practice Budget process. I appreciate the Committee's recognition of the Assembly's role in this area, and both reports have been extremely helpful in setting the direction for this work.

Complete readiness for the new challenges of the Fifth Assembly is one of the Commission's five strategic priorities. We recognise the importance of our readiness for the exercise of our new powers and responsibilities. As your recommendations highlight, this means:

- having the right capacity, understanding and expertise in place so that Members' can perform their role effectively and with confidence; and
- a new budget procedure which is the model of best practice that you have identified to effectively scrutinise the application of the Welsh Government's tax and borrowing powers.

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg/We welcome correspondence in both English and Welsh

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Thus, preparing for the fiscal devolution contained in the Wales Act 2014 is a priority area of ongoing work. The following provides an update in relation to each of these areas of work.

Development and implementation of new budget procedures.

As recognised by the Committee, and by the Minister for Finance and Government Business, collaborative working and continued co-operation between the Welsh Government and Assembly Commission is essential in taking this work forward, to ensure that the resulting budget procedures are fit for purpose for both the Welsh Government and the Assembly. I welcome the continued commitment from the Minister to work collaboratively with the Assembly.

Regular meetings between officials from the Welsh Government and Assembly are ongoing, and are proving helpful in developing our thinking on moving towards a new budget procedure in time for the tax powers going live in the 2018-19 budget round. Such discussions are following up on the Committee's reports, which are proving to be fundamental to this process.

We are confident that this will aid us in reaching a common agreement on a future budget procedure and associated safeguards, which allows the Welsh Government to meet its responsibilities and also provides for adequate scrutiny of the public finances, in time for summer 2017 and the preparations for the 2018-19 budget round.

As well as the Finance Committee, the Business Committee, as the committee with responsibility for Assembly procedures, will be instrumental in agreeing a future budget process. Commission staff will ensure that all are kept informed as this work progresses.

In taking the work on developing a new budget procedure forwards, all relevant Commission staff – including the Clerk of the Finance Committee – are working in a coordinated manner to ensure that there are clear lines of communication for all involved. They are supported in this work by an external expert advisor, Ian Summers.



Readiness for change – capacity planning

The Wales Act 2014 carries two main implications for the scrutiny work conducted by the Assembly. First, the need for scrutiny of fiscal legislation and, second, an expansion of its general financial and budget scrutiny to cover taxation and borrowing, in addition to public spending.

The Silk Commission in their Part 1 report (November 2012) recognised that: *‘The National Assembly for Wales Commission may wish to consider building up of capacity and expertise for financial scrutiny through the training of Members and through research and committee support that Members receive.’* Since that time, work has been underway in the Assembly to improve our expertise in this area.

In principle, the scrutiny of tax legislation is no different to that of other legislation – the legislative process remains the same. However, there is clearly a need to build internal skills and knowledge in relation to taxation and to draw in external expertise. In relation to the latter, committees are already free to appoint expert advisors and I trust that this will continue. But should we need to make changes to these arrangements in order to access the scale and level of advice required, I will be supportive. My priority is to ensure that the Assembly, and its committees, can access the expertise that it needs in order to meet fully its enhanced fiscal responsibilities.

As for our internal expertise, the Assembly already has a programme of financial scrutiny development in place for Members and their staff, organised by the Members’ Liaison and Professional Development team, in conjunction with an external provider. A review of the continuing professional development programme is planned in the next few months, to ensure that it is fit for purpose and reflects our new fiscal powers. A revised programme will be in place by the beginning of the Fifth Assembly, in time for the commencement of the new budget process in autumn 2017.

A programme of development for Commission staff supporting Committee scrutiny is underway, which aims to build our internal knowledge base. We are also tapping into good practice and experience from other Parliaments, such as the Scottish Parliament which has recently scrutinised a similar suite of tax legislation, following on from powers granted under the Scotland Act 2012.



Llywydd
Presiding Officer



The Research Service is in the process of expanding the team responsible for financial scrutiny through the recruitment of an additional senior research officer.

I hope this update reassures the Committee that preparedness for the devolution of fiscal powers is a priority within the Assembly and that work is underway to ensure that we are on course to meet the challenges ahead.

In keeping with your original request, I am copying this response to Jane Hutt AM, Minister for Finance and Government Business, and David Melding AM, Chair of the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee, as well as members of the Business Committee.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rosemary".

Dame Rosemary Butler AM
Presiding Officer

Agenda Item 11

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

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