

Agenda – Public Accounts Committee

Meeting Venue:

For further information contact:

Video Conferencing via Zoom

Fay Bowen

Meeting date: 3 August 2020

Committee Clerk

Meeting time: 13.00

0300 200 6565

SeneddPAC@senedd.wales

In accordance with Standing Order 34.19, the Chair has determined that the public are excluded from the Committee's meeting in order to protect public health. This meeting will be broadcast live on

www.senedd.tv

(Private pre-meeting)

(13.00 – 13.30)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(13.30)

2 Paper(s) to note

(13.30)

2a Inquiry into COVID-19 and its impact on matters relating to the Public Accounts Committee's remit: Letter from the Welsh Government (14 July 2020)

(Pages 1 – 10)

3 Inquiry into COVID-19 and its impact on matters relating to the Public Accounts Committee's remit: Evidence session with the Welsh Government

(13.35 – 14.40)

(Pages 11 – 37)

Research Briefing



Tracey Burke – Director General, Education & Public Services Group, Welsh Government

Ruth Conway – Deputy Director Support for Learners Division, Welsh Government

Nicola Edwards – Deputy Director, Childcare, Play and Early Years Division, Welsh Government

Chris Jones – Deputy Director – Support for Learners

Kevin Palmer – Deputy Director, Pedagogy, Leadership and Professional Learning, Welsh Government

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

(14.40)

Items 5, 6 & 7

(Break)

(14.40 – 14.50)

5 Inquiry into COVID-19 and its impact on matters relating to the Public Accounts Committee's remit: Evidence session with the Senedd Commission

(14.50 – 15.50)

(Pages 38 – 50)

Research Briefing

PAC(5)-16-20 Paper 1 – [Letter](#) from the Chair, Finance Committee to the Senedd Commission – Financial implications of COVID-19 pandemic, 4 June 2020

PAC(5)-16-20 Paper 2 – [Response](#) from the Senedd Commission to the Chair, Finance Committee – Financial implications of COVID-19 pandemic, 7 July 2020

Manon Antoniazzi – Chief Executive and Clerk of the Senedd

Nia Morgan – Director of Finance

Lowri Williams – Head of Human Resource and Inclusion Services

6 Inquiry into COVID-19 and its impact on matters relating to the Public Accounts Committee's remit: Consideration of evidence received

(15.50 – 16.00)

7 Forward work programme – Autumn 2020

(16.00 – 16.30)

(Pages 51 – 60)

PAC(5)-16-20 Paper 3 – Forward work programme

PAC(5)-16-20 Paper 4 – Statutory reports of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: Initial inquiry scoping document



Tracey Burke

Cyfarwyddwr Cyffredinol / Director General

Y Grŵp Addysg a Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus
Education and Public Services Group

Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Nick Ramsay MS
Chair
Public Accounts Committee
Senedd Cymru
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

14 July 2020

Dear Mr Ramsay,

Following my attendance at Public Accounts Committee on 22 June, please find enclosed my response to the action points recorded by the Clerk.

In addition, whilst it was not specifically recorded as an action point, I was asked during the session about the levels of demand on the Discretionary Assistance Fund. We provided some single-day figures at the time, but I now include the trend data for completeness. I hope Members find this helpful.

I trust you will let me know if the Committee would like further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely

Tracey Burke



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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

**Public Accounts Committee meeting
22 June 2020
Follow-up Actions**

A note on the £57m funding identified for the Test, Trace & Protect Strategy and specifically the element relating to local government

A sum of £57m was allocated to the Health and Social Services MEG in the first Supplementary Budget for the test element of Test, Trace and Protect. Local Authorities are playing a crucial part, alongside Local Health Boards, in the trace element of the strategy. At the moment, tracing teams are resourced by redeployed staff with the majority from local authorities, but as services reopen these staff will need to return to their substantive posts.

The Welsh Government is currently working with the WLGA and Health Boards on the models of staff requirements for tracing and the related funding needed. The modelling uses a number of assumptions around the R rate and the number of traces that can be completed by each staff member. The recent local outbreaks have been an opportunity to test the tracing system and how teams in one area can assist others on a regional or national basis to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the network.

Funding for protect is the subject of advice to Ministers at present. It is this element (protect) of Test, Trace and Protect which sits within my direct management responsibilities. The Protect work-stream is led by a Director in my Group and its role is to identify the support which may be required by some people to enable them to successfully self-isolate and how this support will be provided.

Latest position of the local authorities Hardship Fund claims for April – May (June data not yet available)

The figures below are for April to May and are the costs received from Local Authorities. Some of the above costs are still being assessed by a panel. Some may be disallowed, others might be put on hold while more information is sought.

We are currently awaiting the claims for the month of June from Local Authorities. Once received and assessed, I will send the latest position to you. I anticipate that it will be end of July or the beginning of August before I am able to do this.

General The main areas of costs being claimed to date are:

- IT costs to enable homeworking and services to continue
- Overtime costs for business grant administration
- Costs of running education hubs – staff overtime, PPE
- PPE costs for general council services
- Social distancing requirements for waste collection
- Children's social care.

Hardship fund		Period funded	Costs claimed to end May (figures paid may be adjusted due to ongoing queries)	Comments
Free school meals	£40m	30 August	£10.4m	Still expecting higher spend in June onwards as systems catch up (May £7m)
Homelessness	£10m	Until fully utilised	£2.4m	Councils are continuing to house people while alternative accommodation and support packages are developed. Note an additional £20m separate recovery fund for Phase 2 has been announced.
Social care	£40m	Originally 31 May now 30 June	£21.4m	Expected to be fully utilised by the end of June.
Excess deaths provision	£7m	31 March 2021	£1.6m	It is expected that additional capacity will be needed until March 2021, to provide for potential future peaks over the winter in the number of excess deaths.
General	£13m	30 June	£15.5m	Already exceeded funding limit. Consideration of additional funding in hand.
Total	£110m		£51.3m	

In addition to the £110m made available for additional costs for the Hardship Fund, a further £78.5m has been made available for loss of income by Local Authorities which brings the total for the Hardship Fund to £188.5m. We are collecting information from Local Authorities now on loss of income and working closely with the WLGA and the Society of Welsh Treasurers on the detail. For example, there are different ways in which authorities raise income and also seasonal impacts.

An explanation of the position on the School Holiday Enrichment Programme

I was not in a position to respond on this issue more fully at Committee as Ministers were considering advice on interventions over the summer holiday period. Obviously I could not pre-empt their consideration. Since I attended Committee, further announcements have been made by the Minister for Education and the Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services which I detail below.

Welsh Ministers have had to take some difficult decisions this year as a result of the challenges presented by Covid 19. This has included re-prioritising the funding allocated for the School Holiday Enrichment Programme (SHEP).

It is recognised that the hardship faced by families who rely on free school meals has been aggravated by the current crisis and £40million is being provided in additional funding to extend our free school meal provision until 31 August 2020. Free school meal provision is currently reaching over 90,000 pupils.

It is also recognised that continued free school meal provision over the summer holidays will not address pupils' broader needs such as socialising with peers, physical activity, and re-engagement with education. Working closely with local authorities and the Welsh Local Government Association, we will explore whether there are opportunities to set up holiday schemes through the summer.

As school staff take a much needed break over the summer holidays, we are making £1.6m available via the LA Emergency Hardship Fund to allow local authorities to enhance their childcare and play opportunities for children and young people aged 5-16 who may need additional support over the summer. Local authorities are best placed to use services available to them to help those most at risk in their areas.

A further £1m has been allocated by the Minister for Education to fund provision for children and young people over the school summer holidays which will help them to re-engage with education, giving them the opportunity to take part in activities which they might have missed out on whilst not at school such as socialising with their peers and physical activity. We will work with the Welsh Local Government Association to determine how this funding will be allocated and guidelines for its use.

The costs of running the school hubs and specifically a breakdown of the increase cleaning costs

We have had claims to the end of May relating to education, including the hubs, of over £1.25m. Within that around £400k relates to cleaning and PPE, £250k provision of food at hubs and £600k staff costs (these are teaching and support staff including cleaners, relating to overtime during the Easter holidays and cover for shielding / sickness). There were also some savings on school transport overall as normal services were not running.

Descriptor	Sum of costs incurred £
Cleaning / PPE	400,847
Food	260,695
General	1,100

IT	86,697
Resources	19,933
Staff Costs	608,275
Transport	114,977
Total	1,262,569

A copy of the guidance and eligibility criteria developed for accessing funding for the Business Improvement Districts

I attach a copy of the guidance and eligibility criteria developed for accessing funding for the Business Improvement Districts at Annex A.

Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF)

Finally, whilst it was not specifically recorded as an action point, I was asked about the levels of demand on the Discretionary Assistance Fund at the Committee session. We provided some single-day figures at the time, but included now below, are the trend data for completeness, which Members might find helpful.

Between 18 March and 9 July, 37,459 Covid19-related Emergency Assistance Payments were made with a total paid value of £2,320,690. Covid19-related reasons applicants are presenting include: having to stop or reduce work; delay to benefit claim; and increased energy/food costs (family at home). Weekly data are provided in Annex B to this letter.

This data is published every Monday on Covid19 in relation to DAF and can be accessed via the following link, should Members wish to do so on an ongoing basis: <https://gov.wales/summary-data-about-coronavirus-covid-19-and-response-it>.

The data are taken from management information and are subject to change. They have not been subject to the same validation processes undertaken for official statistics releases. However, they are provided to support transparency and understanding of the response to Covid19 in Wales.

A copy of the guidance and eligibility criteria developed for accessing funding for the Business Improvement Districts

BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

WELSH GOVERNMENT COVID-19 SUPPORT FUND (2020)

GUIDANCE NOTE

Scope and Timing

1. The *BIDs COVID-19 Support Fund (2020)* is a Revenue fund to support **eligible Welsh BIDs with up to 20% of their quarterly levy income¹ for a period of 3 months.**
2. The fund will be administered by the Welsh Government, and grant funded to the Local Authority (LA) in their capacity as the BID Billing Authority. The LA will then transfer the grant into the BID Revenue Account, via the same mechanism as is currently used for the Levy.
3. The eligible period of 3 months will commence **once the BID no longer takes advantage** of the UK Job Retention Scheme (JRS) or from 1 August whichever is the later. As of 12 May, the current terms and conditions of the UK JRS have been extended by one month to the end of July, and with some amendments thereafter until October: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-job-retention-scheme-step-by-step-guide-for-employers>
4. The purpose of the Fund is to provide BIDs with core running costs of up to 3 months, in order to ensure staff remain employed and overheads are met. The fund will **not be able to support project delivery**, as this expenditure is not deemed as a 'core cost'. The expectation is that BIDs will have yielded some levy income since March 2020 (from those businesses still trading, and public organisations etc.) to enable some project delivery to be completed if staff are not on furlough.
5. The Fund is available for this financial year only – 2020/21 and will not be rolled forward into 2021/22.

Funding

6. Funding is based on **up to 20% of the quarterly BID Levy** for a period of 3 months to cover core running costs.
7. For the purpose of this fund, the 'quarterly BID Levy' definition is based on the amount billed during 2019/20 financial year (and not the amount actually 'collected' in that year, or the amount stated in the BID Proposal document for this current financial year 2020/21).

¹ See para 7 for definition of 'quarterly levy'

8. This fund is not to be viewed as a substitute for collecting the Levy. The 2005 BID Regulations remain unchanged in relation to Billing:
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2005/1312/contents/made>

Eligibility

9. Applicants will need to evidence they meet the following eligibility in order to apply for funding:
- **Not currently in receipt of UK JRS** – *This Fund is only available once you are not in receipt of JRS. If you are claiming JRS then you will need to wait until you are no longer in receipt of it before applying. We have encouraged BIDs to take advantage of any support scheme on offer during this crisis, whether that be from UK Govt. or Welsh Govt. Once those schemes stop, this fund will be open to you for an application (note – funding has to be in this financial year);*
 - **Is the funding required** – *Please explain why the funding is required. In evidencing this you will need to confirm: what level of reserves you had as at 31 March 2020 in the BID account; the amount of levy collected during this financial year (2020/21) as at date of submission; and whether you have received any other UK or Welsh Government grant funding during COVID.*
 - **Have support from their LA** - *The LA will act in their capacity as Billing Authority and transfer the funding to the BID company, therefore, we require their approval in the application and they will be required to sign the subsequent Grant Approval Letter should funding be approved.*

Application process

10. There are no fixed opening / closing dates with regards to making an application as each BID will be in a different position, and therefore, please ensure that you are able to satisfy the eligibility above before applying (para. 9).
11. Funding has to be committed and spent in this financial year. Officials will inform BIDs if there are any amendments to the proposed timeframe outlined above. Funding is not competitive, and therefore will not be based on a 'first come first served basis'.
12. The BID Chair, or Vice-Chair will need to sign the Application Form, and seek approval and endorsement from the LA (who also need to sign the Application) and submit via email to Regeneration officials².
13. The Welsh Government is advocating a collaborative approach and expects BIDs and the LA to work together in supporting each other and developing Recovery Plans.
14. Eligibility of applications will be assessed by Regeneration Officials within the *Homes and Places* division of the Welsh Government.
15. Regeneration officials will inform both the BID and LA of the status of their application. If approved, the *Grant Approval Letter* will follow shortly after, which will require signing from both parties and returning to officials electronically.

² See Application Form for details

Privacy Notice

16. The Application Form contains a Privacy Notice which sets out our position in relation to data protection legislation and the data you may provide to us in relation to your grant application. A link to our grants privacy notice is also included here:

<https://beta.gov.wales/privacy-notice-welsh-government-grants>

Communications

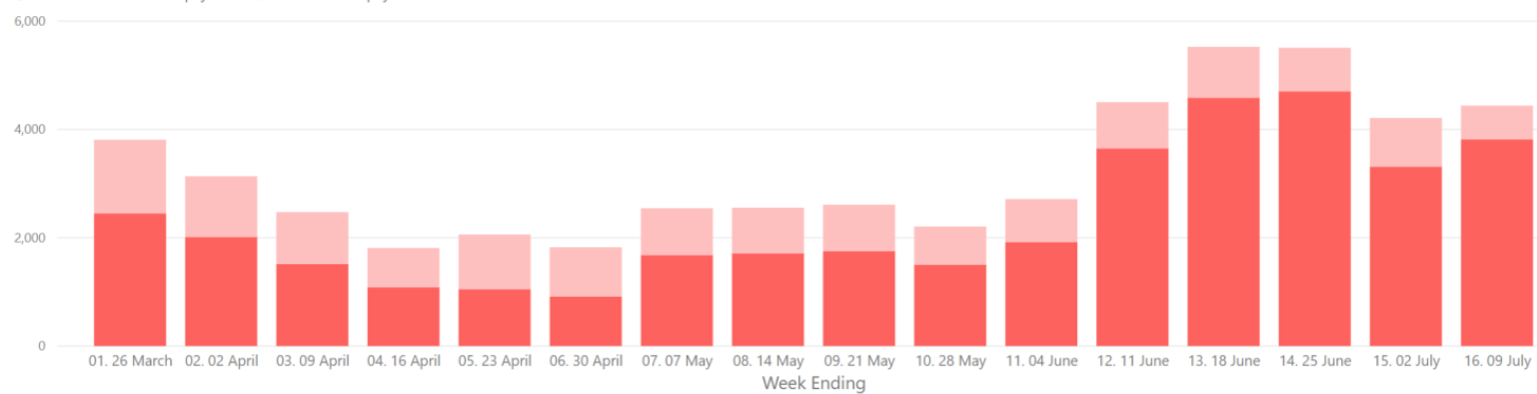
17. You must acknowledge Welsh Government support on all publicity, press releases and marketing material produced in relation to this Fund. Such acknowledgement must be in a form approved by us and must comply with the Welsh Government's branding guidelines.

18. If you have any questions or require further information please contact Vanessa Naughton - vanessa.naughton@gov.wales or Deralyn Mawdsley – Deralyn.Mawdsley@gov.wales

DISCRETIONARY ASSISTANCE FUND (DAF)

Weekly number of Emergency Assistance Payments (week ending Thursday)

● a. Covid-19 related EAP payments ● b. Normal EAP payments



Source: Welsh Government
Data as at 09/07/20

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Agenda Item 5

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

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