

Elin Jones MS, Llywydd

Rebecca Evans MS, Minister for Finance and Trefnydd

28 May 2020

Dear Llywydd and Minister,

Proposed Debate: The Welsh Government's Spending Priorities for the Draft Budget 2021-22, in light of Covid 19

I am writing to you both to explore the possibility of the Finance Committee holding a debate in Plenary on the spending priorities for the Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2021-22, prior to summer recess.

The Committee has previously expressed its concern that the Senedd does not have a formal opportunity to debate and potentially influence the Welsh Government's spending priorities prior to the draft budget being published. Last year, the Business Committee agreed that Finance Committee could hold a Committee-led Plenary debate.

The Committee's debate on the Welsh Government's spending priorities took place on 25 September 2019 and the motion was based on the information gathered from our stakeholder event in Aberystwyth.

Whilst the Committee felt the debate was even more pressing last year given the implications of the proposed timing of the budget due to Brexit and a General Election, the Committee has previously indicated this is something that should be facilitated on a permanent basis to afford Members the opportunity to influence budget priorities and allocations earlier in the process. As such, the Committee is pleased that the Minister accepted our recommendation that the Welsh Government considers how a debate on spending priorities could be factored into the budget timetable and notes her **response** stated:

"We are committed to supporting meaningful and effective scrutiny of our budget proposals. ... We are open to exploring with the Senedd Business and Finance Committees how a debate on spending priorities could be factored into the budget timetable."



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This year's draft Budget will inevitably be affected by the outbreak of Covid-19 and could again be impacted by a UK Spending Review, which has been delayed from July. Whilst the Committee will not be undertaking any public engagement this year as it would have hoped, we will be undertaking online engagement to seek views on what the public think the Welsh Government's spending priorities should be. We hope this information can be used to inform a priorities debate, prior to summer recess so it is within a time frame for the Welsh Government to take into account when formulating its draft budget. Covid-19 will have an impact on public spending for years to come and we believe that holding this debate is vital to ensure the Senedd sets out how it believes the Welsh Government should focus spending over the next financial year.

On this basis, the Committee hopes the Business Committee will agree to the Finance Committee holding a debate.

Yours sincerely



Llyr Gruffydd AM

Chair of the Finance Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

