

Llyr Gruffydd MS
Chair, Finance Committee

8 June 2020

Dear Llyr,

Budget timetable 2021-22

As required by Standing Order 20.2, the Business Committee has been formally notified that the Government intends to publish the outline and detailed proposals of the 2021-22 Draft Budget together on 8 December 2020, and to publish the final Budget on 2 March 2021. I am writing to you to seek the views of the Finance Committee on the proposed deadline for you to report on the draft budget, as required by Standing Order 20.4.

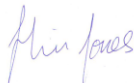
In determining this deadline, Standing Order 20.5(i) states that the Finance Committee must normally be given eight weeks to report on the outline budget proposals, while Standing Order 20.5(ii) requires that other committees have at least five weeks to consider the detailed budget proposals, within the timeframe set by the above dates notified to us by the Government.

The Trefnydd has indicated that the government intends to schedule the debate on the draft budget for Tuesday 9 February 2021. This would require the Finance Committee and other committees to report by Tuesday 2 February 2021.

In her letter, the Trefnydd indicated that there was unprecedented uncertainty this year regarding the UK Government's intentions for a Comprehensive Spending Review. Should it be possible to do so, the Welsh Government would look to bring forward its budget earlier in the autumn, and for the Business Committee to revise the timetable accordingly.

I would be grateful for your views on the proposed timetable as soon as is practicably possible, to enable the Business Committee to publish the timetable for the consideration of the budget soon after the summer recess. I'd be grateful also for your views on the possibility of amending the timetable as described, should the government request to do so.

Yours sincerely,



Elin Jones MS

Y Llywydd and Chair of the Business Committee



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Y Gweinidog Cyllid a'r Trefnydd
Minister for Finance and Trefnydd



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02 July 2020

Dear Elin,

I am writing to you in your capacity as Chair of the Business Committee regarding the timetable for the 2021-22 Budget.

We unfortunately find ourselves facing similar circumstances to those which impacted on our 2019-20 budget preparations. We don't yet know our 2021-22 budget settlement and until we receive this information we cannot provide certainty on our own 2021-22 budget timetable. We will only know this information when the UK Government concludes its Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) as opposed to the UK Autumn Budget.

At the UK finance minister's quadrilateral meeting last week all Devolved Administrations were pressing for detail on when the CSR would happen. Since then it has been confirmed that the Chancellor will be providing a summer economic update on 8 July and it is possible this will provide greater clarity on when the CSR will take place. However I am writing this letter to comply with Standing Order 20, noting that the Minister with responsibility for government business must notify the Business Committee at least two weeks before the summer recess of the dates on which the draft budget will be laid and the annual budget motion will be tabled.

The finance committees of the devolved administrations also wrote to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury on 29 June to raise concerns regarding the ability of the governments of all four nations across the UK to make arrangements for the publication and scrutiny of their annual budgets within the context of this continuing uncertainty. I am writing to the chair of the finance committee to acknowledge these difficulties and to seek the Finance Committee's support for my proposal to publish an indicative timetable, which may be subject to change.

Standing Order 20.6 makes provision for the Committee to make changes to the timetable at the request of the Government. Subject to this, and on the understanding I will provide a firm timetable as soon as possible after the UK Government has made an announcement

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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.

regarding the spending review and its Budget, I wish to indicate now that we are planning to publish the outline and detailed draft Budgets together on 8 December, and the final Budget on 2 March 2021, subject to the forward Senedd plenary plan that is agreed.

In proposing these dates I am mindful of both Standing Order 20.5 and the arrangements agreed between the Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales with regard the period provide for scrutiny. Standing Order 20.5 provides, in 'normal' circumstances, for the Finance Committee to be given 8 weeks to report on the outline budget proposals and five weeks for committees to consider the detailed Budget proposals. Whilst this cannot be termed a 'normal' year, I remain committed to ensuring the fullest possible scrutiny of our spending proposals. As a result, the timetable I have set out would enable 8 weeks for scrutiny of the draft Budget, comprising 5 sitting weeks and 3 non-sitting weeks. This replicates the scrutiny period available for the Senedd to scrutinise the 2020-21 budget.

It may be that the Chancellor's statement on the 8 July will provide early certainty. If we do have a firm understanding next week I would be happy to provide an update to the business committee before the summer recess.

Should this not be the case, once have certainty we will revisit our plans and write again to confirm our intentions and we would look to bring forward our plans and publish the budget earlier, in the event that the UK Government's timetable makes this possible. In these circumstances, I should be grateful for confirmation that you would support a change to the dates set out above in line with the provision set out in Standing Orders, as you did in 2019. I would propose to take the opportunity at Business Committee to seek confirmation from my fellow Business Managers that they would be similarly supportive.

I am once again grateful for the Committee's understanding and trust these arrangements are acceptable given the circumstances, which are driven by external factors beyond our immediate control and carry an unprecedented level of uncertainty.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Evans". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rebecca Evans AS/MS
Y Gweinidog Cyllid a'r Trefnydd
Minister for Finance and Trefnydd