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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

07 September 2020

Dear Mr Ramsay,

### **Procurement of school meals**

Thank you for your letter of 24 August concerning procurement of school meals.

Local authorities and schools (or their contracted caterers) have the responsibility for purchasing food for use in school meals and they are able to establish cost-effective procurement arrangements with local food producers. We recognise the very clear benefits of doing this in terms of a number of issues including food miles and helping children and young people connect with their local environments.

For financial reasons, local authority catering teams must strive for a balance between quality and affordability and for this reason, and to help ensure a balanced diet, it would not be recommended to make the procurement of local produce for school meals mandatory. In some areas particularly, where local providers are less common or potentially over-subscribed, schools could face increased costs for providing food to their pupils. Such an increase could make school meals more expensive for parents, or require the school to use other budgets to meet those costs.

Current legislation allows schools and local authorities to procure Welsh produce if they wish to, but doesn't impose a requirement on schools which are unable to reach an affordable agreement. We believe this allows schools the greatest degree of flexibility and choice and takes into account the different geographical settings in Wales and individual and regional contexts.

The National Procurement Service (NPS) has developed a number of food procurement agreements for use by the wider public sector which, further to the Written Statement of September 2018 on the repositioning of NPS and Value Wales, are now being managed by Caerphilly County Borough Council. While use of these agreements is voluntary, they embrace a range of key initiatives in relation to providing nourishing school meals and readily allow participating organisations to work with providers to explore bringing Welsh produce into their supply chain. Caerphilly Council and the Welsh Government are working together to see how they can continue to build upon the good work done to date to encourage greater use of local produce.

I hope you find my comments helpful. Please let me know if you would like any clarification or further information.

Yours sincerely



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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.