



RTPI Cymru
Royal Town Planning Institute
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e-mail response sent to: SeneddFinance@Senedd.Wales

Dear Sir/Madam,

Response to: Senedd Cymru Finance Committee Consultation on the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2021-22

The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the largest professional institute for planners in Europe, representing some 25,000 spatial planners. RTPI Cymru represents the RTPI in Wales, with 1,100 members. The Institute seeks to advance the science and art of planning, working for the long-term common good and well-being of current and future generations. The RTPI develops and shapes policy affecting the built environment, works to raise professional standards and supports members through continuous education, training and development.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above consultation. Our response addresses Question 6 of the Inquiry questions, which raises a number of specific areas in the scrutiny of the draft budget.

Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in Wales are under increasing pressure to deliver more services with fewer resources. LPAs have seen their budgets cut by more than 50% in the last five years. These budget cuts place local authorities under intense pressure and make key health, social and economic services unaffordable. Moreover, these cuts are exacerbating inequalities. This has been recognised by the Senedd Cymru Public Accounts Committee in its [Report](#) published in June 2020.

RTPI Cymru welcomed Welsh Government's [Building Better Places Guide](#) which puts planning and planners at the centre of responding to the recovery, understanding and valuing what planning and planners can deliver. A well resourced, plan-led, positive planning service can deliver corporate objectives, which, if properly encouraged and effectively organised can bring together objectives across services and help achieve local and national sustainable development and climate action goals. Corporate management

teams provide leadership, vision and priority setting for areas, by shaping the strategic operational direction and investment decisions of local authorities. The implications of these corporate decisions on new investment, infrastructure, development activity, local services and policy delivery are significant, particularly at this time. The RTPI believes that investing in the planning service would positively influence the outcomes of planning and support good growth and a balanced recovery.

Compounding the budget cuts, LPAs are under pressure to quickly address applications and deliver housing targets. The system is sometimes perceived as an impediment rather than an enabler of housing development due to uncertainty and complexities. High-quality planning is needed to efficiently meet the needs of people in all areas. Like any good public service, the planning system requires resources and capacity to deliver outcomes efficiently, effectively, and equitably. Financial support to increase the number of public sector planners employed, funding for specialist knowledge and investing in efficiency-saving digital technologies can help support a proactive and strategic planning system.

As part of our [Plan the World We Need campaign](#), RTPI Cymru called for the National Development Framework to come forward, we believe it will have an important role to play, along with emerging Strategic Development Plans (SDPs), in identifying infrastructure projects and other development at a time where there is uncertainty around the future of planned projects, infrastructure finance and as the UK leaves the European Union. Strategic planning can facilitate an integrated approach, linking decisions on economic development with those on housing, climate change, energy generation, transport, and other infrastructure, providing a spatial framework for effective investment decisions.

Strategic plan-making requires professional skills and a deep understanding of community needs and priorities. Planning services need to understand the communities it works in. The RTPI believes in the importance of broadening the diversity of the talent pipeline into the planning profession afforded through apprenticeships, and the opportunities it offers to bring people in from under-represented groups and also from more rural and Welsh speaking communities. The RTPI therefore recommends the establishment of a Chartered Town Planner Apprenticeship qualification.

Adequate resourcing of the planning function to support each level is vital. Resources for planning are important in achieving effective integration and ensuring alignment with spatial plans. This needs to include national activities, SDPs at the regional level, the well-established Local Development Plans (LDPs) within local authorities, and Place Plans for those communities which have them.

If you require further assistance, please contact RTPI Cymru on 020 7929 8197 or e-mail Roisin Willmott at roisin.willmott@rtpi.org.uk

Yours sincerely,



Dr Roisin Willmott OBE FRTPi
Director
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