Dear Eluned,

Welsh Government Draft Budget 2021-2022

Thank you for attending the meeting of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee meeting on 14 January 2021 to discuss the Welsh Government’s Draft Budget 2021-2022.

During the meeting you agreed to provide further details on a number of issues. I would be grateful if you could answer the following questions by 2 March to inform the Plenary debate on the Draft Budget.

Targets for increasing the number of Welsh medium teachers

The Cymraeg 2050 sets ambitious targets for increasing the number of Welsh language teachers. You mentioned that the Sabbatical Scheme aims to improve the skills of practitioners in English-medium and Welsh-medium schools and receives £3.65 million in funding with access to funding for regional consortia to improve standards. You also said you are hoping to publish the evaluation report of the scheme in February.

During the meeting you offered to send us more detail on your strategy to increase the number of teachers teaching through the medium of Welsh. Please can you include the expenditure on the programme and any assessment of why the current interventions have not produced the numbers needed to reach the Cymraeg 2050 targets so far?

Post-16 Education

When we asked you about funding to develop the provision of Welsh-medium education in the post-16 sector, you stated that this does not sit within your portfolio, but that of the Education Minister. That may be true, but you have appeared before this committee on a number of occasions emphasising the importance of mainstreaming the Welsh language across all Welsh Government departments and budgets. We were disappointed therefore that you could not give us a more meaningful and substantial reply in relation to this important issue.

We would urge you to continue having robust discussions with the Education Minister about the critical importance of developing Welsh-medium provision in the FE sector. To enable them to make the difference needed in increasing provision, the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol has suggested an investment of £800,000 from the Government’s Further Education budget for 2021-22, increasing each year thereafter (£1.4m 2022-23, £ 2.5m 2023-24 and £ 3.2m in 2024-25). We would also urge you to engage with the sector to ensure urgent progress regarding this aspect of education. Those who do not stay on for 6th form education...
need, and deserve, a wider Welsh language offer across Welsh Colleges and through apprenticeship schemes.

**Welsh language support for new parents**

You mentioned during the meeting that there is support for new mothers and babies via the ‘Fi a fy mabi’ programme. Please can you set out how this is promoted to new parents and whether you are working with Health visitors to promote the programme? Have arrangements for the promotion of this programme been adapted in light of the coronavirus pandemic?

**Welsh Language Commissioner**

You mentioned that the Welsh Government’s Prosiect 2050 would take on some work areas currently within the remit of the Commissioner which would free up resources. Can you clarify which aspects of the Commissioner’s work you anticipate Prosiect 2050 will undertake, and what discussions have you had with the Commissioner about this development?

When the Commissioner gave evidence to the Committee at our meeting on 1 October 2020, he said:

‘The workload is increasing and the size of the organisation has remained the same or has shrunk. Now I identified that problem last year in the forecast I provided to Government. I think that was realistic.’

You said that you are having regular discussions with the Commissioner to make sure he can fulfil his functions under the Welsh Language Measure. Given his comment to the Committee, are you confident that the Welsh Language Commissioner has sufficient resources to meet his statutory obligations?

Have you had any discussions with the Commissioner on the anticipated savings resulting from remote working, and if so, what impact will this have on his resources?

Following the cyber-attack on the IT system used by the office of the Welsh Language Commissioner, you agreed that there may be need for additional help or support. Can you confirm whether the Commissioner has requested additional funding to deal with the effect of the cyber-attack and where this funding will come from, should you agree to provide it? The severity of the attack will obviously take time to resolve, can you provide any dates by which you hope the Commissioner’s office will be back to normal?

**Additional funding for COVID related pressures**

You also mentioned during the meeting that, if necessary, you will bid for funding from the central COVID fund to support the Urdd. Please can you let the Committee know the criteria on which you will base your decision on when to apply to the fund? Are you considering applying to the central fund to support any other organisations promoting the Welsh language, such as the National Eisteddfod, following the decision to cancel this year’s event?

In order to inform the work of the committee and the Plenary debate on the Draft Budget I would be grateful if you could respond by 2 March.
I will be copying this letter to the Chair of the Finance Committee to inform its scrutiny of the Draft Budget.

Yours sincerely,

Bethan Sayed MS
Chair of the Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.