

Peredur Owen Griffiths MS

Chair, Finance Committee

12 April 2023

Dear Peredur,

### Scrutiny of the Draft Budget 2023-24: Evidence provided by the Welsh Government

Thank you for your letter, dated 8 March, seeking the Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee's views on potential improvements to the documentation provided by the Welsh Government to support scrutiny of future draft budgets. The Committee considered this matter at its meeting on 29 March. I have set out below the key points we would like to draw to your attention.

The written evidence we received from the Minister to inform our scrutiny of the draft budget 2023-24 was not as comprehensive as previous years. As an example, it did not include the Budget Expenditure Lines (BELs) table or a narrative of the BELs that we had requested. While this information was provided at a later date, we would have expected it to have been included from the outset, given that it is critical to our understanding of the Welsh Government's spending decisions.

The Committee is keen for the Welsh Government to include in future documentation an assessment of the carbon impact of the draft budget. While we were advised by the Minister that the Welsh Government is making progress on assessing the carbon impacts of its spending decisions, this was not reflected in the draft budget 2023-24 documentation. There was no explanation of how carbon impacts were assessed and, more importantly, no information on the findings of these assessments.

In her [evidence](#) to the Finance Committee, the former Future Generations Commissioner includes an analysis of the carbon impact of the draft budget 2023-24. We suggest the Welsh Government may wish to consider whether a similar approach could be adopted for future draft budgets for the purpose of providing high level information to the Senedd to support scrutiny.

More generally, one of the key weaknesses of the draft budget process is the time available for scrutiny. The draft budget 2023-24 was subject to a reduced scrutiny timescale which fell over the

Christmas period. This meant limited time was available for analysis ahead of the Ministerial scrutiny session, held in January 2023, and report our findings before the agreed deadline. We are aware, of course, that our experience of working to a reduced scrutiny timescale is shared by other committees.

Finally, the Committee received the Welsh Government's response to its report on the draft budget 2023-24 following close of business the day before the debate on the final budget. This is deeply regrettable as it meant there was limited time for Members to reflect on the response ahead of the debate. We are concerned that this serves to undermine the scrutiny process. Notwithstanding, we are pleased to say, for the most part, the Minister's response was comprehensive.

I hope you find the above useful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Llyr', is centered on a light yellow rectangular background.

Llyr Gruffydd MS,  
Chair, Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg. / We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.