

Elin Jones MS,
Y Llywydd, Chair of the Business Committee

7 July 2023

Draft Budget Timetable 2024-25

Dear Elin,

The Committee noted your [letter](#) seeking its views on the proposed timetable for the 2024-25 budget at its meeting on 6 July 2023.

We consider the approach taken by the Welsh Government to be highly disappointing: As a Committee we have regularly called for sufficient time to be provided for the scrutiny of the Welsh Government's budgetary proposals, and for that to be in line with the [Budget Process Protocol](#) ('the Protocol'), which was agreed on a cross-party basis in 2017.

We have written to the Minister for Finance and Local Government on a number of occasions during the Sixth Senedd about the practical difficulties that shortened timescales pose to Committees in fulfilling their scrutiny functions, as well as the pressures it puts on stakeholders who wish to submit evidence and engage with our work, particularly when three weeks of that period falls over Christmas recess.

Most recently, I wrote on [23 June 2023](#) noting the concerns expressed by the vast majority of Committee Chairs regarding the timeliness of the budget process and the lack of time available for proper scrutiny. We are therefore extremely disheartened that these views were not reflected when this timetable was proposed.

We have, in each of the past four years, accepted the arguments that there were significant levels of funding uncertainty to delay the laying of the draft budget. Whilst we acknowledge that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has not yet published the date of the fiscal event in the autumn, we do

not consider this to be a compelling reason in itself to delay the publication of the Welsh Government's budgetary proposals and do not agree that this is the only prudent choice available to the Welsh Government.

As the Trefnydd points out in her letter, indicative budget allocations are already available to the Welsh Government, and whilst we accept that inflationary pressures remain high, they are sadly unsurprising and do not, in our view, amount to "significant uncertainty" in the Welsh Government's funding position which necessitates a diversion from the 'normal' process outlined in the budget protocol.

We neither accept that the delay is wholly as a result of matters that are outside the Welsh Government's control, given that the Minister has significant discretion to decide when the Welsh Government's spending plans are published which, in turn, dictates how much time Senedd Committees have to conduct the scrutiny required.

As you are aware, this is the fifth year in a row that the two stage process set out in the Protocol has not been followed. The Welsh Government's request to delay the budget process again this year therefore suggests that there are few circumstances that could be considered a "normal" year.

The protocol was intended to allow the Finance Committee to take an oversight role by allowing more time for policy committees to undertake scrutiny and enable them to take more evidence from stakeholders. This calls into question the Welsh Government's commitment to these agreed practices, given that the timing of budget scrutiny in recent years has not made this possible.

Nonetheless, we welcome the Trefnydd's willingness to revisit the publication dates of the Draft Budget if the Chancellor's announcement regarding the dates of an autumn fiscal event was sufficiently early to allow additional time for its preparation and scrutiny.

We will keep a close eye on these developments and hope that further clarity on the timing of these issues will lead to more time for scrutiny of the Welsh Government's budget proposals as soon as possible in the autumn term.

Yours sincerely,



Peredur Owen Griffiths AS, Chair of the Finance Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu'n Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

