

Pwyllgor Cyllid / Finance Committee  
FIN(6)-14-24 P6

Peredur Owen Griffiths MS  
Chair, Finance Committee

9 May 2024

Dear Peredur,

**Scrutiny of the draft budget**

Thank you for your letter of 22 March 2024 regarding Senedd committees' scrutiny of the Welsh Government's draft budget.

The Committee considered your letter on 15 April 2024, and agreed to make some observations which may be useful to your Committee's consideration.

In your letter, you reference the quality of information provided by the Welsh Government alongside its draft budgets. A particular barrier we have encountered as part of our scrutiny is the fact that spending on justice-related activity is not disaggregated within any of the draft budgets we have considered. This has restricted our ability to identify changes in proposed spending on such activity, and we have called on the Welsh Government to work toward disaggregating this spending in future budgets.

We have noted the Welsh Government's efforts to explore ways in which it can improve the level of detail it provides on justice-related activity within its draft budgets (see the commitment given in December 2022 and evidence provided in February this year). We have also acknowledged the difficulties it faces in presenting this information in the absence of a single member of the government with responsibility for justice-related matters, and a dedicated main expenditure group for those matters. We will continue to press the Welsh Government on these matters as necessary.

It is important to note that our consideration of previous draft budgets has also been challenging because two members of the Welsh Government have been responsible for justice-related matters: the then Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution, and the then Minister for Social Justice and Chief Whip. Responsibility for such matters now resides with three members of the Welsh

Government – the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Constitution and Cabinet Office, the Cabinet Secretary for Culture and Social Justice, and the Counsel General.

The impact this new arrangement will have on our future consideration of draft budgets laid by the Welsh Government is unclear. However, our initial observation is that it may hinder any efforts made by the Welsh Government to improve the level of detail it can provide on proposed spending on justice-related activity, and subsequently hinder the Committee's ability to scrutinise such spending. We will however seek to adapt to the new arrangement, which could for example involve scrutinising aspects of the budget jointly with the Equality and Social Justice Committee where appropriate and time permitting.

On the budget processes more generally, we welcome the consultation and engagement carried out by the Finance Committee. We used the evidence gathered to inform our scrutiny of the draft budget and the preparation of our final report.

I am copying this letter to Jenny Rathbone MS, Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Murphy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter "y".

Sarah Murphy

Chair