

Leighton Andrews AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus
Minister for Public Services



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: SF/LA/1827/15

Jocelyn Davies AM
Chair, Finance Committee
National Assembly for Wales
SeneddFinance@assembly.wales

10th July 2015

Dear Jocelyn,

Thank you for your letter of 19 May regarding the *Auditor General for Wales and Wales Audit Office Annual Plan for 2015-16*. You referred to the £250,000 of additional funding provided to the Auditor General for Wales for ad hoc investigations and asked for my views on the impact of this work on the resources available to Local Authorities.

The allocation of this funding was a matter for the Assembly rather than the Welsh Government. As such, I have not made any specific assessment as to the effect of the Auditor General's ad hoc investigations on the resources available to Local Authorities. However, I fully appreciate the concerns of the Finance Committee in ensuring these resources are used and targeted to best effect.

It is clear that any investigation requiring the input of Local Authorities will have resource implications for the Authorities concerned. I recognise the value of effective audit and review in improving public services. I recognise too that there is a cost in supporting it. In keeping with the need to ensure that public resources are used in the most efficient, effective and economic way, it follows that any demands on Local Authority resources which might divert staff or funding from front-line services should be kept to the minimum necessary. The time and input required should be proportionate to the matter under investigation and the potential contribution to the improved delivery of, and confidence in, local services.

Authorities must of course cooperate fully with the Auditor General in the conduct of his audits and investigations. However, it would seem reasonable to expect the Auditor General to provide an assessment of the impact of any additional work, particularly if it is associated with a request for additional funding, with the diversion of resources or with the reprioritisation of other work. The continued pressures on public finances also reinforce the need for the different parts of the public audit, inspection and regulation community to work together to ensure their work is planned and coordinated as effectively as possible, and takes account of the impact on the bodies concerned.

Yours sincerely,

Leighton Andrews AC / AM
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