

Alun Davies AM, Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services;
Julie James AM, Leader of the House and Chief Whip;
Rebecca Evans AM, Minister for Housing and Regeneration

16 November 2017

Dear Alun, Julie, Rebecca

Scrutiny of the Welsh Government draft budget 2018–19

Thank you for attending the Committee's meeting on 15 November to give evidence on the draft budget. Following the meeting I am writing to you on the issues that were not reached during the session, to inform our scrutiny of the draft budget.

In the interest of saving time, I am writing one letter to include all of the questions not reached. I would be grateful to receive one co-ordinated response.

Local Government MEG

Inspectorates:

- Could you explain your decision to reduce the allocation for the three inspectorates (CSSIW, HIW and Estyn) within the MEG by 2.3% in cash terms in 2018–19 and 5.4% in 2019–20?

Specific grants:

- What consideration did you give to transferring other grants that currently sit outside the RSG?



- Are you considering allocating grants in the RSG in the future at the level seen this year? [£91.7 million worth of grants have been included in the RSG for 2018–19]

Council Tax and Council Tax Reduction Scheme

- Can you confirm that funding for the CTRS will be maintained at the existing level for 2019–20?

Local Government reserves

- What is your view on the WLGA's concerns that the costs attributable to the workforce are likely to result in further cuts to frontline services? [In its paper the WLGA highlights workforce costs as a key cost pressure. It refers to the "inescapable costs attributable to the workforce" and states that, if realised, these will result in "inevitable cuts to frontline services".]

Communities MEG

Financial inclusion and advice services

- How the Financial Inclusion Delivery Plan and Information and Advice Action Plan has influenced the draft budget allocations?
- How much additional funding has been allocated to the Asylum Rights Programme to address the issues raised in the Committee's inquiry around improvements to legal advice, health screenings and mental health support?
- When the provisions in the UK Government's Financial Guidance and Claims Bill regarding devolving funding for debt advice are expected to take effect?

Third sector:

- 'Prosperity for all' includes a commitment to 'build a sustainable relationship with the voluntary sector [based on] the right funding model' – what does this mean and how is it reflected in your allocations?



Community Facilities Programme

- How will you ensure that the additional investment in the Community Facilities Programme provides value for money?

Community safety

- How much was the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse And Sexual Violence (Wales) Act estimated to cost the Welsh Government when it was passed in 2015, and how much has it actually cost per year, and why there are any differences?
- What are your views on Charlie Taylor's Review of the Youth Justice System in England and Wales, particularly the recommendation to roll funding for youth justice services into local government funding?

Supporting People

- What progress has been made in ensuring that funding for Supporting People is distributed on the basis of need, and what impact merging grants will have on this?

Housing supply and standards

- What evaluation has been undertaken of the Housing Finance Grant in terms of value for money?

Legislation

- Given over one million people will be affected by the implementation of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act 2016, what assessment has been made of the costs required to communicate the changes to affected parties?

We would appreciate if you could provide a response by the close of business on Thursday 23 November.

Yours sincerely



John

John Griffiths AM
Chair

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

