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Welsh Government
Tŷ Hywel
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Dear Eluned

Welsh Government Draft Budget 2018-19

Background

Thank you for attending the Culture, Welsh Language and Communication Committee's meeting on 16 November to discuss the Welsh Government's draft budget proposals for 2018-19.

Prior to the meeting, the Committee asked for a range of information on those parts of the budget for which you are now responsible and in which the Committee has an interest. The previous Minister for Welsh Language and Lifelong Learning provided us with a paper, dated 8 November, which was published by the Committee along with the agenda and other papers for our meeting on 16 November.

On this occasion the Committee has decided not to report formally on the budget to the Assembly but would nevertheless be grateful for your response to the points set out below. We will publish your response and it would be helpful if it could be provided before the debate on the final budget, which I understand will be held in January.

Specific Issues

Overall spending on the Welsh language

The Committee noted the overall increase of £2.1 million in identified overall expenditure on the Welsh language within the Education MEG. Given overall pressures on the Welsh Government's budget this demonstrates a welcome commitment to the language. Nevertheless, while the Committee has previously welcomed the overall ambition contained in the Cymraeg 2050 strategy we have also indicated that we are not convinced that the scale of resources needed to deliver the overall ambition has yet been fully assessed. We would like to see



greater clarity over the resources that will be needed over the medium and longer term.

Cymraeg 2050 - 5 year profile of expenditure

You and your officials indicated that, although the overall aim is for a million Welsh speakers by 2050, you are looking to break this down into 5 year milestones for planning and monitoring purposes. Given this, the Committee would be grateful for a breakdown of profiled expenditure in this area over the next 5 years alongside the specific objectives that this expenditure is intended to support.

The Committee recognises that much of the expenditure concerned may not currently be separately identified, particularly, from general education expenditure. However, you recognised in your remarks to the Committee that it will be important to look at this issue in a cross-governmental way. It is also important at the outset to have a clear idea of the resources that will be required and the planning assumptions that underlie those resources.

Support for Mudiad Meithrin

In our report, 'Achieving the Ambition', we drew attention to Mudiad Meithrin's assessment that 650 new groups would be required over the lifetime of the Cymraeg 2050 strategy. You explained that the increase in the number of Mudiad Meithrin playgroups by 40 between now and 2021, increasing to 150 playgroups over the next decade is sufficient in order to achieve the target. The additional £1million in the draft budget for Mudiad Meithrin will enable this to happen.

Despite this, there is a clear disparity between the earlier assessment provided to the Committee and the increase now planned. We were grateful for the explanation in evidence that this is, to a considerable degree, because of differences in the definition of a Cylch Meithrin with, for instance, sessions at different times of the day being registered as separate groups. A lower number of additional groups may, therefore, achieve the same end as outlined to us by Mudiad Meithrin in their earlier evidence.

Mudiad Meithrin have since indicated to the Committee's officials that they agree with this assessment. We have also received a letter from Mudiad Meithrin, which welcomes the additional funding and explains further some of the work that they will now be doing in this area. I attach a copy of the letter for the public record.



Sabbatical Scheme

The Committee has previously expressed its concern at the perceived effectiveness and limited evaluation of the Sabbatical Scheme. As we noted in 'Achieving the Ambition' there does not seem to be a great deal of evidence that attendance on courses has fed through to the classroom, either in terms of better outcomes for pupils or in terms of increases in the number of Welsh speakers in the education workforce. There was an indication in your evidence that changes are being made to the scheme, which might help address some of our concerns.

You agreed to reflect on our concerns and I'd be grateful for your views along with further information on how the changes to the scheme might help address them.

Promoting the Language - Working with SMEs

You confirmed that the £400,000 in funding to help SMEs increase their use of the language in 2017-18 is planned to continue in 2018-19. The information provided during the meeting indicated that this funding supports 10 officers, employed by the Welsh Government under contract to work in communities with the Mentrau Iaith.

The Committee would be grateful for any further information you can provide on how the scheme will work and the reasons why this particular approach has been chosen. It would also be useful to know what specific outcomes the scheme is intended to achieve, and how its success will be evaluated in the future.

Welsh Language BEL

The Committee would be grateful for a detailed breakdown of the £3.9 million within the Welsh Language BEL (6020). Your officials also noted that this BEL included some errors in 2017-18, which the current budget is now correcting. It would be helpful to receive some clarity for the record on exactly what the errors were, and how they have now been corrected.

Proposals for a Welsh Language Bill

The background paper provided by your predecessor indicated that the cost of introducing a new Welsh Language Act would be met from within current budgets. The point was made at the meeting that it is difficult to believe that the new Bill will have no financial implications on the Welsh Language BEL. While the Committee appreciates that it may be too soon for you to have drawn up detailed estimates of any additional costs, it does not seem unreasonable to ask whether



you are planning on the basis that there will be additional costs and, if so, where savings might be found to meet these costs.

Raising School Standards BEL

£4.2 million has been allocated within the raising School Standards BEL to support the teaching and learning of Welsh and subjects through the medium of Welsh. This funding is due to increase by £680,000 next year and by £250,000 the following year. It would be helpful to the Committee to know what input you will have into how that spending is utilised and your role as the Minister for the Welsh language in future budget decisions, given that this BEL is within the portfolio of the Minister for Education.

International Support

The Committee noted that some funding had been set aside for the supporting the language in Patagonia.

The Welsh School in London is approaching its 60th anniversary and the Committee would be grateful to know whether you intend to offer it any funding in the coming financial year.

Yours sincerely



Siân Gwenllïan AM
Acting Chair

