

Ein Cyf /Our Ref:
Eich Cyf /Your Ref:
Dyddiad /Date:
Gofynnwch am/Please ask for:
Llinell uniongyrchol/Direct line:
Ebost/Email:

Leader/JR
28/06/2019
Jon Rae
029 2046 8620
jon.rae@wlga.gov.uk



Janet Finch-Saunders

Chair
Petitions Committee
National Assembly for Wales
SeneddPetitions@assembly.wales

Dear Janet

Petition P-05-875 The Capping of Council Tax Rises in Wales

Thank you for your correspondence of 30 May regarding the petition on capping council tax rises.

We have a clear and unambiguous policy on capping, which we naturally oppose. This is because it weakens local accountability and dilutes local decision-making. Welsh Ministers have never had to use their powers to limit council budgets, however since the onset of austerity there has been a common understanding that if rises breach a 5% threshold then Ministers might consider using those powers. In the run up to financial year 2018-19, ministers signalled a more relaxed approach which local government welcomed.

Councils do not take the decision to increase council tax lightly. Many of the increases in recent years have been implemented to mitigate the worst excesses of reductions in our core grant. This has reduced by around a £1bn, after adjusting for inflation, since 2009-10.

In the run up to the current financial year we pointed out in the evidence that we gave to a number of Assembly Committees that local service pressures combined with cuts would leave a £300m budget gap before any additional council tax income. In the event council tax increases barely made up a quarter of the shortfall.

Many of the pressures that local government face are nationally driven especially around workforce and legislative costs. In effect, the local rather than the national taxpayer is picking up the costs. We understand the frustrations of the petitioner.

We do recognise the unfairness in the system and we have been working with the Welsh Government on several issues. We have developed a 'Council Tax Protocol' which will deliver consistency in approaches to recovery and we have successfully secured an

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**Croesawn ohebiaeth yn y Gymraeg a'r Saesneg a byddwn yn ymateb i ohebiaeth yn yr un iaith.
Ni fydd defnyddio'r naill iaith na'r llall yn arwain at oedi.**

We welcome correspondence in Welsh and English and will respond to correspondence in the same language.
Use of either language will not lead to a delay.

exemption for Care Leavers to be brought into Council Tax legislation to ensure transparency and consistency. We are also working with partners like the Wales Centre for Public Policy on their research into 'Responding to Citizens in Debt to Public services' to better understand the impact of rent and council tax arrears on the budgets of the most vulnerable.

If the Committee has any further queries in relation to the petition, please contact the team at the WLGA using the contact details above.

I hope this is helpful to you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Debbie Wilcox', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Councillor Debbie Wilcox
Leader of WLGA

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