

P-05-921 Earlier notification of council budgets by the Welsh Government #SaveOurServices

This petition was submitted by UNISON Neath Port Talbot having collected a total of 191 signatures.

Text of Petition

We call on Welsh Government to give budgets to councils no later than mid-January 2020 in order that firstly, local authorities comply with all legislative requirements in relation to budget setting process for council tax, and secondly so that they can give appropriate legislative budgets to schools in order for them to be in compliance with their own guidelines set by Welsh Government.

UNISON Neath Port Talbot Branch believes that every council in Wales is under extreme budgetary pressure, with some service provisions lost and others on the verge of collapse, and with a spending review also underway, public services now have no understanding of any of the implications of this review.

Welsh Government have proposed that the Draft Budget will be issued on the 19th November 2019, with a its Final Budget being given in February, but to date still no notice of when the actual Local Government Budget will be. This will have resounding, legislative implications for ALL local authorities when they will have to approve budgets based on draft settlement figures to ensure compliance to statutory requirements around setting Council Tax Bills.

The prosed timetable gives councils very real difficulties insomuch as all scrutiny meetings, subsequent Cabinets and Council meetings will now need to be changed. An outcome of this may be that council tax rates may have been inflated only to discover at a later date that settlement figures would have allowed more flexibility.

Councils are the major employer in their areas and any reduction in funding will also have a detrimental impact on employment and the ability for these vital services to be sustainable whilst remaining in-house.

Additional Information

We fully support Welsh Government's vision that everybody in Wales should live in well-connected, vibrant, viable and sustainable communities with a

strong local economy and a good quality of life, but in order for this vision to succeed, we must safeguard public services which will in turn ensure the safety and well-being of our residents across Wales with better outcomes for all.

Current spending plans end in March 2020, however all current indications inform us that the timetable for settlement figures will not give us any approved funds until March 2020. This is outrageous: no employer can sustain a multi-million pound venture without a budget.

The number of councils now in a position of setting an illegal budget is frightening and is being exacerbated by ill-timed grant offers, some of which have not been received until the end of the budgeting year.

European Funding grants and Welsh Government specific grants contribute immensely to services delivered. Additionally, we need to consider timelines when awarding grants which appear to be given after the financial year has started. This is not supportive of workforce planning or the delivery of services.

Significant reform is required to ensure the long term financial sustainability of local services and to end the systemic inequalities between the funding of public provisions. Local authorities need increased autonomy and control for generating revenue with mechanisms in place for local authorities. Public Audit Watchdogs have been highlighting the significant damage to essential services and without major investment in these same services, local authorities will be unable to provide services to the most vulnerable in society, such as the young or very elderly, at a time when there is increased demand on service provision.

Assembly Constituency and Region

- Aberavon
- South Wales West