

Aled Roberts

Welsh Language Commissioner

14 January 2020

Dear Aled,

The Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee discussed the Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2020/21 at their meeting on 8 January with the Minister for International Relations and the Welsh Language.

During the meeting we discussed the budget allocations for supporting and promoting the Welsh language in general and for your work in particular.

I would be grateful if you could comment on the Welsh Government's plans for funding Welsh language support, both long term and in the coming year. Members of the Committee were concerned that the mainstreaming of funding for the language across Ministerial portfolios could lead to a lack of transparency in the draft budget, if information on this funding is not made available. I wonder if you have any similar concerns?

The Minister discussed the funding settlement for your office and the memorandum of understanding between your organisation and the Welsh Government designed to reduce duplication. I would be grateful if you could provide views on whether the capital and revenue allocations in the draft budget allow your organisation to fulfil its obligations for 2020-21.

In order to progress our work on the Draft Budget I would be grateful if you could reply by 30 January, with apologies for the short deadline.

Yours sincerely,

Bethan Sayed.

Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
Y Pwyllgor Diwylliant, y Gymraeg a Chyfathrebu

National Assembly for Wales
Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee

Bethan Sayed

Chair of the Committee



Bethan Sayed AC
Chair
Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
National Assembly for Wales

31 January 2020

Dear Bethan

Welsh Language Budget

Thank you for your letter dated 16 January asking for my views on the Welsh Government's proposals for funding support for the Welsh language.

You asked two specific questions. First of all my views on the possible lack of transparency in the budget if Welsh language funding is mainstreamed across Government departments, and also my views on the financial allocation of my office for 2020-21.

There are currently two main sources of funding for supporting the Welsh language within the Government's overall budget, the 'Welsh language' allocation within the International Relations and Welsh Language main expenditure group (MEG), and the 'Welsh in Education' allocation within the Education MEG. The 'Welsh language' allocation is further divided into the Welsh Language Commissioner budget expenditure line and the 'Welsh language' expenditure line under the remit of the Government's Welsh language division.

I believe that these expenditure lines are open and transparent. The Government shared an evidence paper with the Committee earlier this year, prior to the Minister's appearance before the Committee, explaining how these expenditure lines would be used. I am also accountable for my office's expenditure line and required to produce an annual financial report and appear before the Committee every year for scrutiny.

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Scrutiny and monitoring difficulties can arise however when expenditure on the Welsh language occurs outside and beyond these specific expenditure lines. In her evidence to the Committee, the Minister referred a number of times to the need to mainstream the Welsh language across Government departments. I agree entirely with the Minister that this is an important aim. The Cymraeg 2050 strategy relates to the Government in its entirety, not only to its Welsh language division. It's essential therefore that other Ministers and departments take their responsibilities toward the Welsh language seriously and look for opportunities to promote and develop the Welsh language in their plans and in allocating expenditure.

In her evidence, the Minister referred to examples of mainstreaming such as the capital expenditure for investing in schools and the Deputy Minister for the Economy's work relating to Welsh and the economy. In order to improve transparency in the future, it could be useful for the Government to consider providing further clarification on large projects outside the Welsh language expenditure lines that are expected to contribute towards the language and an explanation of the likely expenditure.

The main question that arises from the budget however is the overall level of expenditure on the Welsh language. The Minister has explained that she is required to allocate funds in the right areas in order to meet the aims of the Cymraeg 2050 strategy. That is a sensible approach. But there has been no overall increase in Welsh language expenditure, so the question arises, is it possible for the Minister and the Welsh Government to achieve its ambitious strategy without an increase in the Welsh language allocation. It appears to me that the current level of funding for the Welsh language does not correspond with the ambition of Cymraeg 2050 and there's a risk that a lack of investment could undermine efforts to achieve the strategy.

In respect to your second question on the allocation for my office, the draft budget allocates two additional sums for 2020-21. A sum of £50,000 revenue has been allocated to support increases in staffing costs and £385,000 capital expenditure has been allocated for transforming and upgrading our IT infrastructure. I welcome this additional funding, but as you will be aware, I outlined a very challenging financial picture before the Committee last year. A situation whereby posts had to be left unfilled and my financial reserves were likely to fall below the target set in policy. The new capital expenditure for IT will go towards upgrading and modernising our infrastructure and systems that have suffered through a lack of investment over the years, mainly due to cuts in funding. I expect that this will lead to financial savings in the mid to long term.

However, these additional funds will not allow my office to implement the projects that were proposed in my annual financial estimate to the Government. I made proposals for additional funding for projects in the following areas:

- Increasing the use of Welsh language services
- Using Welsh within the workplace
- Support for the health and local government sectors
- Research for policy work and to support my next 5 year report



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- Further support for businesses and charities

Without further funding, it's unlikely that we'll be able to implement these projects in 2020/21.

To summarise, the financial allocation for my office in the draft budget for 2020/21 allows me to address the specific areas of increased staff costs and IT infrastructure, but it will not allow me to fill all the current vacancies in our staffing structure nor will it allow me to invest in new projects that would contribute towards Cymraeg 2050.

Yours sincerely

Aled Roberts
Welsh Language Commissioner