

Agenda – Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

Meeting Venue:

Committee Room 3 – Senedd

Meeting date: 17 July 2019

Meeting time: 09.15

For further information contact:

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Committee Clerk

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Private pre-meeting (09.15 – 09.30)

1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(09.30)

2 Inquiry into empty properties: evidence session 6

(09.30 – 11.00)

(Pages 1 – 31)

Hannah Blythyn AM, Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government

Ian Williams, Deputy Director for Homes and Places, Welsh Government

Vivienne Lewis, Regeneration Enforcement & Loan Manager, Homes and Places Division, Welsh Government

3 Papers to note

(11.00 – 11.05)

(Page 32)

3.1 Correspondence from the Deputy Minister and Chief Whip regarding the implementation of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 – 4 July 2019

(Pages 33 – 43)

3.2 Correspondence to the Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government regarding the inquiry into benefits in Wales – 10 July 2019

(Pages 44 – 45)



- 4 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting**
(11.05)
- 5 Inquiry into empty properties: consideration of evidence and key issues**
(11.05 – 11.40)
- 6 Benefits in Wales: options for better delivery – consideration of key issues**
(11.40 – 12.20) (Pages 46 – 66)
- 7 Discussion on the Welsh Government Draft Budget 2020–21**
(12.20 – 12.30) (Pages 67 – 76)

Document is Restricted

Equalities, Local Government, and Communities Committee

Evidence Paper

Welsh Government approach to tackling empty properties

Introduction

1. Empty properties are a scar on town centres, surrounding neighbourhoods, and a constant source of concern to the people who live in these communities. They soak up resources both in local and central Government, and are often expensive to remedy. However, they are obviously an underused community asset. Frequently large buildings, they could accommodate several housing (or commercial) solutions to fit the needs of the area.
2. Whilst our Regeneration agenda primarily focussed on Town centres, it is also focussed on making communities sustainable over the long term and improving the quality of life for people who live and work in and around those towns. Dealing with empty properties is an integral part of this work. We understand that empty properties attract antisocial behaviour, are often dangerous, and if untreated, can directly contribute to the decline of an area. They also create a perception of decline in the minds of local people and businesses which undermines confidence in the area.
3. There are a number of challenges associated with the issue of empty properties:
 - It can be difficult to identify and engage with owners who might be considered 'absentee' and have a lack of willingness to work with the public sector in order to renew buildings.
 - Current owners of problem buildings often have unrealistic expectations on what land or buildings are worth and are therefore waiting for market conditions to improve.
 - 'Market failure' is present in many town and city centres across Wales. There is little incentive for many private owners to provide renewed commercial or residential space.
 - Owners of properties are struggling to meet the financial commitment to renovate a property beyond what is absolutely necessary.
4. Welsh Government is delivering or facilitating a number of measures and interventions to tackle the issue of empty properties. These activities take place all over Wales and are delivered by a range of organisations in partnership with Welsh Government. We provide support, advice, and in most cases, bespoke solutions to tackle the individual needs of each local authority. We are committed to finding delivery solutions that give control

back to local people, giving them the responsibility to regenerate the communities they know so well.

5. All of our interventions support the objectives detailed in Prosperity for All, in particular the themes of Prosperous and Secure, and United and Connected. Welsh Government also ensures all interventions carry out sustainable development to deliver a Prosperous Wales, a Healthier Wales, a Wales of Cohesive Communities, and a Resilient Wales.

Data and Trend Analysis

6. Although there are many reasons why properties are empty, one challenge is to acquire the data to ensure we are tackling those properties that are persistently empty and not those only temporarily (for example, in a good state of repair and on the market). Given the current data available to us through Data Cymru, we estimate there are approximately 26,000 empty properties (empty for 6 months or more). We are currently using council tax records but this only gives us an indication of whether the property has been vacant for 6 months or more, rather than the preferred “vacant for **12** months or more” which would give us a more accurate representation of the real empty property issues in each authority.
7. Research has also identified that dealing with empty properties can have social, regenerative, financial, and strategic benefits for the area. The property consultants Hometrack conducted research in 2009 which showed that if your property adjoins an empty one, this can devalue your property by up to 19%. There is also evidence from No Use Empty (the Kent empty property initiative) that if the area feels in decline, then the wider community will not invest in their properties. The decline only has to be perceived and empty properties has a huge visual impact in these terms.
8. Tackling empty properties, could support the Welsh Government’s wider housing commitment to deliver 20,000 affordable homes during this government term. The 20,000 target captures multiple housing tenures and reflects the needs and aspirations of a wider segment of the population for whom the cost of housing is a real issue. Good progress is continuing to be made in meeting the 20,000 target however it is accepted that more social housing needs to be built. It is, however, clear that there are ongoing challenges in delivering the number of homes needed in both the market and affordable housing sectors.
9. The New House Building in Wales statistics for 2018-19 (published on 6 June 2019) indicated that during 2018-19, the number of new dwellings started decreased by 1 percent (to 5,974), compared to the previous year.

This is the lowest annual number recorded since 2013/14. The number of new dwellings completed also fell during 2018-19 by 13 percent on the previous year (to 5,777). This is the lowest annual number recorded since 2012/13. The latest statistical release of Affordable Housing Provision in Wales (published 18 October 2018) also showed that there was a drop in the number of affordable homes delivered last year. Despite record investment in housing, we cannot mitigate the slowdown in confidence of developers and potential home buyers, which inevitably comes with the uncertainty surrounding leaving the European Union. Bringing empty properties back into the housing sector could help overcome some of the challenges being faced.

Welsh Government Regeneration Programmes

10. Welsh Government has invested heavily in capital regeneration projects across Wales. Taking into account levered-in funding, by the time our current regeneration programmes are complete, we will have invested £800 million into town centres and nearby areas across Wales since 2014.
11. Supporting town centres and high streets is the cornerstone of these activities and many of the projects supported focus on bringing empty properties back into use.

a) Targeted Regeneration Investment (TRI) 2018-2021 - £100m

TRI commenced in April 2018 and will support regeneration projects in town centres that have been regionally prioritised by the Local Authorities. The programme's overarching aim is to promote economic regeneration with activities focussing on need and opportunity, whilst serving the aims of wider sustainable development.

A TRI programme together with funding allocations has been agreed for each region – North Wales (6 LAs) - £22m; Mid Wales (2 LAs) - £7m; South West Wales (4 LAs) - £27m; South East Wales (10 LAs) - £44m.

An example of this work is a project delivered in partnership between the Isle of Anglesey and Gwynedd Councils to tackle empty homes. They have received a £3.25m grant through the Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme and intend to bring back over 120 properties back into use over 3 years. The programme includes a First Time Buyers scheme and a Landlords Assistance Grant, which can provide a grant of up to £20,000 capital funding to renovate a long term empty property. A condition of receiving the Landlord Assistance grant is to provide the Local Authority with nomination rights over 5 or 10 years and to keep the rental cost at either intermediate rent or Local Housing Allowance rate.

b) Building for the Future 2017-22 - £54m

Regeneration programme funded under the European Regional Development Fund with the aim of acquiring, refurbishing or redeveloping

unused / derelict buildings and land within or close to town/city centres across West Wales and the Valleys.

c) Town Centre Loans (TCLs) - 2014- £31.5m

The programme acts as a catalyst in bringing vacant and underutilised buildings back into use in town centres. The loan works on a recyclable basis for private investors, over a 15 year period, after which it is returned in full to the Welsh Government. TCLs are currently being delivered within 34 settlement areas. For example, Vale of Glamorgan are using their Town Centre Loan Scheme to work with Registered Social Landlords to turn empty buildings in Barry Town Centre into affordable housing solutions for the area complementing the regeneration work that has, and is still taking place.

d) Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) – 2018-20 - £262k

BIDs are a mechanism that has been recognised as being successful in bringing local businesses and other stakeholders together with the aim of improving their trading environment and enhancing their profitability. A BID delivers a sustainable financial model to a defined geographical area, where businesses have voted to invest collectively in local improvements (in addition to those delivered by statutory authorities). BIDs are developed, managed and paid for by the commercial sector by means of a BID levy.

Through this programme 9 developing BIDs are being supported and there are currently 13 BIDs in Wales who collectively generating a total of £16.8m private funding to invest in town centres.

e) Property Loans (formerly Houses into Homes and Home Improvement Loans) - £40m - 15 year loan fund available until 2029

All Local Authorities have access to property loans from the Welsh Government aimed at bringing empty properties back into use. In the third year of Houses into Homes - the number of empty dwellings brought back into use as a result of the direct actions of local authorities, was 2,458: an increase of 13 per cent and an increase of 140 per cent on the baseline year before Houses into Homes commenced. The majority of local authority empty homes officers attributed the increase in properties brought back into use each year since the launch of Houses into Homes to the introduction of the scheme. In total, 20 out of 22 officers reported that the scheme had resulted in an increase in the number of long-term empty homes brought back into use as a result of direct actions by the local authority. In addition, 15 out of 22 officers reported that Houses into Homes had resulted in an increase in the overall number of empty non-residential properties brought back into use as accommodation.

Council Tax Legislation

12. Through the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, the Welsh Government have made changes to legislation which will give Councils the power to charge up to 200% council tax on properties that have been empty for more than 12 months to encourage owners to bring empty homes back into use. For example, Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council have recently set their council tax for empty properties at 150%, and are actively marketing their property loans and grant schemes with leaflets attached to the increased council tax bills.

Empty Homes Strategies and Enforcement Powers

13. Every local authority has an empty homes strategy, and they have the ability to work collaboratively on empty homes whether that's with other local authorities, or with other areas of work. These strategies allow local authorities to set their own agenda on how they tackle empty properties.
14. There are a number of enforcement powers available to Local Authorities, and we have conducted a very basic survey to understand the extent to which these powers are being used. The result has been mixed, with some local authorities using all of the powers available to them and others choosing to use very little. However, the key message is one of a lack of resources, knowledge, and confidence to undertake the enforcement role, alongside the burden of financial responsibility to follow the enforcement through to conclusion. There also seems to be an issue internally in local authorities where powers have not been delegated to officers causing backlogs and a protracted process to deal with empty properties.

Further Opportunities for Welsh Government Intervention

15. Although the Welsh Government involvement in this area is far-reaching, we recognise that there is always more that can be done to help local authorities and communities tackle this challenging problem. Therefore, we have set up a dedicated team to review bespoke support to each authority willing to work with us. This team will be looking at the following issues to provide more support.

- Review how to synchronise funding streams to help simplify the process, we propose to provide bespoke advice and options for funding. We will be reviewing whether we can implement 'one pot' promotion and internal government allocation resources to the projects once they have been identified and reviewed by the local authority.
- As a Government we could do more to help ensure that more public bodies and partner organisations are located in town centres.
- Review empty homes strategy with local authorities, identify links with other Welsh Government policies and seek out opportunities for collaborative working. We will be developing a Toolkit for empty properties with local authorities for dissemination to prospective buyers, developers, community groups, BIDs, town councils, to bring a sense of collective responsibility for empty properties and not just a Government issue.
- Welsh Government would like to research options on how we can ring fence part or all of the Council Tax premiums so they can be kept by empty property teams to support this work. We would also be monitoring the figures attached to post Council Tax increases as there is evidence to suggest that an increase in council tax can result in false occupancy responses from owners. We will also review whether we should follow England's example and provide local authorities the opportunities to increase council tax to 300% if the property has been empty for more than 10 years.
- We are proposing stronger enforcement support to local authorities by providing procured expert training packages for officers and members highlighting the options at their disposal. Also to provide officers with an assessment of any skills and needs shortfalls on a one to one or group basis. We plan to create bespoke action plans and funding mechanisms to support any enforcement activities that may be required.
- We would also look to do some work with authorities on better data capture, and understand why some areas have much higher levels of empty properties than others and also research whether we can introduce measuring levels of empty properties to be able to confirm whether they are reducing.
- We will be reviewing the offer in both England and Scotland to find opportunities of best practice. We will be closely following the development of Empty Homes England following the parliamentary

review and hope that this committee will also be able to provide recommendations we can implement with our authority partners.

Conclusion

16. The philosophy of Regeneration is centred on the sustainable development of town centres and this includes targeting empty properties for new uses, which includes affordable housing, and also the services needed to make these enjoyable places to live and work.
17. This paper has highlighted the Welsh Government has a range of interventions whereby we are directly supporting communities in dealing with empty properties. These vary in scale and scope but the fundamental principles behind our interventions are they are bespoke and support the solutions as identified by local partnerships.
18. Although much has been achieved through our investment programmes, we recognise that there is always room for improvement and we have identified a number of themes to investigate in order to better enhance our support package. We welcome this review and are keen to explore any recommendations that evolve from this discussion.

Appendix 1

Summary of Welsh Government Interventions

Targeted Regeneration Investment Programme 2018-21

- Supports projects which redevelop or improve town centres or their nearby areas. £100m Capital (can also include element of loan funding)
- Maximum intervention rate per project is 70%
- All LA areas - LAs (can be with partner bodies) apply for support for projects within an agreed regional funding allocation.
- Will lever in c.£60m

Building for the Future 2017-22 -European Regional Development Fund (although residential is not eligible for support we do support other activities which enable residential works to be incorporated in the projects)

- Supports projects which redevelop or improve town centres or their nearby areas
- £54m Capital (of which £38m comes from the European Regional Dev Fund)
- Indicative max intervention rate is 70% but this can be flexed if justified
- Local authorities within West Wales and the Valleys
- LAs (can be with partner bodies) apply for support for projects
- Will lever in c.£54m

Town Centre Loan Schemes 2014 – ongoing

- Supports projects which redevelop or improve town centres
- £31.5m in interest free loans which has to be recycled 3 times in 15 years
- LAs administer fund but cannot use it for their own projects.
- All areas of Wales but 6 LAs currently choose not to participate.
- Application from LAs who pass on loan to third parties.
- Loan paid back to LA within 5 yrs. LA can then re-invest loan in new projects.
- Recycling the loan 3 times in 15 years will see over £90m invested in projects across Wales.

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

A BID delivers a sustainable financial model to a defined geographical area, where businesses have voted to invest collectively in local improvements (in addition to those delivered by statutory authorities).

Property Loan Schemes (Houses into Homes and Home Improvement Loans)

The Home Improvement Loans scheme aims to ensure that owner occupiers have a high quality, warm, safe, secure and energy efficient home. Launched in 2014/15, loans of up to 10 years can be provided to owners of substandard properties who pass affordability criteria and who are restricted by other sources of finance. As the loans are repaid to the local authority, the aim is that the funding will be recycled so that the loan fund will be available for the next 15 years.

The Landlord scheme was introduced to help bring empty homes back into use. This national scheme, launched in April 2012, makes loans available to bring privately owned, empty residential properties or commercial buildings back into use as homes for rent or sale. When the work is complete, the property must be sold or rented out. The loans are paid before work commences, are interest free and must be paid back within two or three years depending on whether the property is sold or let. There are standard terms and conditions applied nationally which were defined by Welsh Government.

Originally two separate schemes, a decision was taken to remove the individual allocations so that LAs can spend the funding according to demand in their areas. Currently some LAs have more demand for HIH loans whilst others have more demand for HILs. Removing the split gave the LAs more flexibility to meet local needs.

Social Housing Grant

Social Housing Grant (SHG) funds housing schemes that meet local needs and priorities as identified by local authorities. Since the 1980s nearly all new social housing has been provided by Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). One of the reasons is that RSLs can raise private finance to contribute towards the cost of new schemes.

SHG can be used to provide housing for rent or low cost home ownership through new build or the use of existing buildings. SHG can be used to support:

- schemes to increase the supply of affordable housing for rent
- schemes for older people including Extracare schemes
- Homebuy - to assist people to purchase a home
- schemes to address low demand and to support community regeneration
- schemes for people who need support with independent living.

The Social Housing Grant (SHG) programme is allocated to local authorities based on a formula and local authorities decide where their allocation is spent based on local priorities. The main focus of the SHG programme is building new social houses, but some local authorities use a small amount of their SHG to buy and refurbish empty homes for use as social housing. In 2018-19 4 local authorities allocated funding to empty homes, bringing 16 homes back into use.

Valleys Task Force (RCT+) Grant Scheme 2019-2021

£5m grant scheme available to Valleys Task Force Areas to bring empty properties back in to use. Properties must be empty for 12 months and capped at £20,000 per property. Also there can only be one application per person.

Vibrant and Viable Places 2014 - 2017

Historically, our ***Vibrant and Viable Places*** invested **£124m** between 2014-17 to support capital regeneration investment in town centres and elsewhere (including initiatives to bring empty properties back into use). This funding leveraged in further investment of £320 million, thus providing a £444 million boost to communities all over Wales.

Appendix 2

Case Studies – Regeneration of Empty Properties

Gwynedd Council - Bangor

103-105 High Street in Bangor was once Maxwell's Barbers commercial property situated on the periphery of the main shopping street. Planning permission was required to convert the commercial premises into 6 self-contained units and this took 10 months to secure. The owner of the property, Mr Roberts, a local business man, received financial support in the form of a grant through the Targeted Regeneration Investment programme and a loan through the Welsh Governments Houses into Homes scheme. He agreed to let the property at a local housing allowance rate for rent for 10 years, in return the council extended the repayment period of the Houses into homes loan to 10 years. Welsh Government approval was given to the council to provide this flexibility to change the terms of the loan to suit the needs of the Council.

This has resulted in the provision of 6 one bedroomed units which will be rented out for 10 years at a local housing allowance rate in Bangor which is very beneficial to the area.



Swansea Council - Swansea

71 High Street is a traditional four storey terrace building located opposite High Street train station at a key gateway to the City Centre. The property was in a very poor state of repair and had been vacant for approximately 10 years. The commercial unit on the ground floor had been boarded over to stop further vandalism and trespassing. Windows were broken, pigeons were causing further damage to the internals and there was evidence of dry rot and damp. The stone balcony on the 2nd floor had previously been removed due to structural defects and the stone work on the 3rd floor and roof were overgrown with buddleia. Financial grant support (£17,550) was provided from the Property Enhancement Development Fund to help towards the renewal of the ground floor shopfront to bring the commercial unit back

into use. Further grant funding (£58,210) from Homes Above Shops was also provided to convert the upper floor into 3, 1 bedroomed flats following planning permission.

In March 2015, the commercial unit on the ground floor had a new shopfront installed and included a large open space office with separate staff room and toilets and is now occupied by The Unity Centre providing 2 fulltime and 4 part-time jobs. The upper floors has seen the installation of new windows, new roof, painting of stonework and the reinstatement of the 2nd floor balcony. Internally there were 3 self-contained flats created providing living room with kitchen facilities a separate bedroom and bathroom. All 3 flats are currently occupied.

Before:



After:



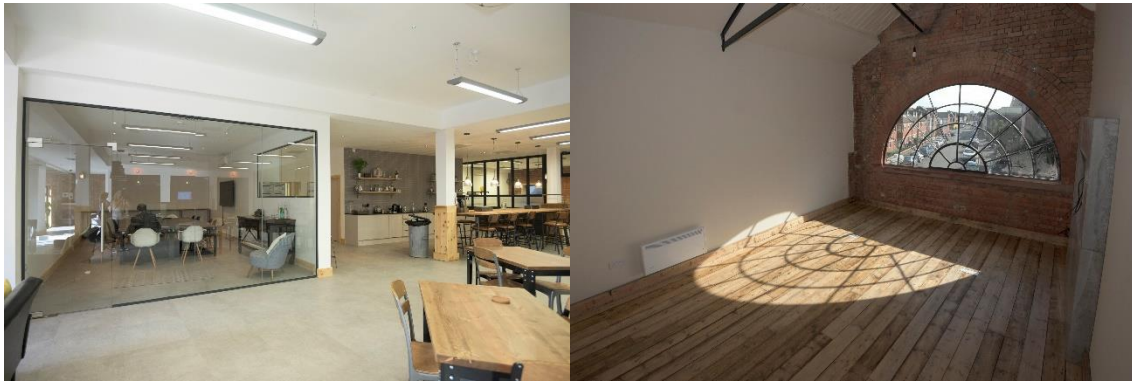
City of Cardiff Council - Tramshed History

The Tramshed Depot is a large Grade II listed Edwardian building located in the suburb of Grangetown, Cardiff, which had, to a short vacancy previous to the renovation, been in continuous use for more than 100 years. The site originally housed Cardiff's trams and then trolley buses to become the Council's vehicle maintenance depot. The total project cost are £3.5m. The developer has designed it as a mixed use building. The music venue opened first, in October 2015. It is a high profile venue which is an important part of the ecosystem for music and performing arts. Since then, a bar/restaurant, and a tech hub have opened, alongside 20 live/work apartments. The work/live units provide an affordable living and business space in a prominent part of Cardiff. This development was supported by Welsh Government's £20m Town Centre Loans Fund, through the Homes and Places division, with an award of £500,000 accessed through Cardiff Council.

Before:



After:



Agenda Item 3

Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee

17 July 2019 – papers to note cover sheet

Paper no.	Issue	From	Action point
ELGC(5)–23–19 Paper 2	Post legislative inquiry into the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015	Deputy Minister and Chief Whip	To note
ELGC(5)–23–19 Paper 3	Benefits in Wales: Options for better delivery	To the Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government	To note

Jane Hutt AC/AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog a'r Prif Chwip
Deputy Minister and Chief Whip



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf / Our ref: MA-P-JH-2038-19

John Griffiths AM
Chair of the Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

y 1st July 2019

Dear John,

In your letter to me dated 18 December 2018, you requested periodic updates every three months from the National Advisers to provide reassurance on the pace of implementation of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Act 2015.

I am very pleased to enclose the second of these updates from the National Advisers which covers the period April to June 2019.

Yours sincerely

Jane Hutt AC/AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog a'r Prif Chwip
Deputy Minister and Chief Whip

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

National Advisers' Report to the Equality, Local Government and Communities (ELGC) Committee June 2019 update

Purpose

In his letter dated 18 December 2018 to the Deputy Minister and Chief Whip, John Griffiths, AM Chair of the ELGC Committee, requested periodic updates from the National Advisers to provide reassurance on the pace of implementation of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015.

This is the second update from the National Advisers and covers the period April 2019 to June 2019 inclusive.

Please note that the sub headings below “National Advisers” and “Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials” indicate ownership of actions described in the respective sections.

Introduction

National Advisers:

The National Advisers recognise that this is a cross-cutting area of work which demands commitment across Welsh Government departments, local authorities, the public sector, UK government organisations, the third sector and other relevant partners.

National Indicators

Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

The Welsh Government National Indicator consultation summary was published on 21st June 2019. The National Indicators and Technical Document was laid before the National Assembly and was published at the end of June 2019.

Although the consultation responses did not recommend any of the indicators should be removed, there were suggestions for improvements to the measures and data sources identified to report against these indicators.

Welsh Government Officials will be establishing a working group made up of all stakeholders that formally fed into the consultation exercise, together with stakeholders who have expressed an interest in being involved in the development of the National Indicators. The aim of this working group is to review the current indicators, measures and data sources with a view to developing and agreeing any amendments which may be required. The finalised indicators resulting from the review work will continue to be used to report against the current strategy and will inform any revised strategy from 2021 onwards.

National Advisers:

The National Advisers are of the opinion that a comprehensive set of indicators (including for sexual violence) was presented during the consultation exercise. The consultation document was framed as simply as possible without too much technical terminology in order to facilitate understanding by prospective consultees.

Local Strategies

Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

Welsh Government Officials engaged with VAWDASV regional co-ordinators on the content and format of their annual reports for 2018/19. These are progress reports on the local strategies published in May 2018. All the reports will be forwarded to the National Advisers for their comment.

National Advisers:

The National Advisers wrote to regional VAWDASV Boards last May and have written again to each Board to establish what progress each has made against their own Action Plans. We intend to consider their responses with a view to determining best practice in this area.

High quality, professional services by frontline staff are essential to meet the overarching aim of improving public sector responses to the needs of survivors.

Statutory Guidance

Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

Regional Commissioning Guidance

The Statutory Guidance for the Commissioning of VAWDASV Services in Wales was published on 15 May 2019.

National Training Framework

The National Training Framework is made up of six groups. All professions within the Public Service will fall into one of these groups and a minimum training requirement is outlined per group offering a proportionate training syllabus.

As of March 2019, 158,500 people in Wales have accessed training under the National Training Framework. Updated figures (including 2018-19) will be available in the forthcoming weeks and will be included in the next report to the Committee. Training opportunities for all groups of the National Training Framework are available across Wales during this year. These opportunities include another fully funded Welsh Government specialist course and service manager course for groups 4 and 5

of the framework (those whose specialism in the field of VAWDASV eg domestic abuse advisers, sexual abuse advisers and refuge workers), and regional workshops for group 6 leaders (includes those with commissioning and planning responsibilities eg chief executives of local authorities and local health boards).

National Training Framework annual reports from the majority of relevant authorities have been submitted and analysis of training will be completed when the full complement of reports is received.

Ask and Act

Ask and Act awareness sessions continue to be delivered to relevant authority staff across the five early adopter/pilot sites. Planning and implementation meetings have commenced in North Wales and 'Train the trainer' training has been completed to 20 professionals in Mid and West Wales during the period.

Initial analysis of the National Training Framework annual reports forecast that 4,000 professionals will be trained in 2019-2020.

Welsh Government Officials have engaged with key partners and pilot area leads to review how third sector support will continue during the next phase of the roll out of Ask and Act.

National Advisers

The National Advisers are of the view that the training is comprehensive and tiered for various personnel in accordance with their involvement in situations around violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. It is also tailored to the needs of specific organisations. The National Advisers think it would be beneficial to map the impact of the training to assess for example the increase in early identification or the decrease in risk. It is important to ensure that training for professionals, service providers and members of the public does actually make a positive difference to victims and survivors. It is suggested that assessing the impact of training could be picked up when looking at the measures for the National Indicators.

Health

National Advisers:

The National Advisers met with Andrew Goodall, Director General for Health and Social Services and Chief Executive of NHS Wales in May when mental health referral pathways and waiting lists for sexual assault referral centres were discussed. The National Advisers also flagged up that data is often not shared with other service providers. For example, health visitors are asked to complete a domestic violence assessment, but it is not known if this assessment is shared or even transferred onto a national database.

The Director General committed to a range of follow up actions at the meeting, including to arrange a discussion for the National Advisers with all four Directors General; share a new proposal for sexual assault referral centres; share the proposal for an All Wales Trauma Stress Quality Improvement Initiative; facilitate health boards

to carry out a framing session on cultural harms; and arrange a meeting with the National Independent Safeguarding Board.

Education

Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

Welsh Government Officials are meeting with the WJEC to discuss the possibility of including a Peer Mentoring Challenge around Healthy Relationships and Sexuality within the Welsh Baccalaureate. This was an action arising from a meeting on 30 April between Kirsty Williams AM, Minister for Education and the National Advisors to discuss health and well-being aspects of the draft Curriculum for Wales 2022.

Welsh Government Officials with responsibility for VAWDASV and for Education are working together to plan a series of communication events with schools, communities and young people to ensure the correct information is being provided around the new curriculum development.

National Advisers:

The National Advisers met with the Minister for Education on 30 April 2019 and agreed a number of actions which are being taken forward by the Minister. The National Advisers will continue to provide advice and practical assistance specifically in relation to the potential parental resistance to specific strands of the Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience.

The National Advisers have hands-on experience of mediating in schools in Birmingham where there are currently parental protests against the curriculum. Another approach the Advisers have offered is to work with organisations like BAWSO and Henna Foundation for the purpose of encouraging dialogue with mothers about Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE)

FGM, Honour Based Violence (HBV) and Forced Marriage (FM)

Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

A meeting of the Honour Based Violence Leadership Group jointly arranged by Welsh Government and BAWSO was held on 25 April. Welsh Government Officials are currently reviewing the membership of the group in order to ensure lead decision makers are represented. This will be followed by a review of the delivery plan so that it is focused on key priorities. The group has achieved a great deal over the past few years, but now needs to refresh the delivery plan in order to move forward.

National Advisers:

The National Advisers have considered how barriers to reporting these heinous crimes has highlighted the need for awareness raising and building up trust with BAME groups. The Welsh Government National Survivor Engagement framework will help

address many of these issues through targeted engagement with diverse groups and the specific training currently being delivered through the National Training Framework.

The National Advisers intend to visit the Wales FGM Clinic and review the number of FGM referrals received. The findings will be provided in the National Advisers' Annual Report 2019.

Sustainable Funding Model

National Advisers

One of the key challenges for 2019-20 remains developing and implementing a sustainable funding approach. The National Advisers have been working alongside Welsh Government Officials to undertake significant work to develop a long term and sustainable funding model following the publication of the statutory Commissioning Guidance in May 2019. It is our aim that this model will provide the foundations for a funding mechanism to give vital and sustainable financial security to our specialist services. It was for this reason the National Advisers re-established the Sustainability Funding Task and Finish Group, which met for the third time in April 2019. Key outputs from this meeting are a common understanding of what sustainable funding means and an agreement to meet with commissioners to better align priorities.

Membership for this group has been agreed to ensure key stakeholders are fully engaged. The National Advisers are now working to include commissioners so that potential joint commissioning and new funding streams may be identified.

The Sustainable Funding Group members expressed the need for the Housing Support Grant to support all forms of VAWDASV, not just domestic abuse. It has been proposed that there will be representation from the Sustainable Funding Group on the group that oversees the Housing Support Grant. The Sustainable Funding Group has also raised concerns about the disparity of funding for women with no recourse to public funds; this has been raised as an action with the Vice Chair of the Group and the Deputy Minister through our regular meetings.

Funding Allocations

Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

The VAWDASV revenue grant continues to support the Regional Partnerships to provide a co-ordinated approach to providing VAWDASV services throughout Wales. This support includes Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) services.

Funding is directed at supporting black, Asian, and minority ethnic services, sexual violence services, a helpline for male victims of VAWDASV, preventative educational support in schools in Wales as well as supporting the functions of the umbrella organisation for VAWDASV services in Wales.

Funding is also directed at supporting regional partnerships to develop perpetrator services in their regional areas.

National Advisers

Grant funding from the Welsh Government has improved since it became a needs and evidence based model. It is hoped that this will improve the sustainability of the third sector and reduce the reliance of the sector on government funding.

Working with perpetrators

Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

Practice sharing events were held in North Wales (Llandudno Junction) and South Wales in April and May. Events continue to be well received and attended. Speakers for this period represented Phoenix and Reprovide, Relate Cymru and the Choose to Change programme, the Offender Personality Disorder Pathway and Data Cymru.

The Welsh Government is providing ongoing support and supervision for the Swansea University harassment research study, which the Welsh Government funded in collaboration with KESS II (Knowledge Economy Skills Scholarships), part of the European Social Fund.

Following the review of the Drive Project (perpetrator-focused programme) in Merthyr (commissioned by the Office of the South Wales Police and Crime Commissioner, Welsh Government Officials are continuing to provide advice on the implementation of the review's recommendations.

The Welsh Government's good practice guidance for public services working with perpetrators is being finalised and will be published in July.

The Head of Perpetrator Policy presented at the two CAFCASS Cymru annual conferences in May, speaking on the importance of safe, effective and evidence-based practice with perpetrators.

The VAWDASV Act has been reflected in the blueprint for female offending, published in May, on which the Deputy Minister gave an oral statement on 21 May.

Input was provided to the North Wales VAWDASV Board in April and Dyfed-Powys VAWDASV Board in May, advising on work towards objective 3 of the National Strategy: "Increased focus on holding perpetrators to account and provide opportunities to change their behaviour based around victim safety."

Her Majesty's Prison & Probation Service (HMPPS) in Wales has agreed to implement the Welsh Government's VAWDASV Perpetrator Service Standards for all non-accredited VAWDASV-related interventions.

Welsh Government Officials are providing advice to the Home Office and Ministry of Justice on the development of Domestic Abuse Prevention Orders (DAPOs), with particular consideration for the needs of Wales.

National Advisers:

There has been some excellent work in this area which the National Advisers discussed with the Deputy Minister and Chief Whip in May. As this work currently requires additional funding, various options for funding have been discussed with the Deputy Minister. The National Advisers strongly support the perpetrator policy agenda and see this as best practice, and wish to highlight this area of work across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

National Survivor Engagement Framework

Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

Further to the last update, colleagues from the Internal Research Programme have developed a survey which ended in June to engage with under represented groups. This survey also contains the option for participation in more in-depth interviews.

Interim findings from the survey will be provided in the summer to enable the formation of a pilot panel. This will be monitored over a three-month period to establish whether it is the best approach and whether the survivor voices and experiences have made a difference. This will inform the final report which will influence a sustainable survivor engagement framework.

Welsh Government Officials are also exploring ways in which to best engage with a diverse range of survivors for the Wales Centre for Public Policy review on accommodation-based services.

National Advisers:

To ensure that a broad representation of survivor voices, in terms of their experiences, is captured, the National Advisers welcome the piece of work through the National Survivor Engagement Framework. A survey has been undertaken to identify certain groups which are not currently represented, the survey will also include in-depth interviews which will help Welsh Government build a greater understanding of need. The National Advisers continue to work with existing survivor forums and individuals to inform our analysis and work.

Live Fear Free

Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

Welsh Government Officials have received approval to extend the Live Fear Free helpline contract for one year.

National Advisers:

The National Advisers are pleased to note the increase in new followers and the lively online debate and feedback generated by the Welsh Government's communications campaigns. Where possible the National Advisers continue to share key messages on their respective social media channels.

Communications

Welsh Government VAWDASV Officials:

Campaigns

The "This is not love. This is control" campaign which was launched in January 2019 continued throughout this April to June reporting period with the launch of the 'Control and Diverse groups' phase. The campaign highlighted the treacherous, cumulative nature of coercive control as well as its subtlety.

This later phase of the campaign reflected the experiences of diverse and under-represented groups and narrowed the messaging to the specific experiences of those with a protected characteristic groups, such as older people, LGBT, black and minority ethnic groups, men and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.

The campaign highlighted the specific types of controlling and abusive behaviour that survivors within these groups have described. It also aimed to help people recognise these behaviours as wrong and abusive and encouraged people experiencing or witnessing such behaviours to seek advice and support from the Live Fear Free helpline.

This phase of the campaign saw the creation of 22 digital videos, shared on social media, over 5000 posters shared with relevant stakeholders and key locations and ongoing interactions with groups working with the target audience.

Interim results for the 'This is not love: this is control' campaign show that the campaign films have been viewed more than 300,000 times across digital channels, including social media, and more than 30,000 sessions have been recorded on the campaign website. Early indicative data from the Live Fear Free helpline and from the police suggests that the campaign is having an impact on the number of coercive control related calls to the helpline and reported coercive control offences in Wales.

The Welsh Government funded community communications activity aims to broaden and strengthen the reach of our campaigns which include "This is Me" and "Don't be a Bystander". Cardiff University has included the 'This is Me' campaign in its Agenda resource for primary schools. Agenda is a resource pack to be used by teachers when discussing healthy relationships in a school setting. It includes topic suggestions, worksheets and activities to be used. It is available for both secondary and primary schools.

National Advisers:

The National Advisers have been closely engaged with the Welsh Government's communication team to ensure that more and better information is shared with our citizens. The National Advisers endorse the recent campaign for "This is not love. This

is control” which focusses on coercive control and which has seen an increase of reported incidents. The National Advisers are working with the communications team to improve the messaging on social media and to publicise the work of the Welsh Government, and continue to respond to news stories which impact of VAWDASV.

Conclusion

National Advisers:

The National Advisers will engage Welsh Government as well as external stakeholders in the planning of the ‘stocktake’ conference scheduled for November 2019 to coincide with the period around White Ribbon Day. Through the National Advisers’ work with the specialist sector and speaking directly with survivors of abuse, the need to re-establish the All-Wales Learning Panel has been identified. This was a commitment originally in the National Strategy. This Panel will focus on improving multi-agency responses to cases where victims have identified safeguarding concerns. The initial meeting will involve BAME survivors who have experienced sexual abuse. It is hoped that a systematic change where required within a multi-agency discipline and across Welsh Government policy can be implemented.

The National Advisers’ annual report is expected later this year. It will be focussing on the gaps and specific actions required to ensure the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 Act and the work flowing from it is being implemented across Wales and the service user’s journey has seen demonstrable change for the better.

In light of the continuing passage of the Domestic Abuse Bill through the Houses of Parliament, the National Advisers propose regular meetings should take place during the next quarter by the Advisers with the relevant UK Government Officials, primarily with the proposed Domestic Abuse Commissioner (when in post). We also wish to encourage continued collaboration and learning amongst the officials of the four UK Administrations (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) as a legacy of our appointment as National Advisers for Wales.

June 2019

Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government

10 July 2019

Benefits in Wales: Options for better delivery

Dear Minister

Thank you for giving oral evidence to the Committee on this inquiry. We would like some additional information on a number of issues.

Social Union

As you will recall we explored with you the concept of the social union. Can you provide greater clarity as to which benefits you feel devolution of would weaken the social union? It would be helpful for the Committee to better understand exactly what the Welsh Government considers 'off-limits'.

Definition of administration

Another issue we explored was the definition of 'administration'. We understand the complex inter-play between administration, legislation and policy in this area, as the Director of Communities and Tackling Poverty highlighted to us. You said that the WCPP had been commissioned to look at the 'devolution of administration' of welfare benefits, and we would like further clarity as to how you defined 'administration' for the WCPP.

Inter-governmental relations

One of the issues the Committee has been exploring is the role of inter-governmental frameworks. For example, do you think there would be merit in strengthening the current JMC arrangements to provide a more formal framework to discuss impacts of policy decisions at both devolved and non-devolved level on the other nations of the UK. Will the issue of social security be covered by the review into how UK Government departments deal with devolution which was announced by the Prime Minister on 4 July?



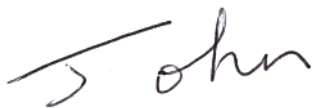
Incorporating the views of people with lived experience in policy design, implementation and evaluation.

One of the strongest messages we took away from our recent visit to Scotland, was how central people's lived experience was to the design, implementation and evaluation of the changes to the benefits system. It was clear that this is something that was taken seriously by all those involved in the system. We heard positive feedback from the third sector about how meaningful this engagement was, and how it was helping to design a more people centred system.

During the evidence session the Director of Communities and Tackling Poverty talked about how engagement with the public was "core" in the Government's approach to policy design, citing the changes to the application process and eligibility criteria for the Discretionary Assistance Fund. The Committee would welcome some further detail on how you engaged with people with lived experience in designing these changes. Did you also include people with lived experience as part of any subsequent evaluation of the changes?

I look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely



John Griffiths

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.



Agenda Item 6

By virtue of paragraph(s) vi of Standing Order 17.42

Document is Restricted

Chair, Children, Young People and Education Committee
Chair, Climate Change, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee
Chair, Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee
Chair, Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee
Chair, Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee
Chair, External Affairs and Additional Legislation Committee
Chair, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee

10 July 2019

Dear Committee Chairs

Welsh Government Draft Budget 2020–21

At our meeting on 1 May 2019, the Finance Committee agreed its approach to the budget scrutiny. I am writing to all Chairs of subject committees to share our thinking, and to encourage your committees to consider how you can contribute to delivering the most coherent and effective scrutiny of the Government's spending plans.

Budget focus

We have agreed to continue the approach followed in previous years, whereby budget scrutiny is centred on the four principles of financial scrutiny: affordability, prioritisation, value for money and process. The principles are:

- **Affordability** – to look at the big picture of total revenue and expenditure, and whether these are appropriately balanced;
- **Prioritisation** – whether the division of allocations between different sectors/programmes is justifiable and coherent;
- **Value for money** – essentially, are public bodies spending their allocations well – economy, efficiency and effectiveness (i.e.) outcomes; and
- **Budget processes** – are they effective and accessible and whether there is integration between corporate and service planning and performance and financial management.

Following a stakeholder event in Aberystwyth on 27 June, we have identified a number of areas which we would like to see the focus of the scrutiny, these are:



- *How the Welsh Government should use taxation and borrowing powers, particularly in relation to the Welsh Rate of Income Tax*
- *Approach to preventative spending and how is this represented in resource allocation (Preventative spending = spending which focuses on preventing problems and eases future demand on services by intervening early), particularly in relation to the financing of local health boards and health and social care services*
- *Sustainability of public services, innovation and service transformation*
- *Welsh Government policies to promote economic growth, reduce poverty, gender inequality and mitigate welfare reform*
- *The Welsh Government's planning and preparedness for Brexit*
- *How evidence is driving Welsh Government priority setting and budget allocations*
- *How the Future Generations Act is influencing policy making*
- *In declaring a "climate emergency", is it clear how the Welsh Government intends to respond and resource that challenge*

We would encourage you to use some of these areas as the focus for your budget scrutiny.

Draft budget consultation

As has been the previous practice, we will be undertaking a consultation on behalf of all Committees over the summer recess and the responses will be shared with you in the Autumn in order to assist your scrutiny of the draft budget.

I enclose a summary of the views we heard at the Finance Committee's pre-budget stakeholder event in Aberystwyth, which may inform your budget scrutiny.

Timetable

The draft budget is usually published in October. However, this year the UK Government has confirmed it would hold a Comprehensive Spending Review which will conclude alongside the UK Budget. So the Welsh Government currently has no indication of funding from the UK Government for 2020–21 to base its budget upon. The Minister for Finance and Trefnydd has announced that the Welsh Government is planning to publish the outline and detailed draft Budgets together on 10 December 2019, and the final Budget on 3 March 2020.



As you will be aware the provisions in relation to the reporting by policy committees changed in 2017, and you are now able to report in your own right (if you so wish), and your reports can be used as a supporting document to the draft budget debate.

If you have any questions about any aspect of the draft budget process, please feel free to contact me or the Clerk to the Finance Committee, Bethan Davies, 0300 200 6372, Bethan.Davies@assembly.Wales

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Llyr', is centered within a light blue rectangular box.

Llyr Gruffydd AM
Chair of the Finance Committee



Stakeholder Engagement: Welsh Government

Draft Budget 2020–21

Finance Committee | July 2019

The Committee held an informal stakeholder event at the Marine Hotel, Aberystwyth on 27 June 2019. The event focussed on the draft budget for 2020–21.

1. Preventative Spend, Health & Social Care

Prevention and early intervention should be at the heart of budget allocation.

Stakeholders discussed the increased pressure on local authority budgets especially within social care due to demographical changes and workforce pressures. Current financial pressures for local authorities include workforce parity of treatment re-dress (eg changes to National Living Wage and sleep-in payments), high-cost high-need care packages and increased responsibilities following introduction of new policies and legislation (eg Additional Learning Needs Bill and Sustainable Drainage Systems Standards). Stakeholders felt that duties or responsibilities of local authorities are not reduced when budgets are cut.

Many local authorities are reaching “saturation point” and cannot absorb any additional costs. This is leading to significant cuts in preventative services despite specific focus in recent legislation on the importance of early intervention and prevention (eg Social Services and Well-being Act, Well-being of Future Generations Act, Violence Against Women Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (VAWDASV) etc). Cutting non-statutory services such as leisure, culture and transport can have a potentially negative impact on the physical and mental well-being of the local population. In the long term, this can lead to increased pressure on statutory services. Cuts to public transport, for example, can have a significant impact on the local population, especially in rural areas.

Some stakeholders suggested that the affordability of universal services such as free public transport and free prescriptions needs to be revisited by Welsh Government given the current financial climate and reduction in budgets.

Out-of-county placements have huge cost implications for local authorities. It was suggested that local authorities need to work together on a regional basis to develop



specialist, not-for-profit services locally in order to avoid sending children and adults to high cost out-of-county placements.

However, stakeholders discussed the tension between preventative action, which often tends to be longer term, and addressing short term, immediate pressures.

2. Long-Term Planning & Strategies

Despite the Finance Committee's recommendations in 2017, the financial implications of new legislation remain difficult for local authorities to plan for. Even when Welsh Government provides assurances that any changes will be "cost neutral", this is rarely the case in practice. It is not just about the direct costs but also the impact of re-direction of resources away from other services. There is often an impact on the third sector too, for example the introduction of the VAWDASV Act had significant resource implications for domestic abuse charities.

Several stakeholders raised concerns about the potential impact of Brexit and the lack of clarity around post-Brexit policy and the Shared Prosperity Fund. It will be necessary to fill some legislative "gaps" post-Brexit but Welsh Government needs to carefully consider the cost implications of this. For example, if Welsh Government is considering raising regulatory standards for farming post-Brexit this could have significant resource implications for local authorities who would be expected to carry out additional inspections. They felt that the Welsh Government should be preparing for a New Deal Brexit, in order to be best prepared for that possible eventuality.

There is a need for more joined up working between health, social care and the third sector, for example on the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) agenda as this can impact on many areas of society.

Stakeholders stressed that long-term spending and vision were imperative as part of longer-term planning. There was a feeling that short term projects and yearly budgets do not allow for strategic spending nor for value for money – that budgets are being spent for the sake of being spent rather than to follow strategies and with priorities in mind.

A suggestion was made for 'disruptive' budgets, moving away from annual budgets and moving closer to the principles of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act to ensure requirements are met. Budgets should have an emphasis on meeting the need, working in areas that require action and co-working across sectors rather than adheres to a departmental structures and encourage competition between sectors.



3. Economy, businesses & the Third Sector

The Welsh Government needs to do more to promote the economy and business in Wales. Wales should be procuring “from Wales for Wales”, for example, currently most of the education books are procured from England. This is often because procurement rules make it difficult for small suppliers to bid for contracts.

Stakeholders felt that having more support for local businesses would lead to increase in local economic growth and that the Welsh Government needs to work together with local authorities to achieve this.

The third sector is often expected to “take up the slack” when local authorities are forced to cut services but many of these organisations are also working at full capacity and having to turn people away due to lack of resources. Many smaller third sector organisations have been lost in recent years due to lack of funding or forced to merge with other organisations in order to survive and this has led to a loss of local knowledge, expertise and support.

Public transport was seen as key to communities and especially in rural communities, as well as being integral to enabling economic opportunities. Key considerations around transport were availability, affordability and quality.

Stakeholders were wary of providing funding for large innovative schemes and the risks that may surround that funding and suggested that those resources may be used to support other services. For example, stakeholders questioned whether it was for Wales to take the lead in unproven technologies such as tidal.

Stakeholders discussed the need for a fair work strategy.

4. Education funding

Stakeholders suggested that the education budget needed to be clarified and simplified.

Stakeholders from the education sector highlighted that certain industries, facilities and services operate across different areas and rather than competing for budgets, sectors should be working together with outcomes in mind.

5. Local services

There were also concerns that community facilities, including leisure centres, were closing. It was noted that this has a significant impact on health and well-being of those communities, which in many cases is preventative, either through opportunities to exercise or for mental health reasons. It was also noted that community facilities provided structures to build social capital.



There was a concern that services and assets were being transferred from local authorities to community and town councils. This leads to a significant risk in terms of the ability of the organisations responsible for service having capacity to operate them, with a local authority likely to have larger specialist teams and a wider pool of expertise compared to a community and town council. Stakeholders suggested that transfer of services needed to be supported by adequate transfer for funding and resources.

Stakeholders suggested that assets needed to be utilised better, and that all tiers of government needed to work together to understand what assets they had and how these may best be used.

There was a general feeling that there was increasing strain being placed upon local authorities due to the lack of funding, which would lead to reduction in staff and a lack of resources, which would only create further issues; stakeholders described this as an endless cycle that wasn't being resolved.

6. Housing

Local authorities need more support from Welsh Government to enable them to fulfil their priorities on the availability of affordable housing. For example, when borrowing to purchase own housing stock, it would be helpful if local authorities could pay back at the lower rate rather than the market rate that Registered Social Landlords are required to pay.

Some stakeholders wanted to see a resolution to the 'loophole' in second home tax, wanting to provide local Welsh residents more housing opportunities.

7. Transparency & Scrutiny

There's not a clear understanding of Welsh Government's spending decisions and focus needs to be on outcomes and the need of the citizen. The Future Generations Act is integral to impact assessments for local authorities, yet many commented that it has not had a significant impact. Stakeholders acknowledged that the Future Generations Act will likely have a positive impact in the long run, however there will be no immediate benefit and instead will only restrict upon how much money local government will receive. Stakeholders felt that the Future Generations Act needed to be fed into any other additional plans and not be treated as a standalone Act.

Some stakeholders felt that the Welsh Government was overspending and there was an unfairness with regards to funding for health services. Some stakeholders questioned how the Welsh Government is monitoring health boards' spending, given the number of boards in special measures.



8. Equality & Vulnerable Groups

Cuts to public transport often have a disproportionate impact on certain groups in society, for example disabled people, older people or victims of domestic abuse. Stakeholders noted that poverty should be at the core of all budget decisions and that the budget should utilise a poverty impact assessment methodology.

9. Taxation

Stakeholders were concerned that local taxes were increasing whilst services are being reducing. Stakeholders were keen to understand what additional taxes might be considered for Wales and what might be appropriate. There was an emphasis on the importance of the public being aware what Welsh taxes will fund and cross border concerns with taxes differing in England.

Stakeholders were keen on the idea of a 'Tourist Tax' for people visiting Wales and it's National Parks, arguing that tourists use resources such as the health services, so this could counter balancing that.





Chairs of Assembly Committees
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

15 July 2019

Dear Chairs,

In the chamber tomorrow I will be making an Oral Statement on the 'Future Public Spending Outlook for Wales' which will highlight the challenges we face as a result of the lack of clarity in relation to the UK Government's plans for a Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) this year and the impact this has on our budget preparations, including the budget timetable.

It is against this backdrop and in accordance with Standing Order 20, I have written recently to the chair of the Business Committee and Finance Committee with regard the dates on which the draft budget will be laid and the annual budget motion will be tabled.

We do not know yet when the CSR will take place, the period it will cover or when it will conclude. There have also been comments by the contenders for the leadership of the Conservative Party and, ultimately, Prime Minister regarding the possibility of the new UK Government publishing its Budget in September. For those reasons, it is challenging to provide certainty at this stage on the dates we will publish the draft and final 2020-21 Budgets.

Standing Order 20.6 does, however, make provision for the Business Committee to make changes to the timetable at the request of the Government. Subject to this, and on the understanding I will provide a firm timetable as soon as possible after the UK Government has made an announcement regarding the CSR and its Budget, I have indicated to the Business Committee that we are planning to publish the outline and detailed draft Budgets together on 10 December, and the final Budget on 3 March 2020.

In proposing these dates I am mindful of both Standing Order 20.5 and the arrangements agreed between the Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales with regard the period provided for scrutiny. Standing Order 20.5 provides, in 'normal' circumstances, for the Finance Committee to be given 8 weeks to report on the outline budget proposals and five weeks for committees to consider the detailed Budget proposals. Whilst this cannot be termed a 'normal' year, I remain committed to ensuring the fullest possible scrutiny of our spending proposals. As a result, the timetable I have set out would enable 8 weeks for scrutiny of the draft Budget, comprising 5 sitting weeks and 3 non-sitting weeks.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

When we discussed these arrangements at Business Committee last week, all parties recognised the impact and difficulties this could present for the scrutiny timetable and your forward work programmes in the event we bring the dates forward should the UK Government publish its budget earlier than envisaged. In these circumstances, I should be grateful for your understanding and flexibility in accommodating scrutiny of the budget in your work programme. I will also ask my Ministerial colleagues to be flexible with regard their availability to attend committee scrutiny sessions.

I hope these arrangements are acceptable given the circumstances, which are driven by external factors beyond our immediate control, and I am grateful for your understanding.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Evans". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Rebecca Evans AC/AM

Y Gweinidog Cyllid a'r Trefnydd
Minister for Finance and Trefnydd