

Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee

Meeting Venue:
Committee Room 2 – Senedd

Meeting date:
14 November 2013

Meeting time:
09:15

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



For further information please contact:

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Agenda

Private pre-meeting (9.15 – 9.30)

The Committee agreed on 6 November 2013, a motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public for Item 1

1 Technical Briefing: Draft Council Tax Reduction Schemes and Prescribed Requirements (Wales) Regulations 2013 (09:30–10:15)
Deborah Carter, Deputy Director, Local Government Finance & Performance

Joanna Valentine, Local Government Finance and Performance

2 Introductions, apologies and substitutions

3 Welsh Language Commissioner: Consideration of Annual Report 2012/13 (11:00–12:15)

Meri Huws, Welsh Language Commissioner
Gwyn Williams, Director of Communications

[Annual Report 2012/13](#)

4 Papers to note (Pages 1 - 4)

Agenda Item 4

Jane Hutt AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyllid
Minister for Finance



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/ Our ref SF/JH/3496/13

Christine Chapman AM
Chair, Communities, Equality and
Local Government Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

6 November 2013

Dear Christine,

Thank you for your letter dated 29 October requesting additional information on a number of issues, as well as making a specific recommendation, following my evidence to the Committee on 24 October.

We have, as you know, been looking at ways, year on year, to improve our approach to impact assessments of our Budget proposals. I welcome the Committee's acknowledgement of the improvements that we have made this year and that the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a 'much improved document'. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Committee for its constructive scrutiny, which plays such an important part in helping to improve this process.

During the Committee session, we discussed the role of the Budget Advisory Group for Equality (hereafter BAGE or 'the Group') in providing advice and sharing expertise and best practice on equality issues. We also discussed the important contribution it has already made in terms of this year's EIA.

You have specifically asked for further information on the role of the Group and I am confident that the BAGE will continue to make a significant contribution to our on-going work to look continuously at steps to improve the EIA of the Draft Budget. In line with this, the BAGE has agreed to meet on a quarterly basis, to progress the development of the EIA process. The forward work programme of the BAGE will include a series of workshops, providing for detailed discussion and engagement on key strategic areas and budget priorities. This approach reflects the Group's previous recognition that there

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*Wedi'i argraffu ar bapur wedi'i ailgylchu (100%)
paper*

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can be more meaningful consideration of equality impacts at the programme and policy level, which can feed in to the strategic EIA of the Welsh Government's budget.

In the context of next year's Budget, I am also happy to consider how we can provide further detail of the work undertaken by the BAGE.

In the meantime, I offered to share the summary paper provided by Caroline Joll, who is the academic member of the BAGE. I have attached a copy of the paper at Annex A.

During our discussions in Committee on the approach we have taken to consider Welsh Language, I mentioned that a specific project will be set up in order to consider potential assessment tools and to look at ways to strengthen the links with other Welsh Government processes. In terms of your request for further information on this project, I can confirm that it will commence in early December. The project will build on the steps we have already taken and will seek to establish internal processes which will more effectively consider the impact of policies and funding decisions on the Welsh language. The new processes will focus on embedding consideration at the outset of policy development, an approach which clearly aligns with the approach we take to consider equality, sustainable development, socio-economic disadvantage and children's rights. This project will also align with the work, which will also begin in December, to look at how the Welsh Government will ensure compliance with the forthcoming Welsh Language Standards.

In your letter you have also requested further detail on the role of the Welsh Language Champions and the nature of the evaluation framework that is being used to look at the impact of allocations on the Welsh language.

In terms of the Welsh language champions, these were established to support Departments in ensuring compliance with the Welsh Government's Welsh Language Scheme, and in overseeing improvements outlined in the Welsh Language Improvement Programme. The Improvement Programme was put in place as a first step to ensuring that the Welsh Government began its internal preparations for implementing Welsh Language Standards. The project outlined above will take this work to a new phase from December onwards

The consultation on Welsh Language Standards will begin in January 2014, and the First Minister issued a Written Statement on the 21st October which set out the timetable for this process, which will ensure that Regulations will be in place by November 2014. The Welsh Government is one of twenty six organisations which will be subject to the first set of Welsh Language Standards.

The Evaluation Framework for the Welsh Language Strategy *Iaith Fyw: Iaith Byw* was published in February 2013. This Framework provides the basis for future research, data collection and analysis to assess the impact and effectiveness of the Strategy.

In terms of your recommendation that we implement a more systematic approach to ensure that policies and budget decisions are screened for their impact on the Welsh language, we are committed to exploring options for taking this work forward in the context of the project we discussed in Committee and which I have mentioned above.

We are also committed to improving our approach to impact assessments more generally, and will be working to move towards a more integrated approach to understanding the impact of our spending proposals in future budgets, including the integration of Welsh language considerations, within the context of the proposed Future Generations (Wales) Bill.

On a final point, in the context of the discussions around the Welsh Language, the Committee also discussed funding for the Welsh Books Council and whether this formed part of reductions in the Welsh Learning Action within the Education and Skills MEG. I committed to provide clarification on this matter and I can confirm that the reduction in funding for the Welsh Books Council does not form part of the £750k reduction shown in the Welsh Learning Action within the Education and Skills MEG. Funding for the Welsh Books Council sits within the Media and Publishing Action in the Culture and Sports MEG.

I hope this response is helpful.

Bethwiske,
Jane

Jane Hutt AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyllid
Minister for Finance

Cc. Jocelyn Davies AM, Chair, Finance Committee

