

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee

Date:	11 May 2005
Venue:	National Assembly for Wales, Cardiff Bay
Title:	Budget Planning Round 2005: Education and Lifelong Learning

Purpose

1. To provide the Committee with the opportunity to consider budget priorities within the Education and Lifelong Learning portfolio in accordance with Standing Orders 9.8, 21.1 and 21.2.

Timing

2. Assembly Committees are asked to respond by 3 June.

Background

3. The Finance Minister wrote to Chairs of Subject Committees on 8 April 2005 outlining the Assembly's planning and budgeting process for 2006-07 onwards in accordance with Standing Order 21.1. The Budget Planning round will allocate firm budgets for 2006-07, and an indicative budget for 2007-08. A copy of the letter is provided at Annex 1 and the Committee is asked to consider :
 - how the strategic aims set out in "Wales: A Better Country" can continue to be delivered most effectively; and
 - where spending priorities might need adjusting
4. The BPR 2004 determined our spending plans for three years and this year's round is unlikely to see any significant increases in baselines. The ELL indicative budget for 2006-07 is £1.480 billion rising to £1.562 billion in 2007-08. These are increases of £88m and £170m on the 2005-06 baseline. The ELL budget provision as set out in the Supplementary Budget published in March 2005 is at Annex 2.

5. It is important to note that funding for compulsory schooling does not form part of the ELL MEG but is contained within the Local Government Settlement. The budgetary provision made by local authorities for education services for 2005-06 will be notified to the Committee in due course.

Discussion

6. We must ensure that our resources continue to deliver the strategic aims set out in Wales: A Better Country in particular in the 4 key areas of :
- helping more people into jobs
 - improving health
 - developing strong and safe communities and
 - creating better jobs and skills
- My priorities for Education and Lifelong Learning were set out in full in the paper provided to the ELL Committee last year and these have not changed – they are to:-
- secure high standards and expectations in all settings
 - put the interests of the learner first in all sectors of education and lifelong learning
 - overcome barriers to learning so that we widen access and participation; and
 - ensure that education and lifelong learning provides for the economic, civic and cultural growth of Wales.
7. The key directions are set out in The Learning Country and the documents which followed The Learning Country; Reaching Higher, Extending Entitlement, Learning Pathways 14-19, Foundation Phase 3-7 and SEAP 1 and 2. The evidence continues to show we are making real progress to deliver on our agenda – working in close partnership with the many stakeholders also committed to putting the interests of the learner first.
8. There has been a broad consensus in the ELL Committee in favour of our educational priorities over previous Budget Planning Rounds. Last year the Committee acknowledged its continuing support for special educational needs, raising standards in schools and tackling teachers' workload and implementing Iaith Pawb. It also asked that particular attention should be given to:
- Teachers' continuing professional development (CPD), particularly in relation to performance management;
 - Provision for implementation of recommendations stemming from the Committee's policy review report of special educational needs (SEN);
 - Iaith Pawb - the supply and development of teaching staff able to teach through the medium of Welsh;

- Post-16 provision, including sixth form provision;
- Higher Education, with particular regard to reconfiguration within the sector; and
- Early years provision.

The budget for 2005-06 and the indicative budget for the following two years are enabling me to address the key priorities of the Committee

Recommendations

9. That the Committee informs the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services of its views on priorities. At this stage of the Budget Planning Round, the Committee is invited to give its views on broad priorities and the overall pattern of investment; the Committee will be asked for its views on detailed budgets after the summer recess at the draft budget stage.