

## **EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING COMMITTEE**

**Date:** 9 July 2003  
**Title :** Budget Planning Round 2003: Education and Lifelong Learning

### **PURPOSE**

1. To provide the Committee with an opportunity to consider budget priorities within the Education and Lifelong Learning portfolio in accordance with Standing Orders 9.8, 19.1 and 19.2.

### **TIMING**

2. Assembly Committees are asked to respond by 31 July.

### **BACKGROUND**

3. The Finance Minister wrote to Chairs of subject committees on 10 June 03 outlining the Assembly's planning and budgeting process for 2004-05 onwards in accordance with Standing Order 19.1. The Budget Planning Round will allocate firm budgets for 2004-05, and indicative budgets for the subsequent 2 years. A copy of the letter is provided at *Annex 1* and the Committee are asked to consider how priorities might need to be adjusted in the light of changing circumstances, given that in most cases bids for additional spending above indicative budgets are unlikely to succeed. Budget provisions which were agreed in March 2003 are set out in *Annex 2*. It is important to note that funding for compulsory schooling does not form part of the Education and Lifelong Learning MEG but is contained within the Local Government Settlement. In 2003-2004, budgetary provision for local authority education services is budgeted at : £1,645m.

### **DISCUSSION**

4. My priorities for Education and Lifelong Learning were set out in full in the paper provided to the ELL Committee for the Spending Review Round last year. While there is clearly more to do, the evidence shows that we are making real and important progress to deliver on the agenda for education and training – progress which is hard won by learners and practitioners themselves together with the whole range of stakeholders seeking to put the interests of learners first. The key directions are set out in *The Learning Country* and thereafter, *Reaching Higher*, and *SEAP*. In essence those priorities are :
  - to have high standards and expectations in all settings
  - to put the interests of the learner first throughout the range of education and lifelong learning

- to overcome barriers to learning so that we widen access and participation and
  - to ensure that education and lifelong learning provides for the economic, civic and cultural growth of Wales.
5. The ELL Committee's views have been supportive of our educational priorities over the last 2 budget planning rounds with consistent support for early years, higher education (including for Reaching Higher), SEN and practitioner pay and support. In supporting the budget priorities for the period covered by the Spending Review (2003-4 to 2005-2006) comments pointed in particular to post-16 education and training, particularly as regards provision for FE pay; provision for learners with special educational needs; and in support of the Assembly's broad agenda for a bilingual Wales.

### **Recommendation**

6. That the Committee informs the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services of its views on priorities. At this stage of the 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 recess at the draft budget stage. That draft budget will be able to take account of the Committee's views, the balance of investment across the whole portfolio including resources for the local government revenue settlement and of spend against provision for existing programmes.

### **Compliance**

7. The Assembly's procedures in relation to allocation of programme budgets are covered under standing order 19. This paper relates to Education and Lifelong Learning Main Expenditure Group of the Assembly's budget. The powers related to them have been transferred to, or made exercisable by, the Assembly and authority to operate the associated schemes and programmes has been delegated to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning and officials. There are no issues of propriety or regularity.