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X July 2003

CABINET RESPONSE TO THE AUDIT COMMITTEE REPORT ON THE ACCOUNTS OF THE NATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING COUNCIL FOR WALES FOR THE PERIOD ENDING 31 MARCH 2002

Thank you for your response to the Audit Committee's report on 'The Accounts of the National Education and Training Council for Wales for the period ending 31 March 2002', which was discussed in the Committee's meetings on 12 June and 17 July.

The Committee is pleased to note that the Assembly Government welcomed the findings of the report and that an extensive range of corrective actions are in hand within both the Assembly sponsor division and the National Council, to ensure that the problems experienced at the National Council do not recur either there or elsewhere within the public sector in Wales. On this latter point, the Committee particularly welcomes the Permanent Secretary's action in writing to the Chief Executives of all the Welsh ASPBs, enclosing copies of our report and the Government's response.

The Committee noted that in the Government's response two of the recommendations (1 and 5) were agreed only in part.

The Committee noted that in both cases comprehensive action plans are being implemented in line with the thrust of the recommendations of the Committee's report. The two areas of disagreement with the Committee's conclusions appear to relate to the extent to which the problems at the National Council might have been anticipated and avoided by the Assembly Government.

The Committee is concerned that actions in response to a recommendation only 'agreed in part' may be perceived to be less of a priority for the Assembly Government.

It is for these reasons that the Committee resolved at its 17 July meeting that I should write to you to bring these issues to your attention and seek your views.

The Committee would welcome confirmation that the Assembly Government intends promptly to implement all of the Committee's recommendations, irrespective of whether individual conclusions have been accepted in part or in full.

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The Committee also believes that it might be beneficial for each individual sponsor division within the Assembly Government to discuss the implications of the Committee's report and the Cabinet response with their respective ASPBs at their earliest opportunity. The Committee therefore asks that the Government consider this suggestion carefully and provide a substantive response in due course on the action to be taken.

Yours sincerely,

Janet Davies AM
CHAIR – AUDIT COMMITTEE