

Finance Committee

Welsh Government Draft Budget Proposals 2016-17

WGDB_16-17 03 Suzy Davies AM

Dear Chair

Please find below my email to the First Minister expressing my concerns regarding the proposed cuts revealed in the Welsh language budget line. While the government has indicated some of that money will be found elsewhere, I hope you agree that this assertion merits some scrutiny. If you are able to raise questions of this, I would be most grateful. I would also be grateful if you might ask how the impact on progress against the Welsh Language Standards will be measured.

Thank you

Suzy

-----Original Message-----

From: Davies, Suzy (Assembly Member)

To: carwyn.jones@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Subject: Budget line - Welsh language

Dear Carwyn

I was disappointed to see from the relevant budget line that expenditure on the Welsh language will be cut by just under £1.7m in this coming year. As your government was eager to criticise a similar cut by the UK Government to S4C's budget - over a longer period of time - you will understand my confusion.

I understand that you intend to restore £1.2m in year from other sources but it is entirely unclear how you intend to do this. There is no evidence of newly-focused, particular support for the language in other budget lines. Once again, it has become impossible for me to answer the question put to me by constituents who both champion and resist the Welsh language: How much do we spend on it?

I am also uncertain why the budget for the Welsh Language Commissioner has become so difficult to identify. The Assembly requested a clear budget line for this office some time ago. The Commissioner has said, however, that she imagines her budget has been cut.

With the steep reduction in local authority budgets, it is hard to see what financial help the Welsh Government is giving to support the introduction of Standards, the improvements required by WESPs and the duty to promote the Welsh language. With the second tranche of Standards due shortly, the Assembly must be confident that Standards, along with the Commissioner's regulatory powers, are adequately financed.

There is also considerable concern expressed by the Mentrau Iaith who are tasked with complementing education and the Standards by encouraging growth in the use of the language in communities. A 19% cut to available finance is bound to affect the scope of their work and they are not reassured by the vague indication of £1.2m being found elsewhere.

While I can understand that no budget line is immune from for consideration for cuts, it is not clear how the figure of just under £1.7m was reached and what impact that cut would have on agreed strategic and operational required to promote the Welsh language. Without conformation as to (a) where the £1.2m will be found and (b) who exactly will be facing the 19% cut, it will be difficult me to recommend that my Group support the budget.

Yours sincerely

Suzy