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Our Ref:

Your Ref:

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Response to Petitions Committee

Thank you for your letter and the opportunity to comment.

Clearly the allocation of resources by the Welsh Government is a matter for them and one driven by policy and politics. It would be inappropriate for me to comment on many of the aspects of the petition, as worded, but nonetheless I do recognise the broad concerns raised and would draw the Committee's attention to the following matters. The draft budget from Welsh Government has clearly given lower priority to local government as evidenced by the headline figures;

Health +7%

Economy and Regeneration +13%

Local Government -0.3%

The contrast is stark.

This Council did slightly better than many others in cash terms, as there was an increase. An increase driven predominantly by population growth skewed towards the cities. Yet this was a cash increase in the provisional settlement of £18k on a £434m budget with pressures of over £20m to contend with. That £18k pays for less than one job, half a social worker, one care package, or pays for less than 6 primary school places, less than 5 secondary school places, one special school place, one tenth of one out of county placement, one half of a modestly complex care package. It makes no inroads to the pay and price pressures administered on this council by decisions out of its control: the national local government pay award, the teachers' pay award and the larger than anticipated increase in administered teachers pensions costs. These costs are not funded from £18k. Nor does the settlement make inroads to meeting the needs of a growing City, changing demography, the increasingly elderly population, the fragility of the care sector, the pressures on both adult and child social care. The list could go on.

The WLGA and individual councils are already making clear what the consequences are as they publish their draft budget strategies for 2019-20 and beyond. Swansea is yet to publish but the position will be the same as others; substantial cuts to services, significant increases in council tax likely, substantial staff reductions, inevitable compulsory redundancies and further strain on an already overstretched workforce and Council finances.

We are moving inexorably as a sector to an era of significant reduction in services to a more core offer, higher taxes, less local council employment opportunities, substantial redundancy costs, dwindling reserves and limited time before one or more councils find themselves in an unviable financial position.

As the petition makes clear there is an opportunity for the Welsh Government to reconsider its priorities and its allocation of resources. I am sure this Council would support that reconsideration wholly, to ensure a settlement that it better recognises especially the interlinked and intertwined nature of health and social care as well as the wider pressures facing the sector.

The Committee is right to explore urgently the terms of the additional £30m for Social Care. We all need to know if this is genuinely new money, relief money, or a prioritisation programme for pending on new things and thus not "free money" that might alleviate real spending pressures we have in social care now. For Swansea, a share of £30m new money would simply help us reduce our overspending on current social care. It would not pay for any new spend.

All of us in local government await news of the final settlement now due on 21 December. We expect some additional resources but also expect that to go nowhere near to addressing the scale and severity of funding pressures and the consequences that will inevitably flow at local level.

Yours sincerely,



Phil Roberts
Chief Executive