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Andrew Davies AM/AC
Y Gweinidog dros Gyllid a Chyflenwi Gwasanaethau
Cyhoeddus
Minister for Finance and Public Service Delivery



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

Gareth Jones, AM

Eich cyf / Your ref: yourref
Ein cyf / Our ref: ourref

National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

18th November 2007

In the Draft Budget debate on the 11th December 2007 you asked about flood defences in Conwy, and the future of the Supporting People Grant. I promised to write to you about these points.

Firstly to answer your point on flood defences, the current proposals will have no adverse effect on existing programmes of flood prevention works in Wales. A bid for additional capital funding from the Convergence Programme is being prepared. If successful this could increase capital expenditure over the next 6 years by up to 30% and assist in accelerating some of our current proposals.

The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to addressing both current and future flood and coastal risk in Wales. Over the last few years the Welsh Assembly Government has significantly increased its allocations in support on the management of flood and coastal risk in Wales. Since 1999 WAG budgets have more than doubled. This trend is continuing with the budget for 2007/08 being increased from around £33m to £35.75m for 2008/09 and beyond.

In the summer the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing announced the launch of a three year programme of work aimed at changing the way we manage flood and coastal risk in Wales. This programme will include an initiative to assess future funding needs and to consider how best to satisfy those needs.

You raised concerns about the future of the supporting people grant. Supporting People (SP) funding is used to pay for housing related support for vulnerable people across Wales. This support improves the quality of life for individuals, improves their health and wellbeing, increases the ability to participate within the community and gives greater choice for individuals around accommodation, lifestyle and the provision of skills to enable this choice.

The differential in the percentage increase between the WAG-administered and the local authority-administered SP budget lines is purely a matter of technical representation. In practice the two will be treated jointly and the uplift will be equalised across both budget lines. This was made clear to representatives of the WLGA by the Deputy Minister for Housing. It is therefore not the case that the WAG-administered budget line is receiving more favourable treatment than the local authority-administered SP budget.

None of the Supporting People funding is currently paid through Revenue Support Grant (RSG), both for historical reasons and also because it meets the needs of vulnerable people to whom local authorities do not have a statutory duty to provide services. If some of the ring-fenced SP budget was moved to the unhypothecated RSG, there is a clear risk that there would be a reduction in the amount of money available to meet the needs of these vulnerable groups.

To: 1. Andrew Jeffreys
2. Minister for Finance and Public Service Delivery

From: Victoria Minshall
Ext 3421

Date: 20th December 2007

[Ref]
CC: Ps Minister for DESH
PS Minister for SJLG
Peter Jones
Georgina Haarhoff
Piers Bisson

RESPONSE TO GARETH JONES RE SUPPORTING PEOPLE GRANT AND FLOOD DEFENCES AFTER QUESTION IN DRAFT BUDGET DEBATE 11TH DECEMBER 2007

1. At the draft budget debate you promised to write to AMs who made specific points. Gareth Jones made specific points about flood defences and the future of the supporting people grant (see **Annex A**).
2. Current proposals will not affect existing flood defences, and there are plans to make use of convergence funds to build on current proposals. Budgets for flood management have increased. There is a three year programme of work underway on managing flood defences in Wales now, and to assess how we can manage them effectively in the future.
3. The supporting people grant is used to provide non-statutory services to vulnerable people with respect to housing. This grant is not put into the RSG because these services are non-statutory.
4. The difference in uplift between LA managed expenditure and WAG managed expenditure is presentational. In practice they will be managed jointly and the uplift will be managed evenly.

Transcript from budget debate, 11th December 2007

Gareth Jones: ... there is great apprehension about the future of the Supporting People grant. If that is interfered with in any way in terms of being included in the formula, it will have a negative impact to the tune of millions of pounds as far as Conwy is concerned.

Finally, can you reassure me that planned flood prevention schemes such as those proposed for Llanrwst and Trefriw in the Conwy valley are not in any way jeopardised by this budget?