

Sue Essex AM

Minister for Finance, Local Government and Public Services
Y Gweinidog dros Gyllid, Llywodraeth Leol a Gwasanaethau Cyhoeddus

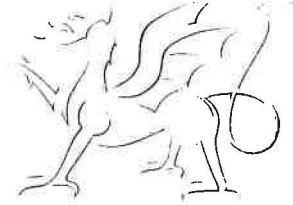
DEBATE ON THE DRAFT BUDGET

20 OCTOBER 2004

Our ref: MB/SE/00503/04

Your ref:

Jenny Randerson AM
National Assembly For Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Welsh Assembly Government

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19th November 2004

Dear Jenny

In the draft budget plenary debate on 20 October, you stated that Assembly Members should be briefed on the budget before the media. This was the case.

The draft budget details were emailed to all Assembly Members well ahead of my substantive press briefing. No information regarding the budget, embargoed or otherwise, was given to the press until after AMs has received the budget documents. All opposition spokespersons were given the opportunity of a personal budget briefing after the documents had been provided to all AMs and ahead of the press conference. You were briefed in this way. I have emphasised throughout the budget process the importance of involving Assembly Members and subject committees. I am therefore disappointed that you should suggest that I might have briefed the media ahead of communicating to Assembly Members. There is no factual basis for this and there is a risk that what should be a discussion about how strategic priorities should be best funded becomes devalued by these sort of accusations.

You also requested that I make an annual announcement on the day that the draft budget is announced along the lines that the Chancellor makes in the House of Commons. However, Standing Orders require that a motion should be tabled at least five working days before it is to be debated and that the draft budget should be laid at the same time as the relevant motion. This allows all Members a chance to consider carefully what is a long and sometimes technical document ahead of the plenary debate. If there was to be an announcement in plenary on the day the draft budget was laid, there might be accusations that opposition members did not have chance to be properly prepared or that the full plenary debate was being pre-empted.

Best wishes,

Sue Essex



BUDDSODDWR AEWX POBL
INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

25.11.04