

Lesley Griffiths AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Llywodraeth Leol a Busnes y Llywodraeth
Minister for Local Government and Government Business



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref: SF-LG-1866-13

Christine Chapman AM
Chair
Communities Equality and Local
Government Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

29 May 2013

Dear Christine,

I was pleased to attend the Communities, Equality and Local Government Committee meeting on 1 May 2013. As you are aware, I agreed to provide the Committee with a note on the following points:

- The level and use of Local Authority reserves.
- The commencement in the Local Government Measure of the section relating to remote attendance.
- The availability of a gender audit within the salary information Local Authorities are required to provide.
- The possibility of requiring Councillors etc. to publish their declarations and interests online.
- Update on the submission to the Silk Commission requesting all matters regarding Local Government elections to be devolved, with the exception of registration and franchise and the reasoning behind this.
- The possible issues surrounding the structure of voting systems in Local Government if Local Governments were re-organised and election powers were not devolved.
- The current funding arrangements of SARC's and IDVA's (Home Office and Welsh Government) and future plans.
- Update on the issues raised and discussed at the Minister's meeting with the Probation Service.
- What work has been done regarding the issue of stalking and how the Welsh Government has engaged with the UK Government's stalking agenda.
- The scrutiny arrangements in place for the four regional education consortia across Wales.
- Further information on the Public Service Leadership Group.

Please find this information enclosed at Annex 1.

I will write to you again during the autumn on how Local Authorities are using the additional £1.25 million funding allocated to provide support for broadcasting, remote attendance and community council websites. I will also send you an update in due course on the timetable for introducing new regulations for the council tax reduction schemes and, when available, I will provide the Committee with the evaluation report of the last round of outcome agreements and a report on how the Anti-Human Trafficking Leadership Group's Delivery Plan has been taken forward.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lesley Griffiths". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end of the name.

Lesley Griffiths AC / AM

Y Gweinidog Llywodraeth Leol a Busnes y Llywodraeth
Minister for Local Government and Government Business

Update from the Minister for Local Government and Government Business on points raised at the Communities, Equalities and Local Government Committee held on 1 May 2013

The level and use of local authority reserves

Each Local Authority has the freedom and responsibility to set levels of reserves appropriate to its own particular circumstances. There are no set rules on the minimum or maximum reserves an Authority should hold, and there are a host of reasons why Local Authorities need to manage their reserves carefully. For example, the need to set aside provisions for equal pay liabilities and the 21st Century Schools Programme were highlighted in a recent Wales Audit Office study as two particular areas where Authorities must set funding aside. The Report also highlighted there is less clarity around some of the other areas where provisions are set aside.

The most recent data shows some wide variation in the levels of reserves held with some authorities holding general reserves, which are not earmarked for any specific purpose, equivalent to 4.4% of their expenditure whilst others' amount to 0.2% of spend. In these circumstances, it is reasonable to want to understand better the position on reserves.

The future funding outlook is extremely challenging and Local Authorities are under no illusion of the need to look at all the options available to them to manage the pressures going forward and to make the best use of their reserves to drive forward the transformation of services which is needed to place public services on a sustainable basis for the longer term.

I have asked each Local Authority to provide me with further detail of its strategy for holding and utilising reserves.

The commencement in the Local Government Measure of the section relating to remote attendance

Draft guidance on remote attendance is due to be published very shortly for a 12 week consultation. My intention is to commence section 4 of the Local Government (Wales) Measure in time for the final guidance to be published. Each Principal Council will then need to consider amending their Standing Orders, having regard to the guidance, outlining the circumstances in which remote attendance can operate in their Authority. I would want all Principal Councils to have arrangements in place no later than their 2014 Annual Meetings. In the meantime, they can make use of the advance funding provided to pilot the system.

The availability of a gender audit within the salary information that Local Authorities are required to provide

Relevant Authorities are required by section 38(1) of the Localism Act 2011 to prepare and publish each year a pay policy statement. This statement must articulate the Authority's policies towards a range of issues relating to the pay of its workforce, particularly its senior staff (or 'chief officers') and its lowest paid

employees. The statutory guidance does not require the Statement to include a breakdown by gender. The guidance does allow Authorities to include any additional information relating to their policies on pay which they consider is appropriate.

The possibility of requiring Councillors etc. to publish their declarations and interests online

The code of conduct requires members with a personal interest (as defined by the code) must disclose the interest when attending a meeting at which the business to which the interest relates is to be considered. The disclosure must be made either before or at the commencement of that consideration or when the interest becomes apparent. To facilitate the smooth conduct of meetings, some (if not all) Authorities request the disclosure of interests at the beginning of the meeting. The code also requires a member to provide written confirmation of an interest on the first occasion on which it is disclosed, so there is no ambiguity over the nature of the interest disclosed.

This issue was considered carefully when the model code of conduct was last reviewed. Whilst alternative approaches were considered, the balance of opinion favoured disclosure on each occasion the related business is to be considered. This provides complete transparency for persons observing proceedings or reviewing minutes at a later date. It also removes any room for doubt over whether a disclosure has been made in the event of a subsequent allegation of a breach of the code.

Update on the submission to the Silk Commission requesting that all matters regarding Local Government elections to be devolved, with the exception of registration and franchise and the reasoning behind this

In our submission to the Silk Commission, we are seeking competence for the Assembly in relation to the administration of Assembly and local elections. If successful, this would give the Assembly full competence over the conduct of local elections, including the appointment and funding of Returning Officers, as well as the voting system. It would not, however, include the franchise and registration. This is because, in our view, it would not be appropriate for the rules relating to the franchise and registration processes to differ between Wales and the rest of the UK. The rules on citizens' entitlement to vote ought to be common across the Union.

The possible issues surrounding the structure of voting systems in Local Government if Local Governments were re-organised and election powers were not devolved

Should there be changes to the number and area of Local Authorities in Wales, the same system of voting would automatically apply to these new Authorities as to the previous. There is no necessary link between the two issues. The power for the elections to be called for new Authorities lies within competence but not the way they are conducted.

The current funding arrangements of SARCS and IDVAs (Home Office and Welsh Government) and future plans

SARCS

For the period 2010/11 - 2013/14, we via Domestic Abuse Services Grant and DHSSC budget) have provided the following funding for SARCS:

- 2010/11 - £170,601
- 2011/12 - £277,998
- 2012/13 - £230,138
- 2013/14 - £73,000 (Domestic Abuse Services Grant only - DHSSC funding to be determined)

The Home Office funded the set up costs of each SARC (£70,000) and provided money from various funding streams (via Home Office Crime Team) up to 2010/11. Five Welsh SARCs were successful in their bids for Home Office Independent Sexual Violence Adviser funds of up to £20,000 per annum from 2011/12 - 2014/15.

IDVAS

We have provided £10,000 to each Community Safety Partnership (CSP) for the Independent Domestic Violence Adviser service in their areas from 2010/11 to 2012/13. In 2013/14, we have allocated £37,500 to each CSP for both the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator and IDVA roles - it will be a local decision as to how much is allocated to each post/service. The funding was not awarded as a response to Home Office cuts, but in recognition of the vital service IDVAs provide to high risk victims of domestic abuse. Sustainable funding for IDVAs was highlighted in the Communities and Culture report.

18 organisations in Wales successfully applied for 4 year Home Office IDVA funding 2011/12 to 2014/15 - they were awarded either £10,000 or £20,000 per annum. The current funding is for the spending review period (ending 2015) and no decisions have been made beyond that point.

Four organisations in Wales successfully applied for three-year Ministry of Justice funding for court based IDVAs (2011 - 2014). The level of awards varied between £67,382 to £138,719 (£419,875 was allocated to Wales in total).

We have also recently provided funding (approximately £80,000) for accredited IDVA training courses in Wales – this has provided an opportunity for 36 individuals from across the public and voluntary sectors in Wales, helping ultimately to improve the standard of services for victims of domestic abuse.

Future Plans

We have recently commissioned an independent review of Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Service provision to ensure the strategic direction and approach to funding in this area is grounded in a sound understanding of the current landscape of provision in this field. The review will help inform the way funding allocations from the VAWDA team can achieve maximum benefit.

The review will not evaluate specific projects, rather it aims to:

- Assess the existing evidence base underpinning types of service provision in this field, in order to examine their effectiveness, both in terms of outcomes and value for money.
- Map current service provision in Wales.
- Estimate the prevalence of the different forms of Violence against Women,

Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence and identify the associated need for services.

- Make recommendations to inform my VAWDA Team's strategic approach to funding.

In parallel, our multi agency National SARCs Planning Group has been considering the sustainability of SARC services, value for money, the requirements of service users and compatibility with the sexual abuse service specifications designed by Public Health Wales (PHW). The Group agreed earlier in the year to conduct a review of SARC provision across Wales. Gwent Police, on behalf of the Group, are leading this work.

The review will examine the extent to which SARCs fulfil the requirements of the PHW service specifications, victims' needs and any unmet gaps in provision. It will also examine the interdependencies between SARCs and other services, such as substance misuse. The review is on-going and will conclude in the summer of 2013. The findings will help inform future funding and planning decisions by the NHS, the police and ourselves.

There will be read across between the two reviews.

Update on the issues raised and discussed at the Minister's meeting with the Probation Service

At the meeting on 1 May, Sarah Payne, Chief Executive Wales Probation, provided me with an overview of the remit of Wales Probation. The meeting also included discussions on how we and Wales Probation could continue to work together effectively for the benefit of both victims and offenders, the UK Government's Transforming Rehabilitation agenda and the potential of a prison in North Wales.

With regard to our legislative Programme, Wales Probation have developed increasingly strong relationships with us and responded to a number of consultations, including on the Social Service and Well-being (Wales) Bill. Wales.

Children dying in secure accommodation

The Youth Justice Board oversees the youth justice system in England and Wales and works to prevent offending and reoffending by children and young people and ensures custody for them is safe, secure, and addresses the causes of their offending behaviour.

My officials work closely with the Youth Justice Board to ensure adequate, safe provision is made for Welsh young people who offend.

What work has been done regarding the issue of stalking and how the Welsh Government has engaged with the UK Government's stalking agenda

On 25 November 2012, two specific criminal offences of "stalking" and "stalking involving fear of violence or alarm or distress" came into force in England and Wales, along with additional related police search powers. The new offences have been added to the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and will provide extra protection for victims, highlight the serious impact stalking can have on their lives and help

bring more perpetrators to justice.

The DASH (DA, stalking and HBV) risk identification checklist is used by Domestic Abuse practitioners in Wales to identify high risk of harm and referrals to MARAC (Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference).

NUS Wales are assisting us with their publicity campaigns in 2013/14 and plan to produce videos for students aligned with the R2BS strategy, one of which will be specifically on stalking.

My officials have engaged with counterparts in the Home Office on this agenda and another series of meetings are planned for June to discuss this and other areas of development including forced marriage.

The scrutiny arrangements in place for the four regional education consortia across Wales

Each consortium established their governance arrangements in accordance with the local need, political agreement and commitment.

An independent review of the consortia and their “readiness to deliver” was undertaken last autumn. A written statement and the report were published by the Minister for Education and Skills on 16 April. As a result of the review each consortium is required to produce an action plan, confirming the steps they are taking to address their priorities and progress the work required. Officials in DfES regularly meet with consortia lead directors, ADEW and the WLGA. Officials will assess the consortia action plans once completed (due June). (The evidence and findings from this review were also considered as part of Robert Hill’s review of education services in Wales.)

Consortia plans for the use of the Welsh Government Schools Effectiveness Grant and Pupil Deprivation Grant are assessed and approved by officials, and subsequently monitored. Regional stocktakes are undertaken by the Schools Standards Division with directors of education and heads of school improvement. The stocktakes cover Welsh Government education priorities and provide an evidence base to assess the progress being made by consortia working as well as the areas for development.

Further information on the Public Service Leadership Group

The Public Service Leadership Group (PSLG) has been established to provide national leadership for public service reform and collaboration and to drive the pace of improvement in public services of Wales.

I chair the Group, and its key responsibilities are:

- ensuring coherence in the implementation of overall public service reform agenda in Wales, including oversight of the implementation of the “Compact for Change” and building coherence with the reforms in education, social services, health and other areas;
- sponsorship and mandating of national action to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public services; and

- the development of effective regional leadership for collaboration, building on existing regional leadership structures and the Welsh Government's geographical footprint for regional collaboration.

Four national work programmes, each led by a senior public service leader, help drive forward this agenda:

- **Effective Services for Vulnerable Groups** which is developing and encouraging adoption of a number of new approaches for providing more integrated and preventative services for our most vulnerable people;
- **Asset Management** which is looking to make more efficient and effective use of the multi-billion pound public service estate;
- **Procurement** which aims to transform the way in which public services procure and commission goods and services from its £4b annual spend; and
- **Organisational Development and Simpson Implementation** has led on implementation of the Compact for Change commitments and is promoting the application of lean/systems thinking across the public service.

These programmes are complemented by a focus on establishing strong leadership for collaboration at a regional level. The basis for this is our footprint for regional collaboration and coherence, which sets out six specific areas: North Wales; Mid & West Wales; Gwent; Cardiff & Vale; Cwm Taf; and Western Bay. The regional collaboration leaders have a key role, alongside the national Organisational Development and Simpson Implementation work programme, to drive delivery of the Compact for Change at a regional level.

Key partners in the public service reform agenda – Trade Unions, the Third Sector, Wales Audit Office, Welsh Local Government Association and the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives, also contribute through membership of the PSLG. A small number of senior Welsh Government officials with a direct interest in areas of the reform agenda also attend. The full membership and an organogram is provided below.

I will take issues identified by the PSLG to the Partnership Council for Wales (and its sub-group, the Reform Delivery Group). This provides the members of the PCfW and the RDG with the opportunity to ensure on-going delivery through the PSLG and through individual and collective action by Local Government and other services meets the needs and aspirations of people in their own areas and of Wales.

The PSLG is supported by a Measurement Group which leads the development of a measurement framework to help demonstrate and report progress. The measurement framework focuses on the four national programmes under the PSLG.

Public Service Leadership Group: Membership

Welsh Government	
Minister for Local Government and Government Business (Chair)	Lesley Griffiths AM
Director General, Local Government and Communities	June Milligan
Director General, Education and Skills	Owen Evans
Director General, Health and Social Services	David Sissling
Director General, Strategic Planning, Finance and Performance	Michael Hearty
National Work Programme Chairs	
Organisational Development and Simpson Implementation	Jack Straw (City and County of Swansea)
Asset Management	Helen Paterson (Wrexham County Borough Council)
Procurement	Jon House (Cardiff Council)
Effective Services for Vulnerable Groups	Andrew Goodall (Aneurin Bevan Health Board)
Regional Collaboration Chairs	
North Wales Region	Mohammed Mehmet (Denbighshire County Council)
Mid and West Wales Region	Mark James (Carmarthenshire County Council)
Western Bay Region	Steve Phillips (Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council)
Gwent Region	Paul Matthews (Monmouthshire County Council)
Cardiff and Vale Region	Sian Davies (Vale of Glamorgan Council)
Cwm Taf Region	Peter Vaughan (South Wales Police)
Public Service Reform Partners	
WLGA, Chief Executive	Steve Thomas
SOLACE Wales, Chair	Jeremy Patterson
WCVA, Chief Executive	Graham Benfield
General Secretary Wales TUC (Observer)	Martin Mansfield
Auditor General for Wales (Observer)	Huw Vaughan Thomas

Public Service Leadership Group

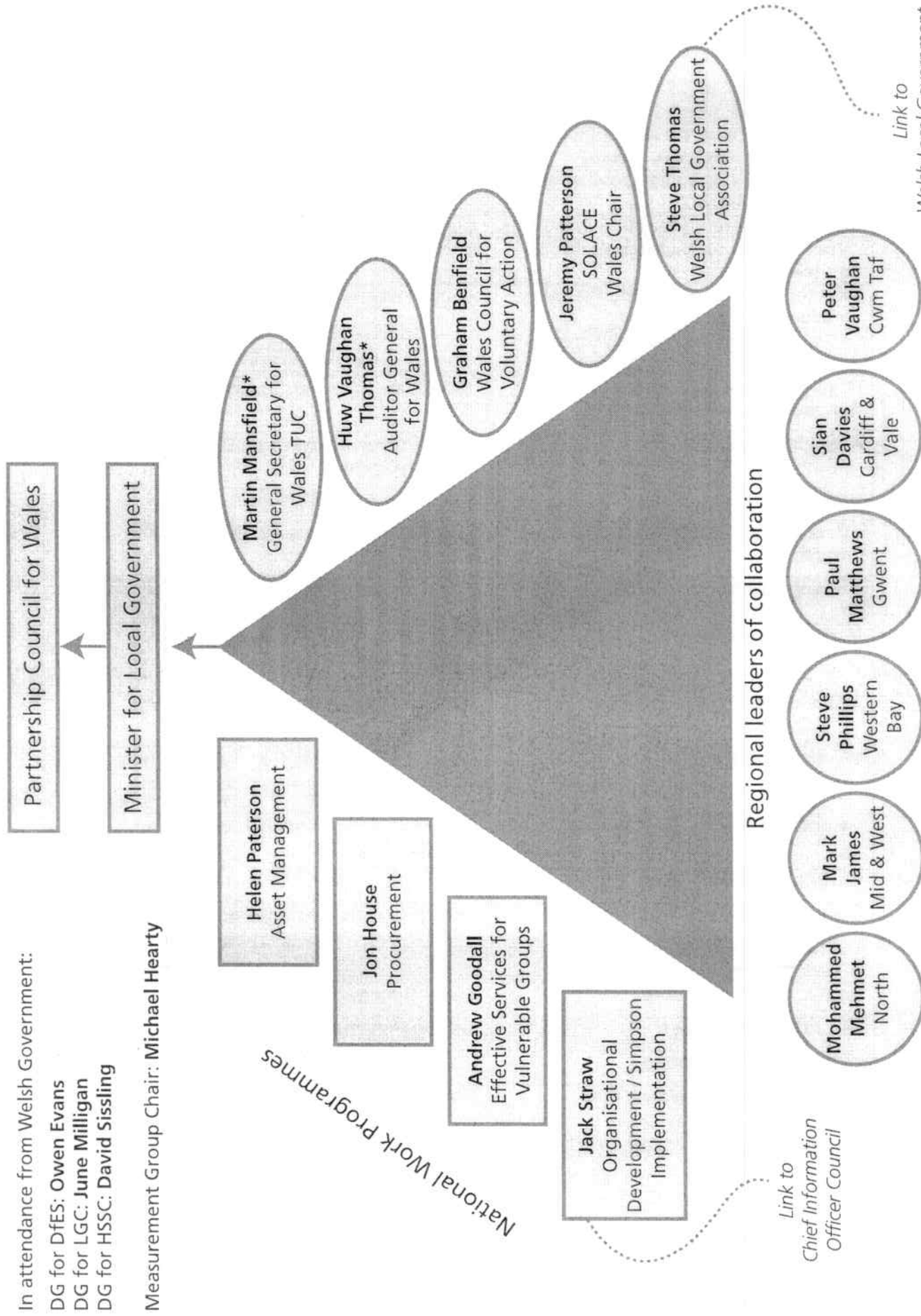
In attendance from Welsh Government:

DG for DFES: **Owen Evans**

DG for LGC: **June Milligan**

DG for HSSC: **David Sissling**

Measurement Group Chair: **Michael Hearty**



Link to
Chief Information
Officer Council

Regional leaders of collaboration

Link to

Welsh Local Government
Association Improvement Board

*observer status

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