

Agenda – Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister

Meeting Venue:

Video Conference via Zoom

Meeting date: 11 February 2021

Meeting time: 14.00

For further information contact:

Graeme Francis

Committee Clerk

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1 Introductions, apologies, substitutions and declarations of interest

(Pages 1 – 36)

2 The Welsh Government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and recovery

(14.00–15.20)

Rt. Hon Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister of Wales

Andrew Goodall, Chief Executive NHS Wales & Director General of Health & Social Services

Break

(15.20–15.30)

3 Issues related to the UK's withdrawal from the European Union

(15.30–16.30)

Rt. Hon Mark Drakeford MS, First Minister of Wales

Des Clifford, Director General – Office of the First Minister

4 Paper(s) to note

4.1 The Welsh Government's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and recovery: Correspondence from the Finance Committee

(Pages 37 – 38)



- 5 Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for the following business:

Item 6

- 6 Discussion of previous evidence session
(16.30–16.50)

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Ann Jones MS

Chair of the Committee for the Scrutiny of the First Minister

04 February 2021

Dear Ann

Scrutiny of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2021-22 / COVID recovery action plan

In October 2020, we wrote to Jeremy Miles MS, the Counsel General and Minister for European Transition, inviting him to attend Finance Committee in relation to the Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2021-22, in his role in co-ordinating Wales' recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

During questions to the Counsel General in Plenary on 11 November 2020, the Counsel General stated that his responsibilities in relation to COVID recovery "have concluded with the publication of the action plan at the beginning of October".

As a Committee, we were surprised that the over-arching responsibility for ensuring the action plan's success didn't fall within the remit of a specific Minister and we subsequently wrote to the First Minister to seek clarification.



In his response, the First Minister stated:

"It is essential Covid recovery is taken forward by all the Welsh Government and are not regarded as the preserve of a single Minister. Our priorities for recovery stretch across all our functions as a government, both now and into the future."



While acknowledging this collective approach, the Committee is very concerned that no specific Minister is directly accountable for COVID recovery work. Without this overarching role in place, the Committee has found it challenging in undertaking effective scrutiny of the Welsh Government's Draft Budget 2021-22, a budget which has undoubtedly been affected by the ongoing uncertainty arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.



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As it is widely considered that the COVID-19 pandemic will be here for some time and will have a significant impact on the Welsh Government's proposals for future allocation of funding and resources, the Committee is concerned that there is no overarching responsibility to ensure the successful implementation of the recovery plan.

As monitoring the COVID recovery plan does not fall under the remit of one specific Minister, we would suggest that your Committee is best placed to scrutinise the First Minister on the strategic approach taken to COVID recovery in his leadership role for the Welsh Government. We would be very grateful if you could raise our concerns with the First Minister at your forthcoming Committee meeting on 11 February 2021.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Llyr', is centered on a light yellow rectangular background.

Llyr Gruffydd MS

Chair of the Finance Committee

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg.

We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English.

