

Peredur Owen Griffiths MS
Chair of Finance Committee
Senedd Cymru
Tŷ Hywel
Cardiff Bay
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24 May 2023

Dear Peredur

When I wrote to you previously with regard to the Commission's response to the Finance Committee's recommendations made in the **Report on the Scrutiny of the Senedd Commission Draft Budget 2023-2024**, I committed that the Commission would provide further information in relation to Recommendation 7 when it became available. This is set out in **Annex 1**.

I would like to thank the Committee for its scrutiny and further updates relating to your Committee's recommendations will be provided in due course.

Yours sincerely



Ken Skates MS

cc Senedd Commissioners, Manon Antoniazzi, Ed Williams

Croesewir gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg neu Saesneg / We welcome correspondence in Welsh or English



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Annex 1 - Finance Committee Recommendations

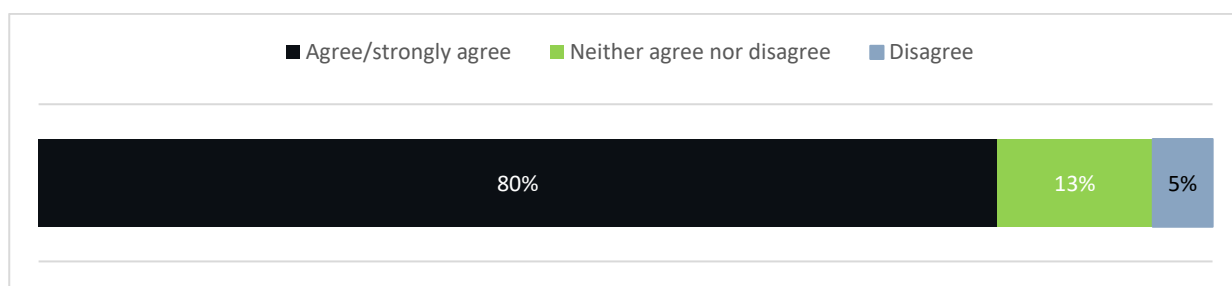
Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the Senedd Commission puts steps in place to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiatives it has introduced to mitigate the impact of cost of living pressures on staff and shares its findings from such reviews.

In early 2023, the Commission introduced a one off 'Cost of living' payment for people earning £32,000 or less in Team Support and EO roles, to provide support as a result of the cost of living crisis. The amount was for £500 in total, payable in three parts in January, February and March.

Recognising current financial pressures, Executive Board set the threshold for eligibility to receive the payment with the aim of including as many staff as possible while also recognising that the greatest impact of cost-of-living pressures is felt by those on the lowest incomes. ONS research demonstrates that cost of living pressures are greatest for those on or below the UK average FTE salary (£32,000). The Executive Board therefore set eligibility at this FTE salary level.

The Executive Board conduct a regular Wellbeing 'pulse survey', which supports the evaluation of its initiatives in this area. The most recent survey was held March-April 2023 and as part of this, respondents were asked to indicate whether they had received the Cost of Living payment. 95 respondents stated they had received this, and responses to the question '**To what extent did you find the cost of living payment beneficial?**' are shown below:*



**Does not total 100% due to some 'prefer not to say' responses*

Anecdotely, there were a lot of positive responses from staff on the introduction of this initiative, with Trade Unions providing formal recognition in the January 2023 TUS/Management side Partnership Forum where they noted formal thanks for this initiative.

Of the 11 people who replied to the question '**Was there any impact of receiving the cost of living payment on any benefits you may receive?**', 6 stated there was no impact, 2 stated there was a negative impact, and 3 stated there was a positive impact



A question was also asked: ***'Is there any feedback you want to provide regarding the cost of living payments?'*** and a summary of the most common responses is below :

Payment was appreciated	Wasn't enough to make any real difference	Should be reflected in basic salaries	Would have been more helpful if not subject to tax/NI	Lack of parity with MSS payment
				Helped pay bills

The Wellbeing Pulse Surveys also measure responses to the question: ***'To what extent do you agree that the Senedd provides enough support and information to staff regarding financial support and options available, including advances, savings, pension and other support.'***

Since the start of Autumn term 2022, the Commission has put in place a number of initiatives to improve awareness of existing schemes and introduce others.

These include:

- Introducing Financial Wellbeing workshops for some service areas, to promote the options for financial support that the Commission provides, and also raise awareness of external support and information available
- Partnering with HSBC to offer free financial awareness sessions and finance check ups
- Promoting corporate gym membership rates and options for free access to exercise activities
- We have also recently introduced a new Electric Vehicle scheme, which offers staff the opportunity to access an electric vehicle through salary sacrifice, offering savings against NI and tax
- Promoting the staff 'Hardship fund', which is a 0% interest scheme allowing staff to borrow up to £999 for a fixed period to help in financial hardship circumstances
- Renewing a scheme to reimburse staff flu vaccinations leading up to flu season
- Doubling the limit on the cycle-to-work scheme, allowing staff to access bikes worth up to £7000, and therefore improving access to new technology such as electric cargo bikes; now a viable alternative to car ownership in urban areas.

Compared to the last Wellbeing Pulse Survey (September 2022), respondent awareness of financial support and information internally has slightly increased (from 73% to 76% of respondents who agree there is enough information and support provided). We have seen a particular improvement inservice areas who participated in the financial wellbeing workshops, so will seek to further promote these).

On an annual basis, the Commission undertakes staff surveys, and as part of this a core question is always included that asks respondents to indicate the degree to which they would agree that they are fairly paid. Compared to previous years a reduction (8%) is noted in the most recent survey.



This means that 70% of staff do agree they are fairly paid and this compares favourably to the industry comparator of 66%:

