



Chairs of Assembly Committees
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

15 July 2019

Dear Chairs,

In the chamber tomorrow I will be making an Oral Statement on the 'Future Public Spending Outlook for Wales' which will highlight the challenges we face as a result of the lack of clarity in relation to the UK Government's plans for a Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) this year and the impact this has on our budget preparations, including the budget timetable.

It is against this backdrop and in accordance with Standing Order 20, I have written recently to the chair of the Business Committee and Finance Committee with regard the dates on which the draft budget will be laid and the annual budget motion will be tabled.

We do not know yet when the CSR will take place, the period it will cover or when it will conclude. There have also been comments by the contenders for the leadership of the Conservative Party and, ultimately, Prime Minister regarding the possibility of the new UK Government publishing its Budget in September. For those reasons, it is challenging to provide certainty at this stage on the dates we will publish the draft and final 2020-21 Budgets.

Standing Order 20.6 does, however, make provision for the Business Committee to make changes to the timetable at the request of the Government. Subject to this, and on the understanding I will provide a firm timetable as soon as possible after the UK Government has made an announcement regarding the CSR and its Budget, I have indicated to the Business Committee that we are planning to publish the outline and detailed draft Budgets together on 10 December, and the final Budget on 3 March 2020.

In proposing these dates I am mindful of both Standing Order 20.5 and the arrangements agreed between the Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales with regard the period provided for scrutiny. Standing Order 20.5 provides, in 'normal' circumstances, for the Finance Committee to be given 8 weeks to report on the outline budget proposals and five weeks for committees to consider the detailed Budget proposals. Whilst this cannot be termed a 'normal' year, I remain committed to ensuring the fullest possible scrutiny of our spending proposals. As a result, the timetable I have set out would enable 8 weeks for scrutiny of the draft Budget, comprising 5 sitting weeks and 3 non-sitting weeks.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

When we discussed these arrangements at Business Committee last week, all parties recognised the impact and difficulties this could present for the scrutiny timetable and your forward work programmes in the event we bring the dates forward should the UK Government publish its budget earlier than envisaged. In these circumstances, I should be grateful for your understanding and flexibility in accommodating scrutiny of the budget in your work programme. I will also ask my Ministerial colleagues to be flexible with regard their availability to attend committee scrutiny sessions.

I hope these arrangements are acceptable given the circumstances, which are driven by external factors beyond our immediate control, and I am grateful for your understanding.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rebecca Evans." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R' and a distinct 'E'.

Rebecca Evans AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Cyllid a'r Trefnydd
Minister for Finance and Trefnydd