



11<sup>th</sup> December, 2019

Janet Finch Saunders AM Petitions Committee Chair

Julie James AM Minister for Housing & Local Government

**REF: JJ/06736/19**

Dear Janet & Julie,

Firstly, may we express our thanks for taking into consideration our demands laid down in our e-petition submitted to you.

UNISON Neath Port Talbot Branch believes that in order for local authorities to comply with all legislative requirements of the budget setting process for council tax, Welsh Government must inform local authorities of their settlements as early as is practicable. This then makes possible that they can give the required, legislative budgets to schools in a timely manner, in order for them to be in compliance with policy as set by Welsh Government. This enables local government to have the ability to plan the workforce and in the process giving stability to both service delivery and the communities they serve.

We believe that every council in Wales is under extreme budgetary pressure, with some services on the brink of collapse whilst local authorities review or cut budgets to ensure that they comply with additional pressures of service delivery and audit requirements to produce a balanced budget, so UNISON are encouraged by Julie's statement to UNISON on the 25<sup>th</sup> October and the measures contained within it.

The longer the delay in informing local authorities, the more this will hinder the investment that authorities can provide in supporting Welsh Government's vision that everybody in Wales should live in well-connected, vibrant, viable and sustainable communities with a strong local economy and a good quality of life. In order for this

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vision to succeed, significant reform and investment is required to ensure the long term financial sustainability of the currently fragile public services across Wales.

We request that you ensure local authorities have appropriate budgets in order to safeguarding public services across Wales, which will in turn ensure the safety and well-being of our residents across Neath Port Talbot and across Wales, whilst fully acknowledging that Welsh Government have endeavoured to protect all residents of Wales with a backdrop of austerity led by a Westminster agenda.

May we also take this opportunity to encourage this more considered approach to local government finance and look forward to a more healthy settlement figure in the forthcoming budget.

Kind regards,



Jane Gebbie  
Branch Secretary



Mark Fisher  
Branch Chair

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