

Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS  
Y Dirprwy Brif Weinidog ac Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet  
dros Newid Hinsawdd a Materion Gwledig  
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for  
Climate Change and Rural Affairs



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

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Y Cwnsler Cyffredinol a'r Gweinidog Cyflawni  
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Mike Hedges MS  
Chair  
Legislation, Justice and Constitution Committee

28 January 2026

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your letter on the draft budget. We trust that the following will support your scrutiny of the proposals for the next financial year.

We have previously noted the Committee's desire for more in-depth information on justice spending, and agree that this could in principle be useful for developing policy in Wales. As our previous response to the Committee set out, however, there are significant structural factors that have prevented us providing this so far. These factors are still in place and not within the Welsh Government's gift to resolve. It is our hope that further devolution of justice will enable some of these structural barriers to be dismantled.

In the meantime, we are concentrating on strengthening the evidence base for justice in Wales. There has been real progress on this. The Justice Research Programme is making progress on opportunities to maximise the efficiency and value of funding for youth justice and establishing capacity and capability requirements for delivering a devolved youth justice system. As the Committee knows, the Ministry of Justice has also recently put out a first Wales statistical release, after sustained work by the Wales Governance Centre and work within Welsh Government and the MoJ. This is a positive step towards a better understanding of the actual impact of the justice system in Wales.

We understand that the Senedd Commission have commissioned Dr Robert Jones from the Wales Governance Centre to explore progress on, and the potential barriers to, implementing the recommendations of the Thomas Commission. He has met with our officials, who are providing him with the information he has requested. We anticipate that this report would also support your scrutiny of Welsh Government's justice spending.

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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.

In light of this and the other content of this letter, we would strongly disagree that justice has deprioritised. Instead, we would characterise the work programme as being more targeted and focused on areas of greatest impact within the limited available resource.

## Devolution

We are continuing to hold in-depth discussions with the UK Government on the devolution of youth justice. As a first step, we are seeking the devolution of funding for youth justice services, and alignment of the oversight and governance arrangements (including some functions of the Youth Justice Board). We have also engaged with local government on these proposals, with support received from council leaders for changes.

We have also continued to discuss with HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) the potential content of an MoU on probation services. A report is expected shortly from the Wales Centre for Public Policy (WCPP). We have seconded operational expertise from HMPPS to ensure that the MoU reflects the practical reality of service delivery. A work programme is being established to bring together key stakeholders and potential signatories, with a view to establishing potential content based on what would most effectively support greater local autonomy and service collaboration. We are aiming for a high-level agreement on the content of the MoU before the next election.

We are also actively considering the future governance arrangements for policing in Wales, in the light of the forthcoming abolition of Police and Crime Commissioners and other potential reforms to police landscapes. The Welsh Government's long stated position is that policing should be devolved in its entirety. At a minimum, we have said that functions which are currently exercised in Wales by PCCs should remain within Wales. The Home Office has acknowledged that the proposals for England are unsuitable for Wales and have been open to alternative models. We are working in partnership with PCCs and WLGA to develop potential governance models for Wales.

We have committed to keep the Committee informed on transfers and impacts on budgets, but these discussions are running in parallel with the budget process. These discussions have therefore not reached a point where we could inform LJCC of anything meaningful. If we are successful in negotiating the transfer of elements of youth justice funding for April 2026, LJCC will be informed in writing of the amounts to be transferred from MoJ and the mechanisms by which they are to be distributed at the earliest opportunity.

In advance of these discussions reaching fruition, the devolution element of the justice transformation budget is being spent on staff expertise and research to strengthen WG justice functions and to enable the effective delivery of devolved functions as well as progress negotiations. This work also supports greater bridging between devolved services and non-devolved justice functions.

## Tribunals

The Welsh Tribunals have seen extensive policy development work. Resources were briefly diverted from the Tribunals Bill to the Mental Health Review Tribunal for Wales (Membership) Act, which the Senedd agreed to treat as a government Emergency Bill. This Act received Royal Assent on 21 January and came into force the following day.

The objective of the Tribunals Bill remains reform of the system of devolved tribunals to create a new coherent and unified structure for their more effective and efficient operation over the long-term. We are working to prepare a draft of the Bill for the government in the seventh Senedd to consider for introduction. Some of the additional resource budget has been

allocated to a dedicated Bill implementation and tribunal reform team, which will include specialist ICT expertise both to support the introduction of the new case management system and to prepare the ground for tribunals reform. Appointments are anticipated in spring 2026.

Monitoring the tribunal service budget is a collaborative process involving the President of Welsh Tribunals, the Counsel General and Minister for Delivery and officials as appropriate. That process is ongoing and aims to ensure resources can be aligned to operational needs both now and as the Tribunals Bill is progressed in the seventh Senedd.

Finally, the Committee's view on the budget position for the accessibility of Welsh law is once again noted.

Thank you for writing to us on this important matter. I hope you find this response helpful.

Yours sincerely,



**Huw Irranca-Davies AS/MS**

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