

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY FOR WALES
REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Supplementary report on the financial implications of the Proposed Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure

Background:

1. Standing Order 14.2 states:

The [Finance] Committee may also consider and, where it sees fit, report on:

(i) financial information in explanatory memoranda accompanying proposed Assembly Measures;

Introduction:

2. The Finance Committee took evidence on the proposed Learning and Skills (Wales) Measure on 2 October and 6 November from John Griffiths, Deputy Minister for Skills. The Minister subsequently provided the Committee with further written evidence to expand on the information contained within the Measure's explanatory memorandum.

3. The responses received from the Deputy Minister at that time and the additional written evidence failed to allay the concerns of the Finance Committee that the Government had not explained the basis for its estimates and calculations.

4. The report laid by the Finance Committee on 25 November concluded that it could not reliably assess the impact of the proposed Measure and that it had little alternative but to recommend that the stage one debate on the Measure should not be brought forward until more detailed financial information had been provided for scrutiny.

Further Information

5. The Deputy Minister subsequently provided the Finance Committee with further written evidence relating to the proposed Measure and gave oral evidence, with officials, at the Committee's meeting on 4 December.

6. This new information satisfactorily answered many of the Committee's questions. Nonetheless, Committee members highlighted some issues that were not entirely resolved. These were

- The apparently modest assumptions made about the increased participation rates and the need to fully fund a greater increase than had been anticipated.

- The inflexibility of an allocation of a £75,000 flat rate to each Learning Network for the implementation of the Measure, regardless of any differing requirements
- The seeming lack of Welsh medium provision;
- The possible requirement for additional resources to meet the particular needs of rural areas and any cross-border activity.

Conclusions

7. The Finance Committee is now content that the information necessary to carry out proper scrutiny of this proposed Measure has been provided and that many of its concerns have been resolved. The Committee is nonetheless disappointed that this additional information, which the Government clearly had, and the details of the analysis which had already been undertaken, were not provided at an earlier stage.

8. Nonetheless, the Committee is now content that the concerns expressed in its original report have now been addressed and recommends the Measure should be passed from a financial perspective and not delayed from proceeding to stage 2.