

Comments in relation to the questions outlined in your letter July 2014.

1. The significant reduction of funding to Local Authorities has meant that at a local level services are being cut at a dramatic rate heading towards a position where only Statutory Services will be provided. At a time of severe budget pressures it is acknowledged that there would be a need for cuts and reconfiguration. It is however unclear whether the rapid change is something that could be avoided by having more timely announcements of strategic budget setting.

It is also unhelpful when 'reviews' are being undertaken that bear little resemblance to what is happening on the ground which results in various funding streams being merged or rebadged giving the impression of 'new' money. An example of this was the previous Communities Facilities and Activities Programme funding to the Third Sector. The reconfiguration of the grant scheme took place with no consultation.

2. Again it appears that LAs and other Public Sector bodies are due to have cuts which following a period of year on year is not going to enable Wales to progress as a nation. Investment in services and support should be a priority when there is evidence of the likelihood of additional investment from the private sector. The indicative budget is again going to show that there will be less service provision on the ground. There is also no indication where the costs for any potential mergers are going to come from as this is going to run into many millions of pounds. Are more cuts going to be required to feed the pace of change. The lack of clarity on funding leading to an election year is very concerning as planning for the future becomes very restrictive.
3. Our own organisation is currently working on a 4.5% cut in core funding this is following a year that had 8.5% cut. We shall be adopting a flexible approach but will need to seek additional outside funding or contracts to maintain a robust base on which to build for the future.
4. Local Health Board – the perpetuation of deficit budgets is a real worry as this is clearly having to be drawn down from other areas of the public purse. At a time when the demographics in society are changing there is a need for a radical rethink of the funding mechanism for Health and Social Care.

Preventative:

There are significant opportunities for the community sector to take on services and reconfigure existing provision – PROVIDED that there is adequate time to prepare. Change management cannot occur over night and a suitable lead in period is vital to ensure some form of sustainability- failure to invest in upfront time will only result in failure.

The impact of the recommendation of the Williams committee is just being sidelined and at present there is no incentive to see county mergers—or indeed any inducements to make this happen. A failure to act upon this with a clear steer over the next few months will be one of the biggest failures since the National Assembly was formed. There is a need for decisive leadership that is not restricted to assuming the status quo can be perpetuated. Change is inevitable just get on and do it with appropriate Guidance.

Equalities—this is an area which is only taken seriously in a tokenistic fashion – if everyone was able to access everything at a time and location to meet their needs in a suitable format then the country would grind to a halt as it is currently unachievable. The public should have

greater say in how equality duties are implemented and what at a local level is actually happening during this period of service closures.

Sustainability- from an environmental perspective lots of schemes are being developed that require very large sums of subsidy/incentives – true sustainability should be developed without the need for massive cash injections but to be self-financed during the life of the project.

The above is personal perspective and not necessarily endorsed by the whole of the Third Sector in Wrexham.

Regards

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