

Our Ref/Ein Cyf: SH/ SH RPFfSWW
Your Ref/Eich Cyf:
Date/Dyddiad: 27 November 2009
Please ask for/Gofynnwch am: Sara Harvey
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WLGA • CLILC

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Councillor Eurfyl Evans
Chairman of Mid & West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Service Headquarters
Lime Grove Avenue
Carmarthen
SA31 1SP

Dear Councillor Evans

We know that you will be aware of the increasing pressure on public expenditure which we believe is likely to result in reductions on our financial capacity to continue funding services at current levels in real terms. The extent of these pressures can be speculated upon but they are unlikely to become clear until after the next UK Parliamentary Election to be held in the first half of 2010. The provisional Settlement recently announced by the Welsh Assembly Government provides for the lowest increase in funding for local government for some years but is likely to be the most favourable result for many years into the future.

As a consequence, all of our Principal Councils are undertaking rigorous exercises to review processes and activities in order to reduce expenditure so that resources are concentrated on maintaining front line service delivery in order to minimise the potential prejudicial effects on our citizens. As Leaders of the Constituent Authorities which make up the Mid & West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, we expect similar commitment and action from your organisation and we are therefore seeking certain assurances from you in that regard.

We have had concerns over some years that the Fire and Rescue Authority has not always had a consistent commitment to ensuring that the very significant funding provided by the Constituent Authorities is always used in accordance with the principles of economy and efficiency which the paying bodies have been pursuing. Indeed, the concept of the joint Fire Authority created in 1995/96 was that economies of scale would provide operational efficiency and reductions in expenditure. However, analysis of budgets since then shows that the expenditure of the Fire and Rescue Authority has grown significantly quicker than in respect of the rest of local government in Mid and West Wales. Consequently, we are not convinced that the financial expectations set before local government reorganisation have been achieved and we are, therefore, concerned

Steve Thomas
Chief Executive / Prif
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that we are starting from an already undesirable position.

In order to give us appropriate assurance, we expect:-

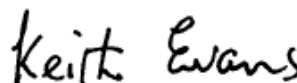
- (1) a modest increase in the levy for 2010/11;
- (2) disclosure of and dialogue about your medium term financial plan;
- (3) effective engagement with our Senior Officers, particularly our Directors of Finance, who will be in a position to assist your reviewing and planning process if you have capacity issues;
- (4) participation in local and national initiatives to respond to the changing funding scene with, as a first action, an invitation to the WLGA to make a presentation to all Members of your Authority about the financial outlook;
- (5) effective engagement with the Beecham agenda for joint working in order to reduce costs.

We should be grateful if you would respond to us c/o Sara Harvey, Regional Coordinator South West Wales, WLGA and we would be happy to discuss these issues with you if that would be helpful.

Yours sincerely,



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Leader, Carmarthenshire County Council



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Leader, Ceredigion County Council



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Leader, Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council



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Leader, Pembrokeshire County Council



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Leader, Powys County Council



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Leader, City and County of Swansea

Copy: All Members of Mid & West Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

Chief Fire Officer