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Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Climate Change
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Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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17 November 2025

Dear Mike,

The Welsh Government's Draft Budget for 2026-27

We are writing in response to your letter of 16 September, seeking information to support scrutiny of the Welsh Government's draft budget plans for justice. Answers to the questions you posed in the letter are attached at Annex A.

Thank you for writing to us as Committee Chair on this important matter. We hope you find this response helpful.

Yours sincerely,

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a Materion Gwledig
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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.

Annex A

General

The Draft Budget is the starting point of the Welsh Government's budget process - not the end of it. The Draft Budget 2026-27 is built on the strong foundation of last year's budget, which included £1.6bn of new spending commitments, enabling public services to start planning for the 2026–27 financial year. It allocates 98.6% of available funding, leaving room for further investment in Wales' priorities by the Final Budget in January. It is our firm ambition to secure a Final Budget which uses all the resources available for 2026-27. The government remains open to collaboration with other Senedd parties to agree a budget, emphasising the shared responsibility to pass a budget to benefit Welsh citizens.

As previously noted to the Committee, it is not currently possible to provide comprehensive detailed, granular information on justice expenditure in the form requested. Justice-related activity spans multiple portfolios and is funded through various BELs, many of which also fund other activities. In cases where a BEL covers a range of activities, a draft allocation does not necessarily reflect final decisions on how those funds will be prioritised. It would not be possible at this juncture to determine the extent to which these allocations will support justice-related expenditure.

We have outlined the budget lines that directly support justice-related activities across the relevant MEGs. A breakdown of planned spending for the main justice-related budgets in the 2026–27 draft budget is provided in the annexed table, along with a narrative on any year-on-year changes. This includes key elements of the Delivering Justice for Wales programme, devolution of youth justice and probation and tribunals.

While other budget lines across Welsh Government departments, such as housing, health, and education, contribute indirectly to justice outcomes, it is not possible to isolate the justice-related expenditure within these budgets. These allocations are therefore not included in the information provided.

Justice Policy Budgets in Wales

Expenditure from Welsh Government's dedicated justice policy budgets focuses on two main areas:

- Advancing the devolution of justice
- Reforming the Welsh Tribunals

Devolution of Justice

As the Committee is aware, discussions are progressing between the UK and Welsh Governments exploring the devolution of youth justice and probation. Any devolution must be properly funded, covering both capital and revenue needs. The Welsh Government's goal is full devolution of justice, and we are taking a phased approach.

The provisions in the draft Budget will allow activity to continue in 2026–27, including implementation of any agreements reached with the UK Government, refining operational policy, and potentially introducing legal mechanisms for new devolved responsibilities. This work is supported by the Justice Transformation and Constitutional Reform BELs, as part of implementing the Independent Commission's recommendations.

Officials in both governments are working together to explore options where responsibilities in the youth justice system could be realigned. This included strategic oversight, partnership and governance arrangements and funding of youth justice services as starting points. Strategic oversight is essential to avoid financial risk and ensure effective service delivery. A Justice Research Programme, funded through Welsh Government research budgets, is strengthening the evidence base. Initial strands focus on:

- Current and potential funding models for youth justice
- Capacity and capability for managing a devolved youth justice system

This research will inform discussions with the UK Government and identify opportunities for better value through alignment with devolved services.

An MoU on co-commissioning probation services is also being discussed. While not expected to significantly affect justice budgets, it could have implications for other devolved services due to their role in reducing reoffending.

Funding from the two BELs will support a small number of staff to lead discussions and prepare for new functions. Planned budget changes for 2026–27 are minimal, primarily reflecting inflationary pressures, as previous allocations covered much of the required activity. Looking ahead, any larger budget uplift would likely occur in the next Senedd term, alongside transfers of powers. Immediate transfers would require both in-year funding discussions and long-term budget mechanisms.

As previously noted to the Committee, it remains challenging to provide detailed justice expenditure data, as justice-related activity spans multiple portfolios and is funded through various BELs. Where BELs cover a range of functions, draft allocations do not reflect final spending decisions, and further work is needed to assess how much will support justice-related activity.

We have identified budget lines that directly contribute to justice-related work across different MEGs. We acknowledge the Committee's interest in improving transparency around justice spending and appreciate its efforts to provide cross-cutting scrutiny. While we are not yet able to provide the level of detail we aspire to, we have made meaningful progress in strengthening our evidence base and informing policy and spending decisions. This year, our focus has been on advancing the devolution of youth justice and probation. This includes work to better understand justice system structures, operations, and outcomes. We have collaborated with the Ministry of Justice to encourage disaggregation of England-Wales data, [which is now available](#).

As noted above we have also launched the Justice Research Programme, supported by an academic advisory group. One of the programme's first pieces of work will be to consider improvements to funding arrangements for local youth justice services. Expert input is guiding both short- and long-term approaches to probation devolution. The Wales Centre for Public Policy is exploring an MoU model similar to Greater Manchester's, and the Wales Probation Development Group has proposed a framework for a fully devolved service.

All of this work is improving our understanding of how Welsh Government activity links to justice outcomes, which will inform future budget decisions and presentation.

Delivering Justice for Wales

As in previous years, we continue to prioritise actions within the Delivering Justice for Wales programme that fall within our current powers, while actively pursuing justice devolution to expand our ability to deliver its wider aims. Budget allocations are detailed in Annex B.

Many programme actions focus on young people's experiences in the justice system, where progress has been made through the youth justice blueprints and collaborative service delivery. We aim to build on this by, for example:

- Developing a prevention framework for at-risk young people
- Ensuring access to support via the Young Person's Guarantee for those in the secure estate
- Promoting Youth to Adult Transitions principles
- Exploring future models for secure youth provision in Wales
- Reducing the number of children held on remand
- Embedding good practice in youth justice prevention
- Strengthening trauma-informed approaches in youth secure environments

The Blueprints, published in 2019 with a five-year implementation plan, were developed jointly with HMPPS, the Ministry of Justice, Policing in Wales, the Youth Justice Board, and third-sector partners. As of April 2025, they have entered a new delivery phase focused on embedding best practice, supporting wellbeing, and reducing reoffending—particularly for women and children.

While not technically a partnership programme with the Ministry of Justice, we are also continuing to fund Police Community Support Officers to support the critical role they play in keeping communities safe. In 2025/26 we provided £16.003m of funding for PCSOs and in 2026/27 this will increase to £16.273m. Following recommendations by the Senedd Equality and Social Justice Committee, we are in the process of undertaking a light touch review of PCSOs in Wales, to provide a broader understanding of the types of work PCSOs carry out.

For 2026–27, there is no planned joint justice spending with the Ministry of Justice. However, the Welsh Government will continue supporting young people and women to prevent justice system contact, and will maintain close collaboration with MoJ and HMPPS to manage the interface between devolved and non-devolved services.

The Welsh Tribunals

We are progressing proposals relating to Tribunal Reform, through the development of the Tribunals Bill. This ongoing work, including preparations for the implementation of that legislation, is supported by the Justice Transformation BEL.

We were pleased to be able provide an increase in the budget allocation for the operation of the Welsh Tribunals, rising from £4.110 million in 2024/25 to £6.083 million in 2025/26¹, which includes changes made in the first supplementary budget: £35k for NI contribution increases and £40k transferred from the Education BEL for in-year projects in this financial year. We intend to make further allocations at the second supplementary budget for meeting pay award costs and for in year projects. This increase reflects our continued commitment to ensuring the effective and sustainable operation of the devolved tribunals, and recognises the valuable contribution made by tribunal members and staff. The draft Budget allocation for 2026/27 is £6.076 million for the Welsh Tribunals, retaining increases for ongoing staff related costs.

We remain committed to ensuring that public funds are managed responsibly and efficiently. We welcome the President of Welsh Tribunals' continued efforts to identify and deliver savings where possible. Monitoring of the tribunal service budget is an ongoing and collaborative process. It is a matter discussed by the President of Welsh Tribunals with the

¹ Please note that the table in Annex B reflects the original allocation of funds and not in-year supplementary budget allocations.

Counsel General and Minister for Delivery and officials, as appropriate, to ensure resources are aligned with operational needs.

A capital allocation of £350k has been made available to the Tribunals BEL in 2025/26 for the procurement of a new case management system. This investment will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of all devolved Welsh Tribunals and their judicial members. In addition, £150K in revenue funding has been allocated to support the migration of data from the existing IT system to the new platform, alongside appropriate staffing resource to facilitate both the procurement and implementation.

The accessibility of Welsh law

As explained in previous years, the costs of our work to deliver *The Future of Welsh law* are met from across a number of portfolios as part of the wider legislative activity of the organisation. That remains the position for 2026-27 and indeed will do so in future years.

Annex B – draft budget allocations to justice budgets – 2026/27

BEL	MEG	2025/26 budget ²	Proposed 2026/27 budget	Impact of changes
Justice Transformation	Climate Change & Rural Affairs	0.688m	0.711m	This BEL funds devolution preparations and tribunals reform. The increase in funds stems from increased costs of staffing of both of these activities and other associated costs.
Constitutional Reform	Climate Change & Rural Affairs	2.014m	2.075m	This BEL also contributes to work in pursuit of devolution of youth justice and probation, by funding (amongst other things) staff to work on these policies.
Criminal Justice Delivery	Social Justice	1.292m	1.443m	This BEL delivers work to support women and children in the justice system, including the One Wales service which we jointly commission with justice partners.
Community Support and Safety	Social Justice	16.003m	16.273m	This BEL supports our funding for Police Community Support Officers who are employed and tasked by the Welsh forces and British Transport police.
Tribunals	Central Services and Administration	6.008m	6.076m	This BEL supports the delivery of tribunal services in Wales.

² Figures reflect when 2025/26 budget was first agreed and do not include in-year budget adjustments