

Answers issued to Members on 28 July 2008

[R] signifies that the Member has declared an interest.

[W] signifies that the question was tabled in Welsh.

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Questions to the First Minister

Michael German (South Wales East): What discussions has the First Minister had over the timing of a referendum for a full law-making Welsh parliament? (WAQ52304)

The First Minister (Rhodri Morgan): The discussions I have had are those that led to the commitment outlined in the 'One Wales' programme of government.

Questions to the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing

Peter Black (South Wales East): What discussions did the Minister have with the UK Government regarding the scope of the powers in the Affordable Housing Legislative Competence Order? (WAQ52300)

The Deputy Minister for Housing (Jocelyn Davies): As I explained in my evidence to the Assembly LCO committee, there have been a number of discussions with the UK Government on the scope of the Affordable Housing LCO at both ministerial and official level.

Transcripts of committee proceedings are available in the legislation committee section of the National Assembly for Wales website

We will continue to work with the UK Government in considering the recommendations of both the Assembly committee and the Welsh Affairs Committee once they have been published.

Questions to the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government

Nick Bourne (Mid & West Wales): When will details of the Post Office Development Fund, which is to reopen on 1 January 2009, be announced? (WAQ52294)

The Deputy Minister for Regeneration (Leighton Andrews): Key stakeholders were invited to a meeting on 2 July to discuss a range of ideas about what the new fund might support. A wider consultation of all sub-postmasters and interested organisations will take place shortly and I expect to announce the details of the new fund in the autumn.

Kirsty Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire): Will the Minister make a statement on whether the Welsh Assembly Government has any plans to extend the categories in which a council tax payer can appeal to alter the council tax valuation list? (WAQ52296)

The Minister for Social Justice and Local Government (Brian Gibbons): A new owner or occupier of a dwelling has six months to appeal against the valuation banding of their property from the time that they become the council tax payer. Other circumstances in which an appeal may be made are: where there have been physical changes to the dwelling that may have reduced its value, for example if part of the property has been demolished; or where there has been an environmental change to the local area, such as the construction of a motorway or industrial development near to the property.

These arrangements are fit for purpose and provide suitable protection for the taxpayer. There are no plans to make any changes.

Peter Black (South Wales East): On a region-by-region basis, how much money has been allocated to the Post Office Development Fund and when will this money be available to post offices? (WAQ52301)

Leighton Andrews: The 'One Wales' agreement commits to opening a re-focussed fund. Key stakeholders were invited to a meeting on 2 July to discuss a range of ideas about what the new fund might support. A wider consultation of all sub-postmasters and interested organisations will take place shortly. Spatial targeting will form part of that consultation. I have previously stated that the new fund will be available from 1 January 2009.

Jenny Randerson (Cardiff Central): What assessment has the Minister made of the impact of below inflation budget increases for local authorities and what plans does the Minister have that may increase their expenditure? (WAQ52309)

Brian Gibbons: I will consider the cost pressures faced by councils in determining the local government settlement for 2009-10. The Welsh Local Government Association has already provided its assessment of inflationary pressures in the report of the expenditure sub-group. I discussed the report with representatives of local government at a consultative forum on finance meeting on 7 July.

<http://www.wlga.gov.uk/english/finance-publications/welsh-local-government-financial-priorities-2008-09/>