

Answers issued to Members on 24 June 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 Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport

Darren Millar (Clwyd West): Will the Minister give details on what procedures were used when selecting the preferred purchaser for the Defence Establishment site at Llanbedr? (WAQ51857)

The Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport (Ieuan Wyn Jones): Bids received were evaluated on the basis of agreed selection criteria by an Assessment Panel of senior officials that included Stuart Hogg Property Consultancy who were appointed to market the property by the Assembly Government. The UK operations of short listed candidates were subsequently visited, followed by interviews with them. All short listed bids were scored against agreed criteria before a decision on the preferred bidder was made.

Darren Millar (Clwyd West): Will the Minister provide details of the procedures by which the Defence Establishment site at Llanbedr was offered for sale to prospective purchasers as a 'commercial' airport? (WAQ51859)

The Deputy First Minister: Property disposal decisions of this kind are normally taken by officials under delegated authority as part of the property development programme of the Economic Department.

In 2007, Stuart Hogg Property Consultants were appointed to market the property on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government. In September 2007, the property was offered on a 125 year long lease to prospective buyers on the basis that future use was consistent with established use in support of the aerospace sector in Wales. It also included caveats relating to the use of one of the buildings for future Unmanned Aerial Vehicle use. The marketing plan targeted the aerospace sector, the property sector and the general business community.

Bids for the site were invited by informal tender on 5 November 2007 and bidders were advised that as well as the level of purchase price, the bids would be evaluated against agreed selection criteria, a copy of which was sent to all bidders. Following a review of the bid proposals received, interviews were held with short listed parties to clarify proposals. This also involved meetings with the short listed parties at their existing operational premises. A scoring matrix was used to evaluate proposals against agreed criteria.

Darren Millar (Clwyd West): What feasibility studies were undertaken to establish the options for and preferred use of the Defence Establishment site at Llanbedr after it became surplus to requirements and what conclusions were reached? (WAQ51860)

The Deputy First Minister: Following the announcement of the closure of Llanbedr Airfield in July 2002, the former WDA, in partnership with Gwynedd County Council, commissioned consultants KPMG to carry out an economic impact study, including establishing what options there were to reduce economic impact of closure. Their final report was published in 2003 and its main conclusion was that the most viable and sustainable option for the Llanbedr site was a continuation of similar activity. Both military and civil uses for the airfield were thought to be potential options.

Darren Millar (Clwyd West): Will the Minister give details of any Welsh Assembly Government funding, either direct or indirect, that has been made available to the prospective purchaser of the Defence Establishment site at Llanbedr to enable it to be used for commercial aviation purposes? (WAQ51861)

The Deputy First Minister: No such funding has been offered by the Assembly Government.

Mike German (South Wales East): When did the Welsh European Funding Office and the Welsh Assembly Government ask sponsors to extend their programmes as a result of the extra £40m coming as a result of the lower value of the pound against the euro? (WAQ51869)

The Deputy First Minister: WEFO is carefully managing the closure of the 2000-2006 Structural Fund programmes and has ongoing contact with project sponsors as part of its programme management responsibilities, with a view to maximising the available resources and achieving the targets set out in the Operational Programming documents. As part of this, discussions have been taking place since the beginning of March 2008, with organisations that have the potential to utilise additional resources that have become available due to recent exchange rate fluctuations, and with Welsh Assembly Government Departments.

Questions to the Minister for Health and Social Services

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister provide details of the accumulated levels of debt in the Welsh National Health Service in each year since 1999? (WAQ51908)

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister provide details of the amount of money spent by a) local health boards, b) NHS trusts, and c) Health Commission Wales in each year since 1999 or their creation? (WAQ51909)

The Minister for Health and Social Services (Edwina Hart): This information is available in the published accounts of LHBs, Trusts, and HCW.

Questions to the Minister for Social Justice and Local Government

Mike German (South Wales East): What indicators does the Minister use to evaluate the cost and efficiency of local authorities? (WAQ51871)

The Minister for Social Justice and Local Government (Brian Gibbons): Local government services are evaluated by a number of mechanisms such as the national Performance Measurement Framework; the Wales Programme for Improvement, including preparation of joint risk assessments and publication of improvement plans; as well as individual local authority Improvement Agreements. In addition, local authorities have to report on the delivery of efficiency gains as required by 'Making the Connections'.

Jonathan Morgan (Cardiff North): What assessment has the Minister made of the effectiveness of the process by which complaints can be brought against Councillors? (WAQ51872)

Jonathan Morgan (Cardiff North): Does the Minister have any plans to change the process by which complaints can be brought against Councillors? (WAQ51873)

Brian Gibbons: Part III of the Local Government Act 2000 introduced a new ethical framework for local government in England and Wales. Under the framework, all local government members and co-opted members must give an undertaking to observe their authority's adopted code of conduct.

Any person may make an allegation to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales that a member in Wales has failed to comply with their authority's code of conduct. It is for the Ombudsman, as an independent person, to determine whether an allegation warrants investigation.

I am not aware of widely held concerns about the current process for making allegations against members.

Nick Bourne (Mid and West Wales): Will the Minister provide details of the percentage of staff who have taken time off sick in each local authority in each year since 1999? (WAQ51905)

Brian Gibbons: This information is not collected by the Assembly Government.