

Julie James AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Tai a Llywodraeth Leol
Minister for Housing and Local Government



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref JJ/00660/20

Rob Smith
Chief Executive
Society of Local Council Clerks

Rob.Smith@slcc.co.uk

5 May 2020

Dear Rob Smith,

Thank you for your letter of 22 April requesting financial support for community councils during the coronavirus pandemic.

In responding it may be helpful to explain that consequential from UK Government don't automatically transfer to the same policy area, it is a decision for Welsh Ministers to direct the funding based on Welsh needs. There is significant pressure on the Welsh Government budget and we are having to make difficult choices. We have already reviewed all our plans to free up additional resources to directly support to the covid response across public and private sector in Wales. We are pulling together all the funding from the UK Government, our own reprioritisation and any funding from EU sources to support our response.

To date the Government has made available to the 22 principal authorities across Wales, funding to deal with specific aspects of the Covid19 response. This funding is to meet the additional costs incurred for providing additional services as a result of the pandemic.

We have been very grateful for the key role our community and town councils, have played during this difficult time, making use of their local intelligence and networks and drawing on the vital work they do to inform and support their communities. Their knowledge of local vulnerabilities or at-risk groups and individuals in their area, can be crucial in directing support to where help is most needed.

You specifically raise the issue of loss of income to some councils. We do recognise there is an impact on income streams in several services. This is a challenge also being felt at authority level. Apart from funding through the council precept, I am aware that a proportion of community and town councils generate 'other income' through delivery of services or managing amenities to the public, and consequently some may be adversely affected by a temporary loss of income. It is an issue which we're alive to and we have asked One Voice Wales to work with us to understand the scale and impact of this.

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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.

All councils will be facing difficult circumstances as a consequence of the response to Covid 19, and in these unprecedented times the reality is that this burden has to be shared. I am aware that many councils hold sufficient reserves to cover at least 6 months of their 'other income' and I would expect them to draw on this in the first instance to accommodate any additional expenditure and counter loss of income.

In circumstances where the cost of specific staff is directly covered by the council's 'other income', and it is necessary and appropriate, each council affected should consider furloughing such staff and claim a Job Retention Scheme grant from HMRC.

I want to thank your members for their continued hard work during this unprecedented situation. There has been a terrific response across Wales and this is a source of hope and pride in these difficult times.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie James". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julie James AC/AM

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