

Kirsty Williams AM
Cabinet Secretary for Education
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

Please ask for: Councillor Rob Stewart
Direct Line: 01792 63 6141
E-Mail: cllr.rob.stewart@swansea.gov.uk
Our Ref: RS/KH
Your Ref:
Date: 13th December 2017

Dear Minister

Education funding, especially that for minority groups previously funded via Education Improvement Grant

I am writing further to your letter of 14th November to Debbie Wilcox, Leader of the WLGA, which was forwarded to individual Council leaders and Cabinet members on 15th November.

I am particularly concerned at your statement in the letter to the funding you present as having made available in the settlement from this year, education improvement grant, and next year it will be the turn of part of post 16 grant.

This has been disingenuously packaged as helping local government by transferring specific grants into the settlement. I am afraid that is simply not true in any normal sense of the approach to specific grant transfers. Indeed it is in stark contrast your Ministerial colleagues with responsibilities for Social Services and Environmental Services where there are clear reductions in specific grants but equally clear passported cash increases in the starting Revenue Support Grant position, before the understandably difficult overall cuts to RSG were made.

A cursory review of the published provisional settlement makes abundantly clear there are zero transfers in 2018-19 in respect of education. You have placed yourself in a tautologically impossible to defend position: you have proposed a cut a specific grant which previously, amongst others, funded gypsy traveller and minority ethnic groups. You have made no cash transfer to RSG, unlike Ministerial colleagues. You have collectively as a Minister then seen overall RSG cut but now claimed those two cuts makes an increase in funding. You tell us how to prioritise spending including demanding we spend the same amount on a function for which you have unequivocally removed the grant with no recompense in cash in the RSG.

I call upon you to immediately retract the statement in your letter requiring us in local government to spend, on a national level across local government, £10m on services for which all of the element of that previous grant has been cut by you.

You should reopen discussion with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance to show a proper transfer of specific grant into RSG, then restate the bigger real cuts to local government RSG as a result of that failure to fund the transfer.

Alternatively, and much more preferably, you should in those discussions with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance agree how you are going to genuinely transfer, at an all Wales level £10m of funding into the base RSG to ensure that the support for gypsy and traveller children and for minority ethnic groups whose first language is not English is maintained . Failure to do so will lead to an equality impact disproportionately affecting these groups being forced on to Councils to take up the financial slack to avoid the impact. That is simply not fair funding.

As Leader of Swansea Council I will continue to prioritise all I can, especially education, schools, and social services whilst at the same time seeking to reinvest and regenerate the local economy. This will result in continued difficult local choices from constrained budgets which affect us all . I can't spend money I simply have had taken away but I certainly can't as Leader of this Council be told by Ministerial letter how to spend money that has been 100% taken away in cash.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rob Stewart', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**COUNCILLOR ROB STEWART
LEADER & CABINET MEMBER FOR ECONOMY & STRATEGY**