

Budget Improvement Impact Advisory Group (BIAG) – Minutes of Meeting

Date 13 March 2023	Time 12:30 – 2:30	Location Microsoft Teams Meeting
<p><u>Attendees: 13/03/2023:</u></p> <p>In attendance for part of the meeting only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister for Finance & Local Government (MFLG) • Minister for Social Justice (MSJ) • David Hooson (DH) – Special Adviser • Bethan Phillips (BP) – Welsh Government - Cabinet Division • Andrew Jeffreys (AJ) – Welsh Government - Director Treasury (attended for GB item) <p>Attendees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Matt Wellington (MW) - Welsh Government – Chair • Lisa Daniels-Griffiths (LDG) - Welsh Government – Budget Improvement Team • Janine Downing (JD) - Welsh Government – Budget Improvement Team • Paul Dear (PD) – Welsh Government - Deputy Director, Cohesive Communities • Chris Buchan (CB) – Welsh Government - Communities • Iestyn Wyn (IW) – Welsh Government - Prosiect 2050 • Sean Oneill (SO) – Children in Wales • Ceri Cryer (CC) – Age Cymru • Natasha Davies (ND) – Wales Womens Budget Group • Dean Pymble (DP) – Show Racism the Red Card • Wayne Vincent (WV) – Equality and Human Rights Commission • Steffan Evans (SE) – Bevan Foundation • Gethin Rhys (GR) – Cytun Cymru • Annie Smith (AS) – Wales Environment Link (RSPB) • Catherine Fookes (CF) – WEN • Rhian Davies (RD) - Disability Wales <p>Apologies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheila Hendrickson-Brown – C3SC • Davinia Green – Stonewall 		
Secretariat: Michelle Harney Helen Davies	Budget & Government Business Division, Welsh Treasury Budget & Government Business Division, Welsh Treasury	

No.	Action	Who	When
1.	Share BIAG minutes with Ministerial colleagues	Budget Improvement Team (BIT)	ASAP

2.	Members to contact Budget Improvement Team if they would like to join subgroups.	BIIAG members	10/04/2023
3.	Members to feed back on workplan by 07/04/2023 if they have any issues	BIIAG members	07/04/2023
4.	Reflect workplan to include nature and climate narrative more clearly.	Budget Improvement Team (BIT)	07/04/2023
5.	AS to share materials on Economics of Biodiversity when available.	Annie Smith	As soon as it is available
6.	Arrange discussion with Wales Environment Link (WEL) to discuss in more detail.	Budget Improvement Team (BIT)	ASAP
7.	Reflect on gender budgeting point related to tax and continue conversation.	Budget Improvement Team (BIT)	By next BIIAG meeting 06/06/2023

1. Welcome and Introduction

- 1.1. Members were welcomed to the meeting of the Budget Improvement Impact Advisory Group (BIIAG).
- 1.2. Members were advised that the minutes from the last meeting had been circulated and all actions had been completed. No amendments were noted.
- 1.3. Group members were reminded to please complete the electronic equality questionnaire which was circulated to members again due to a technical issue with results. We would appreciate if everybody could complete it to help us with our own reporting and monitoring of the group's membership. Link was shared in the chat bar for members to access [Survey Preview Window \(smartsurvey.co.uk\)](https://smartsurvey.co.uk).
- 1.4. The Minister for Finance & Local Government and Minister for Social Justice were welcomed for the first 20 minutes of the meeting.

2. Ministers

- 2.1. The Minister for Finance & Local Government (MF&LG) welcomed all stakeholders and thanked members for all their hard work over the last year, particularly in relation to the improvements that were made to the strategic

integrated impact assessment (SIIA) which we published alongside the Draft Budget. She also welcomed further improvements that will be made this year.

- 2.2. MF&LG emphasised how the work the Group have been engaging in is very important not just to her, but to all Welsh Government Ministers.
- 2.3. MF&LG is really pleased to see the diverse membership of the Group bringing together people from across the voluntary and the public sectors to share their learning, their experiences and also to collaborate in such a positive way to help to make sure that we move forward on the journey together.
- 2.4. MF&LG noted that there has been a really high level of interest in the work of this Group. She is pleased to see the priorities of the work plan this year and is keen to understand members' views on how we can better integrate and communicate these areas in our budget and tax processes.
- 2.5. MF&LG welcomed the regular updates she receives from her officials and is looking forward to coming back again to hear more updates about the progress and engagement being made.
- 2.6. The Minister for Social Justice (MSJ) agreed it was good to see the progress of this Group and thanked members for all of their work.
- 2.7. MSJ noted that as well as looking forward, this work has importantly learnt from its past to shape its future. Crucially equality remains at the heart of the Group and more than ever we need to understand the interrelationship with equality and other areas of impacts such as the environment to ensure we leave no one behind.
- 2.8. MSJ expressed she is very keen to see more progress made in gender budgeting. She is really pleased to see the conversation taking place on how budget and tax processes can drive this change over the coming years.
- 2.9. Members were welcomed to provide any reflections to the Ministers:
 - Positive experience working with officials in BIAG and the SIIA subgroup.
 - It is a valuable way of working.
 - Members really welcome the process.
 - Great opportunity for members and it is a very enjoyable group to be part of.
 - Focus needs to be more than prevention - it is about the longer-term impacts. Pressure makes it hard to find the time within the process to focus on prevention.
 - Creating opportunities.
 - Officials have given a great explanation of the annual budget process.
 - Importance of investing in care and the disability task force was also raised.

AP: Share BIAG minutes with Ministerial colleagues

3. Update and future work plan

- 3.1. A link to the Ministers' written evidence to Senedd scrutiny committees on budget allocations within each MEG document which has now been published and has been circulated to the Group. Following feedback, this document now contains hyperlinks in the contents page. The Group welcomed the change and agreed it was easier to navigate.
- 3.2. SIIA Sub-group – The group were thanked for their commitment to this activity. Work is ongoing to review the SIIA sub-group's previous priorities and look at future actions. The group will be convened again in June to continue this important work.

AP: Members to contact Budget Improvement Team if they would like to join subgroups.

- 3.3. Membership – Still in the process of working through gaps in membership and will update our membership list in the terms of reference as soon as everything is confirmed. Thanked members who are supporting us in identifying appropriate representatives for these gaps.
- 3.4. BIIAG Workplan – Members received a copy of the workplan for their consideration ahead of the meeting. Group were given a brief run through of the work plan and provided with an opportunity to provide feedback and comments. Once agreed it will be published as part of the updated terms of reference document on the BIIAG webpage.

AP: Members to feedback on workplan by 07/04/2023 if they have any issues.

- 3.5. Timetable discussed for future meetings. If any members are interested in becoming involved in the subgroups, then let us know by emailing the Budget Improvement Team mailbox.

Item was opened up for discussion and the following points were raised:

- Query raised over a nature and climate focus being added to the workplan in more detail. Wales Environment Link will be publishing a report looking at nature recovery actions soon. Opportunity to provide presentation to BIIAG at a future meeting.

AP: Reflect workplan to include nature and climate narrative more clearly.

AP: AS to share materials on Economics of Biodiversity when available.

- Opportunity to discuss the cross-party group on gender budgeting with WEN.

AP: Arrange discussion with Wales Environment Link (WEL) to discuss in more detail.

- It was suggested there could be an opportunity to present headlines from the report 'Is Wales Fairer' produced by Equality and Human Rights Commission around October/November.

4. Feedback from prevention sub-group

- 4.1. The prevention sub-group met on 7th March and discussed how we could embed prevention into our budget and tax processes. A number of key themes arose from the discussion.
- Group agreed that the prevention definition agreed by a working group back in 2018 was fit for purpose and does not require adjustment – this work needs to go further than understanding the definition it must be a fundamental change of will and priorities. The challenges around costing the value of preventative spend, how do you cost what hasn't happened? How do you know that your intervention is what led to a reduction in the worsening of a situation?
 - The group explored the challenges around data, evidence and outsourcing. The group discussed how in WG we collect lots of data, but is WG collecting the right data? Are we asking the right questions?
 - Accounting and financial rules that WG are bound by which does not always allow the scope to make some financial decisions. The restrictions regarding carrying forward underspends often limit opportunities for long term planning.
 - Implementing preventative activities often requires additional funding as new preventative measures need to run alongside existing services (so existing users of a service aren't negatively impacted). In times of financial constraints how do we carry out preventative activity without additional funds?
 - The group agreed that focussing on a specific area would be beneficial in understanding what could be improved in the run up to the next spending review – there were no objections to the sub-group's suggested focus on Biodiversity. We are working with Biodiversity colleagues to come up with a proposal which we will discuss with the prevention sub-group at the next meeting.
- 4.2. It was noted that 2 members of the prevention subgroup were unable to attend the first subgroup meeting. Budget Improvement Team to arrange separate meeting shortly to discuss before the next prevention subgroup meeting is arranged.
- 4.3. A discussion took place which covered areas including:
- Less commonly spoken about how day-to-day services can be designed and delivered in a way that contribute to the prevention agenda.

- Complexity - when you're looking at those issues of preventative spend versus just delivering services.
- Biodiversity is a good area to focus on.

5. Gender Budgeting (GB) – presentation and discussion

5.1. A presentation was provided on the budget process (Link below).



2023-02-08 BIIAG
Gender Budgeting.pdf

AP: Share links to reports mentioned within presentation.

5.2. The Group acknowledged the complexity of this area. The Group were invited to provide reflections or ask questions relating to the presentation.

- Group welcomed the presentation; it was really helpful and great to hear reflections on the learning that's coming through from the pilots.
- Senior level accountability accompanied by training.
- Link between MEG level and strategic level.
- Welsh Treasury checks and balances and provide practical support.
- Welsh Treasury to consider how gender budgeting is applied to tax. The Group felt there could be a wide gap in this area and the opportunity to not only make a real difference but Wales to be a leader!

AP: Reflect on gender budgeting point related to tax and continue conversation.

- It was felt that embedding GB can be complicated.
- It was noted that there needs to be some synergy between gender budgeting and Equality Impact Assessment and the wider gender/equalities mainstreaming work.
- Still widespread misunderstand about what an Equality Impact Assessment is.
- It can only be helpful if people gain a greater understanding of what gender budgeting is and the fact it's not all about money - it is about thinking that the through policies through a gender lens.

6. AOB & Meeting Review & Close

6.1. Next meeting is scheduled for 06 June 1-3pm. Agenda to follow closer to the meeting.

- 6.2. A reminder that this is a conversation that does not have to stop when the meeting ends. These meetings are intended to bring us together to be able to debate things in greater detail. Please feel free to contact us at any time using the budgetimprovementteam@gov.wales mailbox.