

Finance Secretary announces a £160m boost for public services

Local authorities will receive an additional £20m in 2018-19 and £40m in 2019-20 to support local services. Further details will be published in the final local government settlement, which will be published tomorrow (Wednesday December 20).

And an extra £50m a year will be allocated to the Welsh NHS in 2018-19 and 2019-20 to support the ongoing transformation of services, primary care and the Integrated Care Fund.

Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford said:

“The final Budget marks a significant milestone in Wales’ devolution journey as, for the first time, Wales becomes responsible for raising a proportion of its own revenue from 2 new devolved taxes to spend on public services.

“I am pleased to be able to provide additional funding for public services – areas we know need extra support. This funding will help to ease some of the pressures on frontline public services, which have been struggling to cope as a result of the successive cuts to our budget, which we have experienced since 2010-11 thanks to the UK government’s programme of austerity.”

The final Budget includes revenue funding allocations made as a result of funding consequential received from the UK Budget. Due to the short timeframe between the UK government’s Autumn Budget and the publication of the Welsh Government’s final Budget, the Finance Secretary will announce early decisions about additional capital funding allocations in the spring.

He has previously announced a new higher starting threshold of £180,000 for the main land transaction tax residential rate, which will mean tens of thousands of homebuyers, including first-time buyers, will be exempt from paying the property tax when buying a home from April 1, 2018.

Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services, Alun Davies, said,

“I am pleased we have been able to provide this additional boost to support key public services in Wales. We have listened to the concerns raised by many of our councils, and we have acted to address some of the pressures that exist in important areas such as youth homelessness.”

Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Services, Vaughan Gething said,

“The additional investment in the health and social services budget now gives me a real opportunity to provide targeted funding to drive forward change in health services through integration, a greater focus on primary care, and strategic change in hospital-based services.”

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Don't forget your pharmacist is on hand to help over the Christmas period

The Welsh Government's Choose Pharmacy service is seeing pharmacists take responsibility for managing a range of minor ailments. People will be able to see their pharmacist for free treatment instead of making an appointment to see their GP.

In an emergency when people run out of their prescribed medicines, pharmacies can provide a supply of prescribed medicines without the need to visit their GP. They can also help with reviewing medicines when people are discharged from hospital.

Andrew Evans said:

“It is important that people remember there will effectively be a ‘five day weekend’ from 23 – 27 December this year with in-hours GP services closed for the vast majority of that period. People with repeat prescriptions should check they aren't going to run out over the Christmas period and speak to their pharmacist if they need a further supply.

“Highly skilled pharmacists are on hand over the Christmas period

to help with a range of ailments from coughs and colds, to ear aches, conjunctivitis, head lice and even headaches and digestive problems brought about by over indulging during the festive period.

“By visiting the pharmacist in the first instance people can help free up GPs so they can care for patients with more complex needs. Pharmacists will be dispensing advice during this time, helping people to stay in their community, and limiting pressure on our ambulance services and emergency services.”

[Pig keepers warned not to feed kitchen scraps to pigs due to African Swine Fever risk](#)

The warning comes after the risk of African swine fever entering the UK was raised over the summer following spread of the infection in Eastern and Central Europe.

There has never been a case of African swine fever in the UK and it does not affect humans, but it is potentially fatal to pigs. If the disease were to reach the UK it could have a devastating effect on our export market and would also mean the humane culling of pigs on infected premises to prevent further spread.

Keepers are being reminded that it is illegal to feed catering waste of any description or domestic food waste to farm animals in the UK, including pigs kept as pets, as some of the outbreaks of African swine fever in Europe have been attributed to wild boar or domestic pigs consuming contaminated pork or pork products. This includes food from vegetarian kitchens, as there is still a risk of cross contamination in products of animal origin such as milk.

Strict hygiene measures are essential in preventing disease – people should not take meat or meat products into areas where pigs are kept and should only eat food in designated areas such as staff rooms or the farm kitchen. Pig keepers, farm staff and anyone in contact with pigs should wash their hands before and after eating or preparing food.

UK Chief Veterinary Officer Nigel Gibbens said:

“The introduction of African swine fever would have an enormous impact on our pig industry. No matter how many pigs you keep, you need to be aware of the potential consequences of feeding waste food to your animals. Not only is it illegal, but you run the risk

of spreading disease which could be fatal to your livestock.

“You can purchase a range of pig foods from your local agricultural merchant that can be safely fed to your pigs and which is the most reliable way of giving them a balanced diet. Good biosecurity is also essential for minimising disease risk, such as providing dedicated clothing and boots for workers and preventing vehicles which may be contaminated from entering pig premises.”

Wales’ Chief Veterinary Officer Christianne Glossop said:

“African Swine Fever is a highly contagious disease. Pig keepers can help prevent the spread of infection by practising strict biosecurity on their premises. An important part of this is ensuring that your pigs do not have access to potentially infectious meat or meat products, including kitchen waste.”

The UK suffered the consequences of pigs being fed illegal waste food in the foot and mouth disease outbreak in 2001. That outbreak is thought to have originated from pigs being fed catering waste containing the virus, which came from outside the UK. The outbreak resulted in the destruction of more than 10 million cattle and sheep and cost the UK many millions of pounds.

Chief Executive of the National Pig Association, Dr Zoe Davies, said:

“The health of our pigs is fundamentally important to our sector. A notifiable disease outbreak would not only needlessly result in the loss of many pigs and annihilate our burgeoning export market, but would significantly impact on countless families, their staff, local businesses and tourism for months. Feeding illegal food waste, however harmless it might seem at the time, is just not worth the risk.”

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