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RHONDDA CYNON TAF
TREFTADAETH GADARN | DYFODOL SICR

CABINET STATEMENT

TITLE: 2008/09 SETTLEMENT

DATE: 21st November 2007

BY: Councillor Russell Roberts, Leader of the Council

I would like to start by expressing my disappointment at the 2.4% increase that this Authority is likely to receive as part of the 'One Wales' Assembly budget. I can confirm to Council that I have and will continue to press the Welsh Assembly Government to find additional resources for the final settlement in January 2008.

This derisory increase does little to support the hard work we have undertaken to improve our services since 2004, and shows little understanding of both the pressure for increases in services we provide and the breadth of coverage of our key services, be it Social Services, Education, Waste Management, Roads, Transport, the list goes on.

It is also very worrying that the provisional settlement has little transparency as to what is or is not included in it, which is a major reversal from the last two settlements in particular.

This is all the more disappointing when you consider our pro-active role in delivering many of the Assembly's innovative policies such as waste management and recycling. As is the fact that local government again seems to be treated as the poor relation when compared to other public services in Wales.

While we face a challenging scenario, we have set in place robust medium term financial planning measures over the last three years and reformed our services to eliminate waste and improve performance.

We have been aware for sometime that the increase in the settlement level would drop dramatically following the Comprehensive Spending Review, but thanks to our strong financial management and efficiency agenda, even this poor settlement will still allow us to continue to improve frontline services, though not as quickly as we would like.

We will also continue to keep our promise of maintaining fair, consistent and prudent Council tax levels, as we have over the last three years.

As a Cabinet, we will now commence developing our budget strategy for consultation with the wider public, and other key stakeholders, before presenting the budget to Council and setting out our spending plans and a fair and reasonable Council tax in March.