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Tel./Ffon: 01633 644020
Date/Dyddiad: 9th January 2019

Cllr Debbie Wilcox
Leader
Newport City Council
Civic Centre
Newport
NP20 4PR

Dear Debbie,

I write on behalf of every elected member of Monmouthshire County Council to express our continued frustration and disappointment at the decision of Newport City Council to withdraw from the Sensory and Communication Support Service (SenCom).

At our full council meeting on 20th December 2018 Members unanimously supported the following motion proposed by the Leader of the Opposition, Cllr. Dimitri Batrouni:

'This Council strongly disagrees with Newport City Council's decision to withdraw from the regional SenCom service and deeply regrets the level of uncertainty it has created around this essential support network. That Monmouthshire County Council remains firmly committed to this service and will work with all partners to reduce any uncertainty or fears held by staff and parents.'

A member of the public, whose newly born daughter is profoundly deaf and a SenCom user, spoke to Council and set the context for the debate. The first hand contribution from a service user made it very clear as to the exceptionally high standard of service that all SenCom users access. In particular, she stressed the importance of the service in supporting families in the very early years. There were impassioned contributions from members of all political groups. You can view the debate online here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dMIzKSt1pzg>

During the course of the debate, there was widespread concern about the impact of Newport's decision to withdraw from the shared service. In particular, Members were concerned as to the impact of the withdrawal on the resilience of service available within the remaining four authorities. Their concerns extended to ensuring that there was a consistency of service for families and that the critical long term relationships formed between teachers, support staff and users can be retained and protected.

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Members respected the ability of any local authority to make a decision about its own service delivery but the decision to withdraw from a shared service of such longevity as SenCom as well as the relative short notice of the decision caused concern across the Chamber.

Members were particularly keen to understand the supporting processes that had led Newport to make this decision as part of Newport's budget development process. Members requested that Newport share its Equality Impact Assessment and Future Generations Wellbeing Assessment so they can understand what actions Newport was proposing to mitigate the risks its decision had created. This letter is a formal request for those documents and is a formal response to Newport City Council's budget consultation exercise.

I look forward to hearing from you and hope you can supply the above documents for me to share with colleagues in Monmouthshire.

*Yours sincerely,
Richard.*

**County Councillor Richard John
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People
Monmouthshire County Council**

cc. Cllr Gail Giles, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills