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QUESTIONS AT ANY TIME TO CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDERS

Question From:	County Councillor Iain McIntosh
Subject:	Business Rates
Question To:	County Councillor James Gibson-Watt Leader and County Councillor David Thomas, Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Transformation

Question:

I'd like to thank the Leader and Cabinet member for Finance and Corporate Transformation for their response to my previous question about this authority's responsibility over Business Rates (<https://powys.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MId=7314&x=1>) and note the refusal to offer an apology to Powys businesses and residents. I would therefore like to ask the following question please.

As mentioned previously, Welsh Liberal Democrats wrote to Powys residents claiming:

'These elections are vital as they will determine who is responsible for vital local services including education, roads and infrastructure, refuse collection, business rates and council tax among many other items.'

By classing business rates as a 'vital local service' in the same sentence as education, roads and infrastructure, refuse collection and council tax, which are services this authority do control, allocate funds to, and determine charges made to the public, an insinuation is being made that this authority does have the same control over business rates. Your previous response does now confirm that this authority does NOT directly set policy around Business Rates, but business owners reading the letter distributed around Powys prior to the Council elections would have to be forgiven for believing that the opposite was true, and that by voting for a Liberal Democrat candidate, they may be voting for someone who would be able to have the same control over Business Rates as the other 'vital services'. This is clearly not true. I'd therefore like to respectfully request the reconsideration of offering an apology to Powys residents for distributing a misleading letter during the election campaign please?

As Welsh businesses are starting to pay business rates again after the Covid pandemic, they are all having to pay more compared to their counterparts in England. In England, businesses get 100% rates relief for the first £12,000 worth of their premises rateable value, whereas Welsh businesses only get 100% rates relief for the first £6,000 worth of their premises rateable value. This means than business owners with rateable premises between £6,000 and £12,000 in Wales have to pay

business rates, but equal size businesses across the border in England do not. This is clearly unfair and prejudicial against Welsh business owners. Can the Finance and Corporate Transformation portfolio holder, the Economic Development portfolio holder and the Leader therefore write to Welsh Government on behalf of Powys business owners, asking for the same business rates package as English businesses please?