



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru **The National Assembly for Wales**

Y Pwyllgor Cyllid **The Finance Committee**

Dydd Mercher, 25 Medi 2013
Wednesday, 25 September 2013

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Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

The proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee. In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol **Committee members in attendance**

Peter Black

Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru
Welsh Liberal Democrats

Christine Chapman	Llafur Labour
Jocelyn Davies	Plaid Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) The Party of Wales (Committee Chair)
Paul Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Mike Hedges	Llafur Labour
Ann Jones	Llafur Labour
Julie Morgan	Llafur Labour

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Claire Griffiths	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Martin Jennings	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Helen Jones	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Gareth Price	Clerc Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:30.
The meeting began at 09:30.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Jocelyn Davies:** Welcome to the first meeting in this term of the Finance Committee. I do not have any introductions, apologies or substitutes, but I am given to understand that we will soon be getting another member on this committee. I would just remind everybody to ensure that their mobile phones are off. Of course, we do not expect a fire drill, so if you hear the alarm, please follow the directions of the ushers.

[2] Before we turn to the next item on our agenda, which is an update on our inquiry into higher education funding, I would just apologise to Members as I have not been able to give you the enterprise zone report that we were going to consider this morning. That explains why the agenda this morning is as light as it is, because it is not quite ready yet. However, we will be having it in the next few weeks.

09:31

Ymchwiliad i Gyllido Addysg Uwch—Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Gynnydd
Inquiry into Higher Education Funding—Update on Progress to Date

[3] **Jocelyn Davies:** For this item, we have Helen Jones with us today. You have had a paper on the progress so far with regard to our consultation and so on, and the way that we are going to organise the inquiry. Do Members have any comments or questions? I did notice that the future work in relation to this has a webchat, which we, as members of this committee, will be engaged in. I would just assure Members that you will have advice on how to do this before you are expected—

[4] **Julie Morgan:** What is a webchat?

[5] **Jocelyn Davies:** Well, we will have an explanation of that. We also have, at section F on the witness sessions, suggestions for you to include in your diaries as to what we intend to do and the dates that we have pencilled in for those sessions. Of course, we shall be writing to the Minister, whom we hope to see, although probably not before December.

[6] Helen, do you want to explain to us about the webchat?

[7] **Ms Jones:** Sure. The outreach team has gone out. There are two versions of the questionnaire at the moment: one version is for students in years 1 and 2 at university, and the other is for students in years 12 and 13 at school. The team has gone out and done a lot of promotional work around that, and the response rates have been really good. The team has actually hit the target for the questionnaire for students in years 12 and 13—they already have 450 responses. With the universities, they have 200 responses already. So, they should be up to target. When we have the results back from those questionnaires, I will be able to analyse them and see the key themes that are coming out.

[8] The idea behind the webchat was to follow up the results from the questionnaires, to pick out in more detail the reasons students go to university and the impact that the tuition fee grant is making. Talking to the outreach team, I think that the webchat will be based in Cardiff bay, Swansea or wherever is convenient. Two groups will be run: one with Welsh students at English higher education institutes, and one with Welsh students at Welsh HEIs. So, there will be two distinct groups, and it will be facilitated by the Research Service and the outreach team, with Assembly Members asking questions over the internet. So, it is not a face-to-face event; it is just like an online forum.

[9] **Ann Jones:** I was interested to hear ‘Cardiff bay’ and ‘Swansea’. We are an all-Wales organisation, so north Wales and west Wales should be featured as well, or I will declare this inquiry null and void, because we have only taken—

[10] **Ms Jones:** Sorry, those were just examples.

[11] **Ann Jones:** Okay, but when we use examples, we should use examples across Wales and not just in Cardiff bay. We are, you know—

[12] **Jocelyn Davies:** We shall assume that because it is a webchat, we will be able to facilitate a wide range and a wide geographic area. However, I think that Assembly Members will perhaps need a little practice before we go live with that. Mike, did you have a comment to make?

[13] **Mike Hedges:** I have two comments. I assume that we will do Bangor and Aberystwyth as well. The other question is: will we be looking at all the different types of higher education institutes? I know that it is easy to do Cardiff, Swansea, Aberystwyth and Bangor universities, but a large number of different organisations provide a substantial amount of higher education, including Bridgend College, for example, which does a lot of higher education work, as does Pembrokeshire College. Can we get a cross-section of people in higher education? I know that the easiest would be the four old universities, and that is Wales done, but there is an awful lot more than that.

[14] **Jocelyn Davies:** Yes, of course. I think that that is a very good point.

[15] **Mike Hedges:** I am trying to be geographical, and not parochial.

[16] **Mr Price:** The plan for the webchats was to have one that was Wales-based so that

we could have a cross-section of institutions from within Wales, and one with institutions across the border so that we get that feel for Welsh students who have gone across the border.

[17] **Jocelyn Davies:** We are still in public session, so one at a time. Mike, back to you.

[18] **Mike Hedges:** What I am trying to get at is that we need a whole range of people who are going to different higher education institutions, and not just people doing first degrees in the traditional universities. We need people who are doing higher national diplomas in some of the non-traditional universities to get a feel for the full range of higher education.

[19] **Jocelyn Davies:** Yes, I think that we want a range of people who are going, and not—

[20] **Mike Hedges:** Not 18-year-olds going to Cardiff and Swansea universities. That would be unrepresentative.

[21] **Jocelyn Davies:** I think that you have made your point there.

[22] **Mike Hedges:** And continually.

[23] **Jocelyn Davies:** Yes. You have reiterated it. Does anybody else want to come in?

[24] **Julie Morgan:** Regarding this idea of a webchat, is this something that has been done a lot? Has the Research Service experience of doing this? It is a new one to me.

[25] **Ms Jones:** I think that it is the first time that the outreach team has tried this method of consultation, so it is going to explore different webchat software in different ways that it has to use. There is testing and piloting work being undertaken to make sure that there are no issues with firewalls for students who are signing on. It is quite an innovative engagement method that we have not tried before.

[26] **Jocelyn Davies:** I think that it will be the first time for Assembly Members—well, for most of us, but there we are. We have an experienced person who can lead us on this then, Christine. We will look forward to that. I know that you use Skype on a regular basis. It will be the first time that we use it for taking evidence. We have had video-conferencing in the past, but it will be the first time that we use this in order to take evidence from young people. Let us hope that it will be successful and that we will be able to get good evidence to aid us in our inquiry. Does anyone else have any other questions in relation to this paper?

[27] **Peter Black:** In terms of the evidence sessions with the institutions themselves, we have just seen the statistics come out for university acceptances in England. Are we going to have similar figures in terms of Welsh students in Welsh universities, and for each Welsh university, before we deal with the question?

[28] **Ms Jones:** Sorry, the statistics for—

[29] **Peter Black:** For acceptances into higher education.

[30] **Jocelyn Davies:** We will certainly take that into consideration.

[31] **Peter Black:** I was just wondering what the figures were for Welsh students, because we need to have that information to be able to do a proper analysis in terms of how it impacts on finances.

[32] **Jocelyn Davies:** We will see what data are available. Are there any other comments on this paper? I see that there are not. Are Members content that we move forward with the thrust of this? I see that you are.

09:38

**Papurau i'w Nodi
Papers to Note**

[33] **Jocelyn Davies:** Just before I move the motion under Standing Order 17.42, there is a paper to note. We have the minutes of our last meeting, and we have the Welsh Government's outturn report. We also have the letter from the Public Accounts Committee giving us ideas about how we might undertake the budget scrutiny sessions. Can we note those papers? I see that Members are content.

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r
Cyfarfod
Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the
Meeting**

[34] **Jocelyn Davies:** I move that

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 17.42(vi).

[35] I see that all Members are content.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 09:38.
The public part of the meeting ended at 09:38.*