



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

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau **The Petitions Committee**

Dydd Mawrth, 28 Ebrill 2015
Tuesday, 28 April 2015

Cynnwys
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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

Russell George	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
William Powell	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Liberal Democrats (Committee Chair)
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

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

Steve George	Clerc Clerk
Helen Roberts	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Kath Thomas	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:13.
The meeting began at 09:13.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **William Powell:** Good morning, all, and welcome to this first Petitions Committee of the new term. Normal housekeeping arrangements apply. We've received apologies this morning from Bethan Jenkins and there isn't a substitute. Otherwise, we are a full complement of Members and I look to proceed in the normal fashion.

Deisebau Newydd
New Petitions

[2] **William Powell:** Agenda item 2, new petitions. We have at agenda item 2.1, P-04-613 'AMs Should Reject Recommendation for a 18% payrise'. This petition was submitted by Mr David Swain and has the support of 12 signatures. As is my normal practice, I'm just going to read, for the record, on this first occasion, the text of the petition. It reads as follows:

[3] 'With those working on the frontline in the public sector having pay cuts in real terms, I urge AM's to reject recommendations to increase their pay by 18%. By accepting this or any pay rise whilst the vast majority of public sector workers are faced with pay cuts and redundancies AM's would be communicating to those that they represent a message of "We're alright Jack, keep your hands off my stack" (Money, Pink Floyd).'

[4] —for those who didn't pick up the reference—

[5] 'with their "stack" being paid for by public sector cuts, pay freezes and redundancies. I would propose that AM's pay rise, freeze and cuts mirror those working in education, NHS, Police and social services.'

09:15

[6] Thus ends the text of the petition. A first consideration letter has been sent to the Presiding Officer, seeking her views on the petition. At the Presiding Officer's suggestion, a letter was subsequently sent to the chair of the independent remuneration panel, Sandy Blair, seeking his views on the petition. We have a substantive response from Mr Blair in our pack today.

[7] The petitioner has been asked for comments on Mr Blair's response, but at this time, we haven't received such a response. Now, I think it would be prudent for me to declare an interest in this matter—a natural interest. I sense that maybe that's the case elsewhere. Russell George.

[8] **Russell George:** Yes. Thank you, Chair. I don't think that there's a requirement, but I think I will just declare an interest. Of course, this petition and a pay rise are not for current sitting AMs; this is just for AMs in the future. I'm not sure whether I'll be an AM in the future, but just for the record, I would declare an interest as I may, one day, be an AM in the future. But, looking at this petition, Chair, if we've already asked the petitioner for comments on Mr Blair's letter, I don't think that we can discuss it further until the petitioner has responded, so I just think we wait until the response comes in.

[9] **William Powell:** Absolutely. Thank you very much. Joyce.

[10] **Joyce Watson:** I will echo what has already been said. I declare a potential interest, because that's where we're at. But I also point out that nothing has been decided and, for clarity, that it is not being decided here, in any case. These are proposals by a remuneration panel. So, as there is no decision that has come forward as yet, I agree that the petitioner has had comments written and a response by the chair—Mr Blair—of that remuneration panel and is yet to respond to it, so I think that's where we're at now. We'll wait for that response.

[11] **William Powell:** Absolutely. I think it's only right to give our petitioner, Mr Swain, adequate time to consider that response from Sandy Blair and to get back in touch with us, and all having declared that potential interest as well, for the record. Excellent.

[12] Moving to agenda item 2.2, P-04-623, 'Improve the Provision of Disabled-friendly Housing in Wales'. It's good, also, to welcome the lead petitioners in the public gallery this morning. The petition was submitted by Rhian Stangroom-Teel on behalf of Leonard Cheshire Disability and collected 788 signatures. The text of that petition, which we received some weeks ago now, reads as follows,

[13] 'We the undersigned call upon the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to take action to ensure that all new homes in Wales are built to fully meet all the Welsh Housing Quality Standards ensuring they are as comprehensive as Lifetime Home Standards, with at least 10 per cent of new homes built to full wheelchair accessibility standards.'

[14] The first consideration letter was despatched to the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, seeking her views on the petition, but because the substantive issues here relate to planning matters, it is, in fact, the Minister for Natural Resources, Carl Sargeant who has responded, as you've seen in the pack. That is available in the public pack today.

[15] The petitioner has also submitted some substantial further comments and they're also available in the pack. So, at this stage, I think it may well be sensible, I would suggest, that we feed those comments back to the Minister, particularly the issues within the final paragraph of the letter that seem to be needing to be addressed in more detail. Colleagues, are there any other thoughts that you'd have at this stage as to how we best take this forward? Joyce.

[16] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you, Chair. I think this is something that we come up against time and time again: people having to move because the house doesn't fit their needs later in life. I feel that there is a need to recognise, early on, that houses should be able to accommodate your lifestyle, whatever that lifestyle might be in the future. I think it is an eminently sensible request in that regard. And it is about building regulations more than planning. I think that it would be right in this case to go back to the Minister for planning, but maybe housing too.

[17] **William Powell:** There's definitely a crossover there; absolutely.

[18] **Joyce Watson:** I think we need to do that because it is the case that, very often, people are trapped in their homes or out of their homes, and if we could do something now, I think now is the time to do it.

[19] **William Powell:** On the occasion of the presentation, we had the opportunity to engage with several of the petitioners to hear their particular stories, and very, very disturbing they were too. Because building regulations have only relatively recently been devolved to us, there's an opportunity maybe to make a real change. Russell George.

[20] **Russell George:** Cheers, Chair. I was just thinking that the last paragraph, as you mentioned, kind of opens up a question there for the petitioners to potentially respond to, because the Minister was saying,

[21] 'I would need to be convinced as to how the quota system for wheelchair dwellings the petitioner calls for would match provision with demand.'

[22] I think it's almost as if the Minister's asking a question of the petitioner, so I think we should perhaps prompt the petitioner to respond to that specific point.

[23] **William Powell:** Absolutely. I think that would help us to navigate things to the next stage and to consider how best, or whether or not it might involve an evidence session, and it is something that we can consider at an early future meeting, I think.

[24] **Joyce Watson:** Chair, could I also add—. I'm sorry to come back again, but there is another further devolved area here and that's local government. Have we asked local government and their planning authorities whether they are looking at lifetime home standards in their local development plans? Because they'll all be making new development plans now, as we speak; they'll be working towards them.

[25] **William Powell:** That's right. And also, with the emergence of the Planning (Wales) Bill and the regulation that will sit beneath that when it's enacted, there may be an opportunity for us to get this considered in that place also. Okay, so I think we've got a couple of clear actions there that we need to undertake, and I thank the petitioners once again for joining us this morning. Good.

09:22

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[26] **William Powell:** Moving now to agenda item 3, updates to previous petitions. I start with agenda item 3.1, which is P-04-598, 'Disability Awareness Training'. This petition was submitted by Visualise Training and Consultancy and was first considered by us on 23

September 2014 and it has the support of 62 signatures. Now, it was last considered by us back in November and we agreed to seek further comments from the petitioner on correspondence that we had received at that time from the Minister. Despite a number of reminders, we've actually had no response. Russell George.

[27] **Russell George:** Can I suggest, Chair, that we do chase the petitioner one more time, and if we don't hear anything after six weeks, we close the petition?

[28] **Joyce Watson:** I agree.

[29] **William Powell:** I think that would be a decisive and sensible move. Excellent. Okay, let's do that.

[30] Agenda item 3.2 is P-04-511, 'Support for children and young people participation standards'. This petition was submitted by Powys Youth Forum and was first considered by us on 11 November 2013. It has the support of 39 signatures. We last considered this back in our pre-Christmas meeting on 9 December 2014, and we considered correspondence on the petition from the Minister and agreed to seek further comments. We've now received comments from Jack Gillum, and the response is within the public papers. I think, probably, it would be sensible for us to write to the Minister for Communities and Tackling Poverty, and indeed, Children in Wales, so that the comments made can be taken on board.

[31] **Joyce Watson:** Indeed.

[32] **William Powell:** Is that a sensible way forward?

[33] **Joyce Watson:** Yes.

[34] **Russell George:** Agreed.

[35] **William Powell:** Good. Agenda item 3.3. Now we come on to a cluster of petitions all relating to fire service matters. Agenda item 3.3 is P-04-535, 'Save our Fire Stations'. This petition was submitted by Jonathan Edwards, at that time the MP for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr, and currently a candidate in that same seat. It was first considered on 18 February 2014. It had the support of 698 signatures, again calling on the Welsh Government to ensure that fire services throughout the country are protected from the severity of budget cuts. This petition was last considered in October 2014, and we agreed to seek further comments from the petitioner, but they have, up to this point, not been received.

[36] **Russell George:** Chair, can I suggest the same again?

[37] **William Powell:** The same action, I think, would be sensible. Clearly the—

[38] **Russell George:** If we haven't received a response after six weeks, we'll close it.

[39] **William Powell:** Absolutely. The person concerned is clearly a little bit busy at the moment, but that matter will be resolved fairly shortly. So, we chase and apply the same rule. I think that's sensible, and, Joyce, also consistent, as you rightly insist.

[40] Agenda item 3.4 is P-04-563, 'Provision of Services at Pontypridd Fire Station'. Now, this petition was submitted by Ben Croxall, and was first considered on 17 June 2014. It had the support of 9,000 signatures, and we recall the presentations, which were backed up by the presence of an engine at least in one case. Now, this petition was last considered by us in September, when the committee agreed to seek comments from the lead petitioner, and, again, we've had no feedback from the petitioner. I suggest—maybe even before Russell does

himself—that we apply the same tactic here, of giving them one further chance if they wish to pursue matters.

[41] And, finally, agenda item 3.5—finally for the fire service petitions—P-04-596, ‘Save Porth Fire Station: Seconds Cost Lives!’ Now, this petition was submitted by Gerwyn James, first considered on 23 September 2014, and has had the support of five electronic signatures, and in excess of 9,000, again, paper signatures. We last considered this in November of 2014, and we agreed to seek comments from the petitioner on the correspondence received from the First Minister. Again, I suggest we—

[42] **Russell George:** Let’s be consistent.

[43] **William Powell:** Absolutely. One further chase on this, and, if we hear nothing then within the specified period, then, again, we move to close the petition. Good. Okay.

[44] Now, agenda item 3.6 is P-04-592, ‘Democratically Binding Plebiscites at Local Government Level’. Now, this petition was submitted by Plebeian Laboratories and was first considered on 23 September 2014, and has the support of 38 signatures. We can just refresh our memories of the particular proposals that they have. The petition was last considered by us as a committee in November 2014, when the committee considered the correspondence on the petition, and wrote to the petitioner, seeking further views. And, again, we’ve not received any since that time, so, once again, I think we give the petitioner—the Plebeian Laboratories—one final chance to engage with us again, and give them that six-week window in which to do so.

[45] **Joyce Watson:** Agreed.

[46] **Russell George:** Agreed.

[47] **William Powell:** Okay. Good.

[48] Agenda item 3.7 is P-04-525, ‘Funding for CREST Awards in Wales’. Now, this petition was submitted by See Science—British Science Association and was first considered on 21 January 2014, with the support of 210 signatures. Now, we last considered this fairly recently, back in March, and we considered correspondence from the petitioner, and agreed to write to the Minister, seeking an update. We’ve got a response now from Mrs Edwina Hart, the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport, and we’ve got a response—and a positive one, I’m pleased to say—from the petitioners. So, in the light of the fact that this has come to a positive resolution for the current year, and with meaningful talks for the future time, I think we should write to the petitioners, expressing our good wishes for the coming period, and also regard this as something of a positive. Colleagues, how do you wish to proceed?

[49] **Joyce Watson:** Chair, I absolutely agree that we close it, because it’s met its stated aims, and that is that the Welsh Assembly continues to fund the activity of CREST, which recognises the value of STEM and inspirational enrichment. It’s a really good news story. The Welsh Assembly is funding this award, system, and particularly is at the forefront of this in the UK. So, I think this is a very good news story, and it’s nice to be able to close a petition—

09:30

[50] **William Powell:** Yes; in a positive way, really.

[51] **Joyce Watson:** In a very positive way.

[52] **William Powell:** Yes, absolutely. Agreed. Good. That is indeed good news. Moving

now to agenda item 3.8, and petition P-04-585, 'Changes to A494/A470 Junction Dolgellau'. This petition was submitted by Kathryn White and was first considered by us on 23 September 2014, having gathered 1,288 electronic signatures and a further 1,581 paper signatures, and so totalling 2,869. This was a matter of very significant concern to a large number of people, as is made evident by the sheer number of signatures gained for the petition. We last considered this in our November meeting and we considered correspondence on the petition and agreed to seek further comments from the petitioner on correspondence that had been received from the Minister despite reminders that a response has not been received from the petitioner. However, we have received a recent update from Mrs Edwina Hart on this and I can only conclude that we've got some significant progress here as well. Joyce, you've indicated, and then Russell.

[53] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you. Well, it is good news and the good news here is that the Minister, in her letter, has identified this as needing attention, has put money aside towards it so that work can start in early 2016 with completion in early spring 2017, but also made available funding for this year so that any improvements to the temporary traffic signal installation can be carried out, and recognising, as I think has been mentioned, for major events like the Royal Welsh Show, you might have to put in some manual control.

[54] **William Powell:** Yes, absolutely.

[55] **Joyce Watson:** So, again, I think it's a positive. There's action that's come from a petition. We need to chase the petitioner and get a response from them.

[56] **William Powell:** Absolutely. Russell George.

[57] **Russell George:** I was just going to say, Chair, it's a fairly positive response, I think. I think what I would be inclined to do is to write to the petitioner and say, 'We're minded to close the petition, given the response, unless of course we hear from you otherwise in the next six weeks. If we don't, we'll assume that you're satisfied with the outcome'.

[58] **William Powell:** Absolutely.

[59] **Joyce Watson:** I agree with that

[60] **William Powell:** Maybe it would be worth us engaging with our communications team as well to see whether there's something that we can do to flag up this set of developments and the positive outcome maybe in the local arena, well past any current election issues. I think it would just be useful to flag up that there is going to be some benefit and, hopefully, public safety will be the gain in that respect.

[61] **Joyce Watson:** Okay.

[62] **William Powell:** Good. Moving now to agenda item 3.9, and petition P-04-594, 'Cilmeri Community Council Appeal for The Prince Llywelyn Monument'. This petition was submitted by Cilmeri Community Council and was first considered on 23 September 2014, with the support of 205 signatures. I should declare that I know some of the petitioners who are involved in this, including fellow Powys county councillor, David Price, but also some other members there, and that at different points I did give some procedural advice and, indeed, over recent years have attended the commemoration in December. So, I've got some links with this particular petition, but nothing untoward, I hope. The petition was last considered in November 2014, and we as a committee considered correspondence on the petition and agreed to seek further comments from the petitioners on the correspondence that had been received from Mrs Edwina Hart. There have been some staff changes, I think, within the council in terms of their clerking arrangements but we've now received a response

from the petitioners, and that's available in our public papers. It's evident that they seem to be quite positive in their views as to the progress, but also they've got some other actions that they'd like to see being delivered upon. I'm very keen to hear your views on this matter. Joyce.

[63] **Joyce Watson:** Write to the Minister, Chair. They've asked for specifics, i.e. signage. Ask the Minister to get his response and then see where we are after that.

[64] **William Powell:** Yes, happy to do that.

[65] **Russell George:** Agreed.

[66] **William Powell:** Russell, you're content?

[67] **Russell George:** Yes.

[68] **William Powell:** Good. So, that's what we shall do.

[69] Agenda item 3.10 is petition P-04-542, 'Practical Opportunities for Young People'. This petition was submitted by George Colville and was first considered on 29 April 2014. It is supported by 32 signatures. This petition was last considered in July last year, and, as a committee, we considered correspondence on the petition and agreed to ask the petitioner whether he was satisfied with the response that we had received at that time from the Deputy Minister. Again, this is one of those where we've not had any feedback or response from the petitioner. So, I suggest that, in line with our earlier comments, we give George Colville one final opportunity to respond and, if we hear nothing within the six-week period, again, we close this petition.

[70] **Joyce Watson:** Agreed.

[71] **Russell George:** Agreed.

[72] **William Powell:** Good. Okay. Agenda item 3.11 is P-04-551, 'Basic First Aid To Be Taught In Schools'. This petition was submitted by Tim Clarke and first considered on 13 May 2014, having gained 11 signatures. The petition was last considered by us back in our September 2014 meeting and the committee agreed at that time, following correspondence from the Minister, to seek comments from the lead petitioner—from Mr Tim Clarke. Again, we have received no response. So, I think a final chase and the six-week window again is what we need to apply.

[73] **Joyce Watson:** Agreed.

[74] **Russell George:** Yes. I think it's a shame, Chair, because this is a good petition, I think. I would hope that the petitioner would respond, but—

[75] **William Powell:** Well, absolutely. It's rather curious that we've got this whole cluster that we've identified.

[76] **Russell George:** At this rate, we're going to have far fewer petitions if people don't reply.

[77] **William Powell:** Absolutely. That will be the consequence of these actions today, but let's not prejudge that. Absolutely.

[78] Agenda item 3.12 is P-04-569, 'Stop National Tests for Primary School Children'.

The petition was submitted by Alexander Roberts. It was first considered on 15 July 2014, having collected 123 signatures. The petition was last considered by us in September 2014, and we considered correspondence from the Minister on the petition and agreed to seek comments from the lead petitioner. And, curiously, again, we've had no response.

[79] **Russell George:** I suggest, Chair, that we close the petition in six weeks if we don't have a reply.

[80] **Joyce Watson:** Same action.

[81] **William Powell:** Agreed. I think we've got unanimity on this one again.

[82] Agenda item 3.13 is P-04-576, 'Allow Children in Wales to Have a Family Holiday During Term Time'. Now, this petition was submitted by Bethany Walpole and was first considered on 21 January 2014. It has the support of 1,008 signatures. Now, this is a petition where there has been significant exchange, unlike a number of the others. In fact, it accounts for a significant slice of our information in our papers today, including a very useful private paper, which is from the research service. I express gratitude on behalf of the committee for that particular piece of research, which pulls together the responses that we've had from local authorities the length and breadth of Wales. It gives us the opportunity to assess things in terms of the way in which the rules and guidelines are being implemented, and I find that very useful for our consideration today. Colleagues, how would you like to proceed? Clearly, it's a matter of real interest and concern. I'm sure we all get this coming into our surgeries and into the mailbox. Russell George.

[83] **Russell George:** I've taken an interest in this, Chair, and I've raised it in the Chamber a number of times as well. I look at Estyn's reply to us, and what they say is that, currently, headteachers have discretionary powers to authorise holidays of up to 10 days in term time. However, many local authorities and regional consortia have instructed schools to record any holiday as unauthorised absence. So, to me, there is a real clear contradiction. So, the Welsh Government are saying, in my opinion correctly, 'School headteachers, you have the discretion to decide whether school absence should be allowed or not', but at the same time, headteachers have been instructed not to allow them.

[84] **William Powell:** Absolutely.

[85] **Russell George:** I'd love to get to the bottom of this. So, as far as I'm concerned, and I hope that the rest of the committee agrees, I would like to perhaps take this a bit further and ask the Minister and other people, particularly relevant parties and the petitioner, to come in and give evidence to us.

[86] **William Powell:** I think that this has got the potential of a useful evidence session some way down the track, because we need to drill down to actually what is going on because I sense that there is a tension between the different correspondence that we've received.

[87] **Russell George:** Of course there is, and I think particularly as well because the Chair, Ann Jones, has written back to us from the relevant committee, saying that there's no time in their programme to look at this. So, all the more reason for us to.

[88] **William Powell:** So, we've got a green light there from Ann Jones to potentially undertake a focused piece of work on this. Joyce.

[89] **Joyce Watson:** I met with the petitioners in the first instance on this. They were confused; we are confused and people who are applying it are confused. So, I think we need to understand where that confusion has come from and maybe how the advice that is being

given is evenly applied, because that's the real issue here, and how that is impacting on businesses and also families. So, I would be very happy to see this going to an evidence session.

[90] **William Powell:** Okay. I think that's most certainly the right way forward, because we've got evidence of really very varying practice across Wales as well, with some interpreting things in a radically different way from other areas and that can't make sense. Okay, so, I think, again, we've got unanimity there. But it's good to see the level of exchange that we've had on this issue and we're getting somewhere, but there are further steps that need to be taken. Good.

[91] Moving now to agenda item 3.14, we've now got two petitions that we have previously considered in a group fashion. P-04-479, 'Tywyn Memorial Hospital X-ray and Minor Injuries Unit Petition': this petition was submitted by Tywyn and district health care campaign group. It was first considered on 15 May 2013 and has the support of 4,486 signatures. We also have agenda item 3.15: P-04-466, 'Medical Emergency—Preventing the introduction of a poorer Health Service for North Wales'. This petition was submitted by Mike Parry and was first considered on 19 March 2013, having received 306 signatures. Colleagues will recall that, amongst other things, these petitions were the subject of an evidence session, which we took some significant time ago, back in November 2013, on our visit to north Wales, and we were grateful at that time for a really useful evidence session. We most recently considered this in February of this year and we considered correspondence on the petition. We agreed to ask the Minister to keep the committee informed of developments on the new health facilities for Blaenau Ffestiniog and also of progress by health boards in responding to the mid-Wales healthcare study that was concluded by Professor Marcus Longley.

[92] The chief executive of Betsi Cadwaladr University Local Health Board, Professor Trevor Purt, has now written to the committee with a fairly full update on the current position locally in terms of the progress on service development following the publication of the mid-Wales healthcare study to which I referred. The petitioners have been asked for their comments on Professor Purt's letter, but, at this time, none have been received. I think, in the context of the wider consideration, it would make a lot of sense for us to chase that, because we have got a substantive letter from Trevor Purt and I think that should be of relevance to the consideration of the petition. Joyce.

[93] **Joyce Watson:** Again, there is mixed news here. There's certainly good news in terms of the x-ray in Tywyn Memorial Hospital and that has progressed and that is really good news. There is also some good news within the letter that we've had from Trevor Purt in this regard. But we don't know whether it's satisfactory or what the petitioner's looking for. So, until we hear back from them to that end, I propose that we wait for any further action in this petition.

09:45

[94] **William Powell:** That's right. I think a chase is required, and I'll sign off a letter, in short order, on that issue. Okay. Agreed.

[95] Agenda item 3.16, P-04-534, 'A Campaign to Secure CARDIGAN HOSPITAL'. Now, this petition was submitted by Cardigan Hospital and Community League of Friends, and was first considered on 4 February 2014, and it was most recently considered in May, when we as a committee considered correspondence on the petition, and agreed to seek the petitioners' views—now, this was May 2014, almost a year ago now. Despite a number of reminders, we've actually not had a response, which is a bit curious, given that we're dealing with quite a well-established, and busy organisation, in terms of the league of friends. I think

it's certainly sensible for us to try to chase one more time, but, nevertheless, with consistency in mind—

[96] **Russell George:** We have to close it in six weeks if we don't have an answer.

[97] **William Powell:** Indeed. And I hope we maybe will hear from the league of friends, because it's obviously a matter that's of significant local concern, because I recall distinctly the presentation of that in one of our first meetings in the winter term last year. Okay. Good.

[98] Moving to agenda item 3.17, P-04-552, 'Child Protection', now, this petition was submitted by Montessori Centre Wales, and was first considered on 13 May 2014, and has the support of 40 signatures. It was last considered in October of last year, when we as a committee considered correspondence from the Deputy Minister for Social Services, and, indeed, the Welsh Local Government Association, on this petition. The committee agreed to seek further comments from the petitioners in the light of that. We've now got a response from the petitioner, and that is here in the public papers. I'd very much welcome a steer from colleagues as to how you'd like to proceed with this one. Joyce.

[99] **Joyce Watson:** We could seek the views of the Minister on the development that the petitioner has referred to, and I think, if everyone—. There is movement, and there is, I hope, reason to be positive, and, if that's the case, we can then close.

[100] **Russell George:** I mean, we could, potentially, close the petition now, because the petitioner has not raised any new points.

[101] **Joyce Watson:** We could. But if we're going to be consistent—

[102] **William Powell:** I think, in the context, it would make sense to get back to the Minister with the latest round of comments. But, again, I sense we're not far from closure, because it seems to be where we're moving.

[103] **Joyce Watson:** I agree.

[104] **William Powell:** Agreed.

[105] Agenda item 3.18, P-04-514, 'A Welsh clean coal and/or renewable energy power station instead of the proposed Wylfa B nuclear plant at Anglesey'. Now, this petition was submitted by Sovereign Wales, and was first considered on 26 November 2013, and received 104 signatures at that time. I'm conscious that Joyce and I had the opportunity to engage with some of these matters in the recent Environment and Sustainability Committee's visit to Germany, looking at the whole issue around Energiewende, and their withdrawal from nuclear, so it's something that's of relevance to our recent experience, anyway.

[106] We last considered this petition in July of 2014, and considered correspondence on the petition, and we agreed to seek a response, once again, from Hitachi, on their work in developing clean coal technology. We haven't received any response from the Hitachi corporation, despite a number of chases. I think probably the best action for us, at this point, is to write to the Minister—to Edwina Hart—on these matters, because I think, in the intervening time since we received this petition, there's been a change in ministerial responsibilities, and I don't think we've engaged with her on this particular matter. Would colleagues be happy for me to write, seeking an update?

[107] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, definitely.

[108] **William Powell:** Okay. I'd be happy to do that.

[109] Agenda item 3.19, P-04-547, ‘Ban Polystyrene(EPS) Fast Food and Drinks Packaging’: this petition was submitted by Friends of Barry Beaches and was first considered on 29 April 2014 and has the support of 295 signatures. We also had a very illuminating evidence session relatively recently with the lead petitioner and the Marine Conservation Society, which I’m sure we recall. As I said, we last considered this back in March, when that occurred, and we discussed also the previous evidence session and agreed to seek to take oral evidence from the Minister for Natural Resources and to request a research brief on the potential costs for business if there were to be a switch from using polystyrene. Also, I’ve written to Oxford County Council seeking their views on the petition and we have drawn the petition to the attention of the Environment and Sustainability Committee.

[110] We’ve got a substantive response from the Minister for Natural Resources, but, at this stage, he has declined the invitation to give oral evidence and colleagues will have had the opportunity to study that letter in detail. Given the interest that this provoked and the evidence session that we’ve still got very much in mind, I wonder which way colleagues would like to go on this. There are some outstanding responses that we’re awaiting from some of the other letters I’ve sent.

[111] **Joyce Watson:** I think if we wait for those first—. We’ve had the Minister’s response and it’s pretty clear, actually. So, let’s await the other responses.

[112] **William Powell:** Okay and we’ll return to that in the light of hopefully receiving—

[113] **Russell George:** I think, Chair, as well, once we have had those responses, we get back to the Minister and rather than invite him, we just ask him to come before the Petitions Committee.

[114] **William Powell:** Yes. Which, ultimately, I suppose, is our right.

[115] **Russell George:** We’ll approach it a different way next time.

[116] **William Powell:** Let’s consider that in the light of the fullness of the responses that, hopefully, we’ll receive.

[117] **Joyce Watson:** Okay.

[118] **William Powell:** Good. Moving now to agenda item 3.20, P-04-550, ‘Planning Powers’, now, this petition was submitted by St Mellons Action Group and was first considered on 13 May 2014 and we’ve got 41 signatures. The petition was last considered by us in September 2014 when we considered correspondence on the petition and agreed to seek comments from the lead petitioner. We’ve now received those comments and they’re in our public papers. Clearly, they’re very keen to come and present their issues to us and I’m sure we’ll recall, at the time when they presented the petition initially, they were quite energised about this particular local issue, which has provoked this move to petition us. What do colleagues feel is the best way forward on this?

[119] **Russell George:** I think I would prefer to seek the Minister’s view on the petitioner’s comments at this stage before we go any further.

[120] **Joyce Watson:** I agree.

[121] **William Powell:** Absolutely, it would be useful to then get a rounder view, because it is evidently relating to a very specific local concern and I think it would be useful to get the breadth of the picture from the Minister.

[122] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, and there's a planning Bill going through that might change things.

[123] **William Powell:** Absolutely and there's still life in our consideration of that Bill. Excellent.

09:53

**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**

Cynnig:

Motion:

bod y pwyllgor yn penderfynu gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog 17.42(ix).

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

*Cynigiwyd y cynnig.
Motion moved.*

[124] **William Powell:** Moving now to agenda item 4, I move the motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the meeting for the following item of business, to consider some draft reports at item 5. I see no objection.

[125] **Joyce Watson:** No objection.

[126] **William Powell:** So, I ask that the public gallery be closed. Thank you very much.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 09:54.
The public part of the meeting ended at 09:54.*