



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

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[The Petitions Committee](#)

08/03/2016

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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 Bywgraffiad Biography	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Bethan Jenkins Bywgraffiad Biography	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
William Powell Bywgraffiad Biography	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Liberal Democrats (Committee Chair)
Joyce Watson Bywgraffiad Biography	Llafur Labour

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

Gill Eveleigh	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Steve George	Clerc Clerk
Kath Thomas	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Katie Wyatt	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:05.
The meeting began at 09:05.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **William Powell:** Bore da, bawb. Good morning, all, and welcome to this final Petitions Committee of the fourth Assembly. We have no apologies this morning, and when Russell George arrives, which he's indicated he will be doing shortly, we'll have a full complement of Members. Normal housekeeping arrangements apply, so if there is a fire alarm it will be for real.

Deisebau Newydd New Petitions

[2] **William Powell:** Okay, so in that case we move now to agenda item 2, new petitions, and we begin at 2.1 with P-04-681, 'Allow Public Recording of Local Government Meetings In Wales'. This petition was submitted by Michael John Powell, having collected 185 signatures.

[3] 'We the undersigned ask that the Welsh Government gives the people and electors of Wales the same ability to record their Local Government meetings as their English counterparts have.'

[4] I should declare that I know Councillor Michael Powell of Pontypridd, and he is a member of my party although we've not discussed these matters in any shape or form. A first-consideration letter was sent to the Minister for Public Services on 19 January. We've got a response from the Minister, and his response is available to us in the public papers. And Councillor Powell had not offered any views on the Minister's response when the meeting papers were being finalised. So, I'd welcome colleagues' thoughts on this. Clearly, the Minister has indicated that, broadly, the aspirations of the petitioner are already very much a possibility and very much permitted, but I'd like to hear what colleagues have to say with regard to the petition. Joyce.

[5] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you, Chair. It is the case, obviously, that the Minister is talking about a draft local government Bill that seeks to ensure that this is what happens, but it hasn't happened yet. So, because it hasn't happened yet and it's not guaranteed, I wouldn't want to close the petition at this stage. So, what I propose is that we await the petitioner's response to that letter.

[6] **Bethan Jenkins:** Roeddwn i jest **Bethan Jenkins:** I just wanted to say eisiau dweud fy mod i'n eistedd ar y that I sit on the local government pwyllgor llywodraeth leol, lle rydym committee, where we have assessed wedi asesu y Bil drafft, ac hefyd bod the draft Bill, and also there's a yna adolygiad gan ein pwyllgor mas review from our committee out there nawr ynglŷn â hyn. Ac fel mae Joyce now regarding this. And as Joyce has wedi dweud, Bil drafft yw e ac felly said, it is a draft Bill and therefore bydd y Gweinidog newydd yn gallu the new Minister can change their newid ei farn. Felly, byddwn i eisiau views. So, I would want to keep this cadw hyn ar agor i'r pwyllgor newydd open for the new committee to look i edrych arno, i fod yn deg. at it, to be fair.

[7] **William Powell:** Okay. I think we're all of one mind there, so despite the provisions of the draft Bill, it's very much all in the detail and it will be a matter for the forthcoming Assembly to determine. So, in that context, we'll certainly keep the petition open, and we await comments from Councillor Michael Powell with regard to what the Minister's had to say.

[8] **Bethan Jenkins:** Y broses **Bethan Jenkins:** The process then is wedyn fydd y pwyllgor newydd yn that the new committee will be edrych i mewn i—. Jest ar gyfer yr looking at—. If we decide to keep one holl gyfarfod yma, os ydym yn open, will there be an obligation on penderfynu cadw un ar agor, wedyn a that committee to look at it? fydd goblygiad ar y pwyllgor newydd i edrych arnyn nhw?

[9] **Mr George:** Bydd.

Mr George: Yes, there will.

[10] **William Powell:** Yes. Okay; very good. Moving now to agenda item 2.2, P-04-682, 'Routine Screening for Type 1 Diabetes in Children and Young People'. This petition was submitted just last week by Anthony Cook, having collected 2,570 signatures. An associated petition submitted to the UK Government on www.change.org had collected 3,670. It was our privilege to meet Beth Baldwin and wider members of the family with regard to this petition, and it was a very poignant occasion, as all of us would testify. The text reads as follows:

[11] 'In January of this year we tragically lost our beloved 13-year-old grandson, Peter Baldwin, to Type 1 diabetes that had been undetected until it was too late to save him. Peter was a well-loved and highly respected pupil at Whitchurch High School in Cardiff where he is greatly missed but for his family the hurt is unimaginable. Our daughter Beth was recently presented with an award from The Pride of Britain for her fundraising efforts and for raising awareness of this terrible illness but with your help, and that of your friends and family we can really make a difference. Please spare a couple of minutes to sign our petition calling on the Welsh Government to introduce a screening programme and to raise the profile of the need to check for Type 1 Diabetes in anyone presented to a health care professional with unexplained flu-like symptoms or general feeling of being unwell. The test involved is merely a finger prick or urine sample and takes less time than you have spent reading this paragraph; it also only costs pennies. It is our intention to make this test as routine within GP surgeries and clinics as temperature and

blood pressure checks presently are. Your signature on this petition really could help save lives and prevent further terrible loss within families.’

[12] It’s our privilege today to have Beth and other supporters in the public gallery, and we welcome you most warmly.

[13] A first-consideration letter was sent to the Minister for Health and Social Services on 19 January. We have a response from the Minister, and his response is available to us in our public papers. As I commented, the petitioner handed over the petition to us last week on St David’s Day, and since we’ve had further written comments in response to the Minister’s letter with a number of actions that are possible. Clearly, many of these will go forward beyond the scope and the life of this particular committee of the fourth Assembly. Colleagues, I look forward to contributions; firstly, Joyce, you’ve indicated.

[14] **Joyce Watson:** First of all, it takes a lot—doesn’t it—to bring a petition like this in the circumstances in which it’s being presented, so I’d like to pay tribute to the petitioners in that regard. Secondly, moving on, we certainly can’t in this Assembly do any more, but I think that what I would like to see done is that there will be an incoming health committee or a committee dealing with health—

[15] **William Powell:** And the Chair of the current committee was present at the presentation—David Rees.

[16] **Joyce Watson:** Indeed. So, I think it might serve us well to put it forward as a suggestion—because we can’t make them do anything—that they look at this particular item. The Minister’s letter is quite clear and it’s very welcome, and he has said, you know, that he will update us moving forward.

[17] I would also like to put forward—but again, you know, we can’t guarantee it will happen—that if the health committee, however configured—the next health committee, that is—can’t find time and space to do a piece of work on this, that we make it a suggestion for our forward work programme for the next petitions committee, which there will be, maybe to have a look at doing some work on this. Those are my thoughts; I don’t know what—

[18] **William Powell:** I’d strongly endorse both of those. I realise that we can’t bind the hands of either the successor committee to us or the health

committee, but I would certainly hope that the successor to the health committee will have an appetite to take this important work forward. And I shall write in that vein, if colleagues are agreeable. Russell George.

[19] **Russell George:** Chair, I agree entirely with Joyce's comments; the only other thing I would add is that we had a debate last week in the Chamber on Wednesday, and this petition was mentioned by all of us, I think, so it's worth—

[20] **William Powell:** It was indeed, and there's been acknowledgement of that also.

[21] **Russell George:** —just putting that on the record, because anyone interested might want to refer back to that debate as well.

[22] **William Powell:** Yes, exactly. Bethan.

[23] **Bethan Jenkins:** I just wanted to—. I mean, I agree with the points we've made, but I wonder if there's work we can do in the interim or not, because with other petitions, such as the muscular dystrophy one, we've asked health boards exactly what they're doing. And I know that the Minister has said that he's going to look into it, but from what the petitioners have said back, they've looked at the diabetes delivery plan and they've looked at the health boards' delivery plans, but there isn't clear information within those plans about type 1 diabetes and how, potentially, a testing process would come about from those plans.

09:15

[24] So, I just wanted to see if we could at least pull together a research paper, so then the new committee would be up and ready to—

[25] **William Powell:** It would be one more important step in taking the issue forward.

[26] **Bethan Jenkins:** And the point I wanted to ask was, in the last paragraph of the letter from the Minister, it says that:

[27] 'Prompt diagnosis once an individual shows signs of type 1 diabetes is a more effective approach.'

[28] I would just like to ask him why he's come to that conclusion, because we don't have the information to hand. If that is the case, then we need to see the evidence to show why they've taken that stance, because this is fundamental for the petition. Obviously, as with the cervical screening petition—

[29] **William Powerll:** Yes, exactly.

[30] **Bethan Jenkins:** —that we had, saying, as this letter says, it could be more harmful—. So we need to understand why he's saying that that is more effective than screening all children if they show any symptoms that may lead type 1 diabetes. So, I think again it's about pulling everything together, because obviously the petitioners want one national plan, but the reality is that health boards have their own—

[31] **William Powell:** The delivery mechanism of the health boards, absolutely. I'd be very happy to write back to the Minister picking up those points that you've made, and also drawing on what Beth Baldwin and her colleagues have had to say.

[32] **Bethan Jenkins:** One final point, though. Remember, we had a petition on the babies—the premature babies. Could we not write back to the Minister saying, 'Look, you've been open before to meet with, or your officials. Could you not meet with the petitioners to see whether there would be ideas that they could bring to the table?', because I don't think that what is done enough is actually talking to the patients and the families.

[33] **William Powell:** And that's been very powerful in the Emma Jones case, and I think it could well be again. So, I'm happy to pick up that suite of actions if colleagues are agreeable. I think that we're unanimous on that. So, that's agreed, and I'd like to thank the relevant petitioners once again for taking the time to be with us this morning. Good.

[34] Agenda item 2.3, P-04-683, 'Trees in Towns': this petition was submitted by Coed Cadw Woodland Trust, having collected 2,258 signatures, and the text reads as follows:

[35] 'I support the aspiration that every city, town and village in Wales should benefit from at least 20% tree canopy cover, matching the leafy suburbs of the best places to live.'

[36] 'I call on the Welsh Government to support this by establishing a challenge fund for tree planting to improve the environment where people live.

[37] 'This should particularly support the planting of native trees, that can provide a habitat and nectar source for pollinators, and also fruit trees, that will provide a sustainable source of food.'

[38] Now, a first-consideration letter was sent to the Minister for Natural Resources on 26 January and we have a response from the Minister, and that response is available in our public papers. At this time we have not received any further views from the petitioner, but I'm sure that—. I think this matter's now been adopted by Rory Francis of Coed Cadw, as his colleague's gone on to maternity leave, so I suggest that we await the comments of the petitioner and potentially ask the incoming committee to consider this further when the time is appropriate. Are colleagues happy with that approach? Good. Okay.

[39] There is, of course, the reference in the final paragraph of the Minister's letter, where he suggests that there may be local authorities in Wales who, if contacted, would be prepared to develop the whole issue around the benefits of urban and community tree planting and put them forward in the form of funding applications. So, that's another avenue open, I think, to the petitioners.

[40] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, Chair. Also, we've got new planning Bills going forward at this time. We've got the future generations Bill going forward, so now is a really good time to bring this sort of issue, which I passionately support, to the attention of those authorities while they're putting all those plans together, rather than trying to do something retrospective. So, in terms of timing, it couldn't actually be better timing.

[41] **William Powell:** It's extremely timely.

[42] **Joyce Watson:** So, if you could write in that vein, drawing attention to the local authorities, future generations Bill and the fact that there's a new planning Bill and see what comes back.

[43] **William Powell:** I'd be very happy to do that, and I'm conscious that this also comes at a time when there are some pretty high-profile cases with regard to radical tree surgery and tree felling of mature trees in some towns

and cities. Particularly, the Sheffield case comes to mind, which has hit the headlines at a national level, and we see that tree cover in our towns is under threat. So, therefore, the fresh planting agenda is actually even more relevant, I think. Good.

[44] Moving now to agenda item 2.4, P-04-684, 'We Demand Better more Effective Welsh HMO Planning Laws and a New Use Classes Order': this petition was submitted by Nortridge Perrott, having collected 11 signatures, and the text of Mr Perrott's petition reads as follows:

[45] 'Bring forward a new use classes order—A C5 ORDER—to specifically capture HMO's—Houses in Multiple Occupation in Wales who meet the definition of a HMO specified in Part 7 Housing Act 2004 in conjunction with Schedule 14 Housing Act 2004.

[46] 'We also call for a density threshold to be enacted by means of allowing Planning Authorities to remove permitted development rights in Areas of Wales operating an Additional Licensing scheme—or on a City Wide basis whichever is most appropriate such that a "material change of use" between Use Classes in Wales—would require a Planning consent for Change of Use.

[47] 'We believe that Welsh Government should actively incentivise HMO landlords who are considering "flipping" their property under both Housing/Planning Act HMO provisions along the lines of a Welsh Houses to Homes scheme such that HMO landlords be allowed to bid for SME grant help to revert the HMO property back to sole domestic use.'

[48] As colleagues can see, this is a highly specific and very focused petition. We first wrote to the Minister for Natural Resources as the Minister with overarching responsibility for planning on 3 February. We have a response from Carl Sargeant, and his response is available in today's public papers. The petitioner's submitted further comments also in response to what the Minister had to say. I'd very much welcome colleagues' views on this matter, particularly now that we've got the benefit of the latest thinking of Nortridge Perrott in response to Carl Sargeant's earlier comments. Colleagues, any particular angle that you would take with regard to this issue? The Minister's referred to the highly specialised nature of the asks that are contained within the petition. Russell George.

[49] **Russell George:** The petitioner has responded to the Minister's letter,

so I think we should forward that to the Minister. I wouldn't like to recommend too much to the next committee because I'd rather they make their own decisions. So, I think let's just do that and then the response will come forward for the next committee.

[50] **William Powell:** Yes, and I'm sure the petitioner would fully expect there to be a pause during the recess and associated activities, and then the constitution of the future committee. So I'm sure that won't be a surprise, but, in the meantime, we'll provide some correspondence for the Minister to consider, including the latest comments from the petitioner. Are colleagues happy with that approach? Good. And that concludes the new petitions before this final committee meeting this morning.

09:24

Y Wybodaeth Ddiweddaraf am Ddeisebau Blaenorol Updates to Previous Petitions

[51] **William Powell:** We therefore move to agenda item 3: updates to petitions previously received. We start with agenda item 3.1, P-04-660, 'Additional Pressures on Funding for Education Provision Faced by Sparsely Populated Areas'. This petition was submitted by Save Powys Schools and was considered for the first time on 8 December 2015 and has the support of 1,049 signatures. Colleagues will recall that this was received in the wider context of quite a substantial demonstration expressing the strength of feeling on these issues back before Christmas.

[52] We, as a committee, wrote to the Minister for Education and Skills a first-consideration letter on 8 December to seek his views on the additional information provided by the petitioners to ask what research had been done into the effect of pupils receiving their primary education outside of Wales and their secondary education in Wales, and whether education consortia hold any information on the number of pupils who are thus affected. We've got a response from the Minister and his response is in the public papers today. We've also got comments from the petitioners to the Minister's letter and this is also contained in the public papers. I think I should probably declare that I'm a registered supporter via Facebook of the Save Powys Schools campaign and I'm actively engaged in one of their sub-campaigns at the moment, so it would be inappropriate not to make that declaration. I'd very much appreciate colleagues' views on the way forward. Bethan.

[53] **Bethan Jenkins:** Nid yw'n fy ardal i, ond y sylw cyntaf sydd gen i, achos fe wnes i ei godi yn y cyfarfod diwethaf, yw'r ffaith, pan wnes i gwrdd â'r deisebwr, bod yna gonsŷrn bod pobl yn mynd allan o Gymru i gael addysg yn hytrach nag astudio yn y fan hyn, oherwydd y pwysau o ran ysgolion yn cau.

[54] Rwyf i jest bach yn *shocked* nad yw'r Llywodraeth yn cadw data ynglŷn â'r ffaith bod yna symud rhwng y ffiniau. Maen nhw'n cydnabod ei fod yn digwydd, ond sut maen nhw'n gwybod ei fod yn digwydd os nad ydyn nhw'n cadw data am y peth? Rwy'n credu y dylem fynd yn ôl at y Llywodraeth i ddweud, 'Os oes yna adolygiad newydd Donaldson i greu system addysg newydd, fe ddylech chi wybod ble mae pobl yng Nghymru'n cael eu haddysg, ac fe ddylech chi gadw'r data hynny. Pam nad ydych chi'n cadw'r data hynny?' Achos mae'n dyngedfennol i sut mae pobl yn yr ardal honno'n mynd i dderbyn eu haddysg yn y dyfodol, os oes yna bwysau o ran ysgolion bach yn cau. Yn bersonol, rwy'n meddwl bod hwnnw'n un o'r cwestiynau mwyaf pwysig yn hyn i gyd.

[55] So, na fyddwn i eisiau ei gau e. Mae yna gwestiynau eraill yn y llythyr i fynd yn ôl at y Gweinidog gan y deisebwyr, ac wedyn gawn weld beth sy'n dod allan o hynny gyda'r pwyllgor newydd, heb ofyn yn blwmp ac yn blaen iddyn nhw wneud

Bethan Jenkins: It's not in my area, but my first comment, because I raised it in the last meeting, is the fact that, when I met the petitioner, there was a concern that people were going out of Wales to receive their education rather than studying here, because of the pressure in terms of schools closing.

I'm just a little bit shocked that the Government doesn't keep data on the fact that there is movement between borders. They acknowledge that it's happening, but how do they know that if they're not keeping data about this? I think we should go back to the Government and say, 'If there's a new Donaldson review to create a new education system, you should know where people in Wales are receiving their education, and you should keep that data. Why aren't you keeping that data?' Because it's crucial to how people in those areas are going to receive their education in the future, if there is pressure in terms of small schools closing. Personally, I think that is one of the most important questions in all of this.

So, I wouldn't want to close this petition. There are other questions in the letter to take back to the Minister from the petitioners, and then we can see what comes out of that with the new committee, without asking plainly for them to do something

rhywbeth penodol, eto.

specific, again.

[56] **William Powell:** I agree strongly with what you've just said in terms of the need for monitoring and tracking of this, particularly when you're dealing with areas that are in any way—in any event, rather—affected by relative depopulation, and, therefore, if you've got significant movements across the border, there's always the potential for that to lead to a pattern of moving further into further education and potential skills and brain drain associated. So, I think it's really important that we know where pupils end up for their studies. I'm sure that makes good sense. Joyce.

[57] **Joyce Watson:** I think that now is not the time to close the petition for different reasons, but I do have to say that, principally and almost solely, the configuration of education provision in Powys is down to Powys council and outside the remit of this Assembly. I think we need to have clarity on that in those terms, so that people understand it, because they don't always understand that it's the local authority that makes the decisions on education provision. So, it's not on those grounds that I want to keep the petition open, but it's on the grounds of having that information about cross-border travel that I would agree to extending this a little further.

[58] But, I think, in all things, we need to be absolutely clear where the duty lies, where the responsibility lies, and where the decisions will be taken. Of course, decisions can be called in and in the final case, of course, it would be the Minister who will decide. However, it is a sparse area. The question of funding for sparsity in education has been answered by the Minister quite clearly.

09:30

[59] I cover Mid and West Wales, as you do, William, and this gets raised time and time again in whatever it is that you're trying to deliver, so it's not necessarily unique to Powys is what I'm saying.

[60] **William Powell:** No, absolutely.

[61] **Joyce Watson:** So, all of that said, I will support keeping it open, simply and purely to get beneath the cross-border issue and the educational issues that might come from that

[62] **Bethan Jenkins:** Rwy'n credu **Bethan Jenkins:** I think perhaps it is

efallai hefyd ei bod hi'n bwysig inni also important that we discuss this in drafod hyn yng nghyd-destun y Bil the context of the local government llywodraeth leol achos bydd y Bill, because the discussions in trafodaethau o ran ariannu relation to funding local authorities awdurdodau lleol yn dod yn rhan o will become part of it. So, maybe this hynny hefyd. Felly, efallai y dylai'r petition should be given to the new ddeiseb yma gael ei rhoi i'r pwyllgor committee that will be discussing newydd a fydd yn trafod y Bil hwnnw that Bill so that they can be aware of er mwyn iddyn nhw fod yn some of the concerns in relation to ymwybodol o rhai o'r *concerns* the capacity that Powys has to afford ynglŷn â gallu Powys i'w fforddio fel this in their budget. rhan o'r gyllideb.

[63] **William Powell:** I think that makes a lot of sense, and, also, this needs to be viewed in the context of the memorandum of understanding between England and Wales on cross-border issues, which I think is a long-standing feature of the way in which this Assembly and the administration across Offa's Dyke have continued in policy making. Russell George.

[64] **Russell George:** Thank you, Chair. I should put on record that I'm also a member of Powys County Council. What I would say is, Chair, that I think it's a worthy petition brought forward to us because there is an issue with delivering education in rural communities, and that is what this petition is highlighting, and there is a greater cost to that. I think that needs to be reflected. But I would say I agree with the comments that Joyce and Bethan have made as well.

[65] **William Powell:** Excellent. Well, I'll be very happy to write in those terms on behalf of the committee, and we'll see what the successor committee has to do with this matter in the fifth Assembly.

[66] Agenda item 3.2 is P-04-637, 'To Protect the Future of Youth Music in Wales'. Now, this petition was submitted by the Friends of Bridgend Youth Music and was first considered on 16 June 2015, having collected 1,436 signatures. We last considered this petition back on 8 December of last year and agreed to write again to the Minister for Education and Skills to ask if he has any further observations on the latest submission from the petitioners, and that was particularly for his views on the task and finish group's perspective in relation to music hubs as a potential model, and also to write to the WJEC to seek further information on its plans relating to resources for the national youth orchestra. Now, we do have a response from the Minister,

and that's in the public papers. Disappointingly, at this time, we haven't heard from the WJEC, so I think we probably need to chase that, given the fact that they will have an important contribution to make. I'm conscious, maybe, that one or more colleagues will have a declaration to make on this matter, but I'll just open it up to the floor.

[67] **Bethan Jenkins:** Obviously, I've been involved in, well, this and the Swansea music service debacle of late, whereby Swansea are potentially planning to remove the funding for music services with regard to peripatetic tutoring because of the fact that they maintain that it's not affordable, and that there was some issue with the fact that Neath Port Talbot council weren't going to part-fund it. But, anyway, that's beside the point. But it reflects the fact that it's not only in Bridgend that this is happening at the moment.

[68] My concern is that the Minister says here, at the end of the letter, that both he and the culture, sport and tourism Minister have endorsed the recommendations of the review of the task and finish group. But we're not seeing what is happening from that, because, at the moment, we've got Swansea and we've got Bridgend now both in the same situations, where music funding is being pulled, regardless of the fact that this task and finish group has reported. So, we need to understand what is coming from that group now. How will the recommendations be put forward? Again, we would have to write to all the respective local authorities, because they are the ones that are making the decisions, to see how they are going to be responding to that task and finish group, because the Minister is saying he endorses it, but obviously he's not going to be doing anything about it. Because the rest—no offence to the Minister—of the letter isn't anything to do with the actual delivery of music services, it's about creative learning within the classroom. These petitions are about how music is delivered by—

[69] **William Powell:** Absolutely. Discretely within the—

[70] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes, as a separate entity within the school curriculum. Many areas have either privatised it, or they've got social enterprises delivering it, and children are having to fork out much more money now. So, it is getting to a crunch point now, because the less that is done on the national recommendations, the more that local authorities are going to—

[71] **William Powell:** You move away from a critical mass, really, don't you?

[72] **Bethan Jenkins:** Yes; there's not going to be a service to salvage. In Rhondda Cynon Taf, for example, where my sister—I declare an interest—is accessing music services, the numbers have just depleted, the staff have mostly left, so they don't have that skill and expertise. So, this really should be treated more urgently than it is at the moment. So, I wouldn't want to see it close, but also I'm aware, as the petitioners have said, it's been open for a year now, and so we need to really take—. It's hard for us to take decisive action, I appreciate, but I would say that we contact all local authorities to see exactly what their reactions are going to be to the task and finish group, to try and pin them down, as we did at Russell's suggestion on the school meals situation, so that we can get a holistic view of what they are planning to take forward. I think the creative learning plan is a red herring, really, in all of this. In fact, as the petitioners say, some of that money could have been utilised in another way to keep these services running, had they wished to do so. Perhaps we could ask that back to the Minister: 'Why did you not use these pots of funding to keep these music services free of charge for young people?'

[73] **William Powell:** Yes. Well, I'd be happy to build in that question in response to the Minister, but if we're going to write to the 22 local education authorities—

[74] **Bethan Jenkins:** We haven't got the time to deal with any of this.

[75] **William Powell:** Well, there's no constraint on the time; I'll commit to work arising out of this particular session.

[76] **Mr George:** Just to be clear, we'd be asking them about their individual decisions as local authorities, about their funding decisions. Those are operational matters for—

[77] **William Powell:** The current budget round, I suppose.

[78] **Bethan Jenkins:** In relation, though, to the recommendations of the task and finish group, it's not for the Minister to implement it. He endorses it, but then we need to understand where that's going to go.

[79] **Mr George:** I was just going to suggest perhaps it'll certainly be easier if we were to write to the Welsh Local Government Association on this occasion so that we've got that overview of—

[80] **Bethan Jenkins:** Okay. We can try that, then.

[81] **William Powell:** We can write to the WLGA, and possibly also the consortium, if they have a role in this matter. I don't know. Because that's one removed, then, from the operational local authority decision.

[82] **Bethan Jenkins:** We could try. I don't know if they have any input into it.

[83] **Russell George:** Let's write to the WLGA.

[84] **William Powell:** In the WLGA, Mr Llewelyn, I think, oversees that department. So, I'd be happy to write on behalf of the committee. Joyce, did you indicate?

[85] **Joyce Watson:** I did. It's just that we ought to be careful we don't overstep our remit here, and our remit is not to ask about and question what local government have decided to spend their budgets on. That's why local government exists. That was my concern.

[86] **William Powell:** Understood.

[87] **Joyce Watson:** Writing to the WLGA on this particular petition is fine. I don't agree with Bethan's previous statement about the wider look at the arts beyond music and what the Minister's done, because I think he's given that by way of explanation as to why we are where we are. So, I wanted to equally put that on the record. But that isn't to say that, in terms of this petition in front of us, I don't support writing to the WLGA and seeing what responses we get back, but also to let people know, if they aren't already aware, that this is our final go at this and also to be very clear here in letting people know how far we can go and when, actually, we've done all we can.

[88] **William Powell:** Okay. I'm very happy to write in that vein, as Bethan has suggested, and thanks for the reminder, Joyce, regarding our remit, which obviously we shouldn't exceed, which is obviously common sense.

[89] Moving now to agenda item 3.3, P-04-522, 'Asbestos in Schools'. This petition was submitted by Cenric Clement-Evans, and it's good to see Cenric present in the public gallery today for our deliberations. It was first considered on 10 December 2013 and had collected at that time 448 signatures. We recall that the principal asks contained within this petition

upon which we've done, I think, over the last couple of years, a very considerable amount of work, which also included some very useful evidence sessions, both provided by Cenric himself and more recently by the Minister and by the senior official in the department, Joanne Larner—. This petition was considered by the committee on 8 December and we agreed to defer consideration of the petition until additional information had been received from the Minister, following the evidence session that I just referred to, which took place on 24 November.

[90] The Minister responded and his letter and attachment are in today's public papers. That was considered on our meeting of 23 February, as colleagues will recall, before recess. At that stage, the petitioner asked for some additional time to provide a substantive response and consideration was then deferred to this final committee meeting. Now, as good as his word, the petitioner has responded and his comments are in the public papers, and in addition to that, we've also been supplied with a suite of other documents relating to the topic and they are not in the public papers, but they are available to Members on request from the clerk and, in fact, subsequently, they have been circulated.

[91] **Mr George:** They may not yet have been published on our web pages because there was a technical issue yesterday, but they will be by the end of today. So, they will be published as well and publicly available.

[92] **William Powell:** Excellent. And they provide the detail for which we have an 11-page synopsis, which will lead you into the topics. When colleagues and interested members of the general public have access to that, they'll be able to get to grips with the full detail.

[93] I think it's clear that we need to write to the Minister and share the most recent response from Cenric Clement-Evans. I'm happy to write in that vein to the Minister, but given that we are here in the final meeting of this committee in the fourth Assembly, obviously we need to have a view to the future and any steer or guide that we can give to the future consideration of these matters. Bethan.

[94] **Bethan Jenkins:** Rwyf jest **Bethan Jenkins:** I just want to ask eisiau gofyn, a ydy hi'n rhy hwyr inni whether it's too late for us to ask for ofyn am ddadl lawn ar y mater o fewn a full debate on this matter in this y Cynulliad yma? Mae'n rhy hwyr, ydy Assembly. It's too late, is it? Okay. hi? Ocê. Achos roeddwn i'n meddwl Because I thought perhaps now

efallai mai nawr byddai'r amser—. Ocê, cynnig arall yw: a ydyn ni'n gallu gwneud adroddiad o'r hyn rŷm ni wedi'i wneud a'i roi ar y wefan? Nid wyf yn gwybod a ydyn ni'n gallu mynd ymhellach gyda'r ddeiseb, felly a allwn ni ddod ag adroddiad at ei gilydd, gyda'r holl bwytiau a chyda ein hargymhellion ni, er mwyn i'r Gweinidog ymateb iddo? Yr hyn nad wyf ei eisiau ydy bod hyn yn mynd ymlaen ac ymlaen drwy'r amser, ac rwy'n credu bod y deisebwr yn deall hynny. Mae yna gwestiynau i roi yn ôl i'r Gweinidog, ond, eto i gyd, rwy'n credu, os oes yna adroddiad, byddwn ni'n gallu dweud: '(a), (b) ac (c)—dyma'r hyn sydd angen cael ei wneud yn awr', ac wedyn gall Aelodau'r Cynulliad a'r grŵp trawsbleidiol newydd ymdrin â'r sefyllfa. Dyna fy marn i oherwydd rŷm ni wedi cael y Gweinidog i mewn ac rydym wedi sgrwtineiddio'r ddeiseb yma mewn lot o wahanol ffyrdd. A fyddai modd inni roi rhywbeth ar y wefan, fel adroddiad o'r hyn sydd wedi cael ei wneud, neu a ydy hynny eto, o ran amser, yn anodd—gyda'r syniad o'i chau wedyn?

[95] **William Powell:** Russell George.

[96] **Russell George:** It might be, Chair, that the timings and protocol doesn't allow us to bring forward a report, and we could get some advice on that, but if that is the case, it doesn't stop us from writing a detailed letter, with recommendations in it. It might be that that's what we need to do, if a report wasn't able to be produced.

[97] **William Powell:** I don't want to second-guess what we're about to hear from our clerk, but I don't think a full-scale report is particularly likely to be

would be the time—. Okay, another proposal is: can we produce a report of what we've done and put it on the website? I don't know whether we can take this petition further, but could we bring a report together, with all these points and with our recommendations, in order that the Minister can respond to it? What I don't want to happen is for this to go on and on all the time, and I think that the petitioner understands that. There are questions to take back to the Minister, but, yet again, if there is report that can say: '(a), (b) and (c)—this is what is being done now', and then new Assembly Members and the new cross-party group could address the situation. That's my view because we have had the Minister in and we have scrutinised this petition in many different ways. Would there be any way that we could put something on the website, as a report of what's been done, or, again, because of time, is that something that is difficult—with the idea, then, of closing the petition?

possible in the circumstances, but if there is the opportunity to produce a detailed letter—. What I'm keen to avoid is, to some extent, what happened, I think, in the previous period of the Westminster Parliament, where a considerable amount of expertise was dissipated by the result of the election and therefore the issue was to some extent, sort of set back some time, and I would like this to be in a position to pull the strands together, which I think is what Bethan has advocated. Joyce, you've indicated.

09:45

[98] **Joyce Watson:** I have. In order to write a report, we'd all have to agree it. I don't even know that the clerking team, along with all the other things we've told them we would like them to do within the next few days—because we are talking days, now—. I don't think it's realistic. I am, obviously, happy to write a letter, but in terms of agreeing a report, I would like to see a much wider piece of research, so that we've actually got a balanced report, with many, many more witnesses than the ones that we've currently had, because any report has to have depth and width, and I don't think, at the moment, personally, we're in that position. Those are my views.

[99] I'm not saying I would be against a future report, but I would be in favour of it in those terms, because you don't want to do what would be, at this stage, a rushed report and then, perhaps, do a disservice to this subject, rather than—

[100] **Bethan Jenkins:** I don't think it's possible for us to do a disservice to it, because we've looked into this quite a lot.

[101] **Joyce Watson:** I'm not saying, but what I am saying is that any rushed report, you know, doesn't always pick up all the things, and we, as Members, won't—. By the time it's written—and I don't think it can be written in time—and by the time we've had a chance to reflect and comment on it, I think you'll find that we'll be in recess. That's my view.

[102] **Russell George:** I think that we can't do a report. It's not that we don't want to do a report; we just physically can't do a report, because this is the last committee.

[103] **Joyce Watson:** Exactly.

[104] **Russell George:** So, there's no committee for us to look at that report

and we can't physically do a report. I would have thought that is the answer. But, therefore, we could do a detailed letter that could very much look like a report.

[105] **William Powell:** But a detailed letter is a kind of status report of where we're at, and, clearly, this petition is not to be closed at this time, even though it will be moving to that, I would imagine, early in the fifth Assembly. We can't bind the hands of our successors, but it's very important that the work that has been done, and the assiduous follow-up that we've had from the petitioner, and indeed the involvement from the Minister, isn't lost in some way because of various people moving on. So, if colleagues are happy with that approach, then I think there's a recognition that a report as such is not going to be realistic or possible.

[106] **Mr George:** The difficulty I've got is not the report part of it; it's your conclusions part of it. If I can slightly draw a veil, and draw back the curtain against what usually happens, there is a process by which, Members, we usually discuss in private what your recommendations are going to be, and we then try and reflect those in a report. At this stage, I'm not absolutely sure I know the consensus of the committee on what it would like to recommend. So, we could certainly write a long letter saying, 'This is what we've done'; what I'm not clear about is what we'd be asking the Minister regarding what we want to do.

[107] **Russell George:** In that case, what if the letter is—. I think what we're looking to do is to summarise what we've done, so that work isn't lost, which is what everybody would want, and then the next committee then has all the information at hand, and it's for them then to take it forward. It might be that they then want to do a report, as is being suggested, but we need to summarise all that information that we've had, so that it's not lost at all.

[108] **William Powell:** A kind of executive summary, in a sense. Obviously, there are many background documents then to visit, including the most recently delivered ones that will give greater depth, if they wish to have that.

[109] **Russell George:** But I agree with Steve, the clerk, that we can't make recommendations, because he hasn't had a steer of what those recommendations should be.

[110] **William Powell:** Absolutely. That's our role and our capacity to do that is ebbing away fast.

[111] **Russell George:** That'll have to be the role of the next committee to do that.

[112] **William Powell:** Yes. Okay. I think we've got an emerging consensus on the way to proceed. Again, thanks to Cenric Clement-Evans for his assiduous work as petitioner. [*Interruption.*]

[113] **Bethan Jenkins:** Diolch.

[114] **William Powell:** We're very grateful indeed. Diolch yn fawr iawn. Thank you very much indeed to Cenric for his assiduous work on this petition and for his attendance here again today.

[115] Moving now to agenda item 3.4, which is P-04-620, 'Reintroduce the National Speed Limit on the Cardigan Bypass'. This petition was submitted by Councillor Gethin James and was first considered on 24 March 2015, and has the support of 196 signatures on change.org. We recall Councillor James's clear wishes here with regard to this matter. We considered this petition for the first time on 24 March 2015 and agreed to ask the Minister to give due weight to the petition and to inform the committee when she had reached a decision on the proposed traffic order, and also to write to Councillor James seeking his views on the Minister's letter.

[116] In a response to a reminder from our secretariat, the Minister has written to update us, as a committee, on the latest position and her letter is in the public papers. The petitioner has been asked for his comments, but a response had not been received when the papers for this meeting were being assembled. So, I think we probably need to ask the Minister to inform the committee, or indeed ask the Minister's successor to inform the successor committee to our own, of the final outcome of that legal process and to agree, once that's received, that the petition should be closed as it marks the end of a statutory process. Are colleagues happy with that way to proceed?

[117] **Russell George:** I agree.

[118] **William Powell:** Excellent. Okay, moving now to agenda item 3.5, P-04-617, 'Stop the Wholesale Hiving off of Public Libraries to the Voluntary Sector'. This petition was submitted by Adam Riley, Save Rhoose Library, and was first considered on 24 February 2015, having collected 66 signatures. Before proceeding with this, I think I probably should declare that I am a

founder member of SLAG, small town library action group, which was brought into being in 2007 in relation to—

[119] **Bethan Jenkins:** [*Inaudible.*]

[120] **William Powell:** Apologies for that. It was in relation to particular proposals that had been brought forward by a local authority at the time. So, I wouldn't want that to come to light subsequently without my declaring it now.

[121] The committee last considered the petition substantively on 14 July 2015, when we agreed to await the petitioner's views on the response received from the Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism. The Minister's response at that time had indicated that a change to primary legislation would be required to make the current non-statutory guidance statutory. There had been no contact with this particular petitioner since May 2015, and as there had been no contact, despite reminders, we were minded to add this to the list of petitions due for closure. Then, at the last meeting we were contacted—our secretariat were contacted—by the petitioner, requesting that it remain open and the petitioner's e-mail to our secretariat on this matter is in the public papers. Well, I think in the circumstances of my previous declaration, I'd like to open this to other Members who may be less conflicted. Joyce, any thoughts on this?

[122] **Joyce Watson:** Well, I'm not conflicted—that's the first thought. I would have been minded, actually, to close this petition, but I'm not going to die on that issue. So, if other people are of other opinions, I will listen to them, but that would be my view.

[123] **Russell George:** I'm probably of the same opinion as Joyce as well. I've got strong views on it, but I think it's heading to closure.

[124] **William Powell:** Okay, well, I'm not going to start—

[125] **Bethan Jenkins:** I've got strong views on it, but I don't know where we can take it. I think it would be for a new Government to—. I agree we need a definition of what statutory guidance on a comprehensive and efficient service in Wales would look like. Because it's not going to end here, is it? I've had issues in my area, as I'm sure you have, about library closures and I think it would be for—. It's just, if we keep it open, what's it going to be able to achieve in the short term? I think it could be for a new committee to—.

[126] **William Powell:** I think that's probably right, because colleagues and campaigners have raised with me the issue around the medium to long-term future of certain community libraries that are sustained in the short to medium-term, maybe, by community groups or relevant town and community councils, but then if they're not meeting the standards set out for overall library standards, then they're not going to be a priority for investment and then there's a potential spiral of decline. There are issues there that need addressing as smaller communities rely on that, and everything else is built around urban hubs, which may be centres of excellence, but aren't necessarily accessible for many, many people. That's my sense on that, but I fear that we probably do need to close this now in the light of what colleagues have indicated. Maybe there'll be a significant piece of work that needs doing in the next Assembly.

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

[128] **William Powell:** Okay, good. Thank you, colleagues.

[129] Agenda item 3.6 is P-04-572, 'Grants for Flood Resilience'. This petition was submitted by Charles Edward Moore and was first considered on 15 July 2014, having collected 88 signatures. We last considered this petition on 2 February 2016, and it was agreed to write to the Minister for Natural Resources and also to Emyr Roberts, chief executive of Natural Resources Wales, to seek their views on the apparent difference of approach between England and Wales, and also to await a promised response—it had been promised for some significant time—from the Association of British Insurers. They've got a key role to play here. Also, we've requested a note from the Research Service setting out differences of approach taken in England and Wales. A response has now been received from the ABI, and this is in the public pack. The petitioner has responded, and Mr Moore's letter is also in the public papers. The Research Service has produced a short briefing that compares the support levels for households and businesses to help with flood resilience in England and in Wales.

[130] There are a number of possible actions here. Clearly, it is very much a relevant and quite emotive topic. As colleagues will recall, the petition calls for the Welsh Government to approve grants for properties that have recently flooded to make them more resilient against future flooding. These issues have been addressed in a considerable amount of ministerial correspondence and also in correspondence we've had with NRW. However, we are still

awaiting responses from the Minister and NRW in this regard, and it would be appropriate, I think, for these to be considered by the incoming committee of the fifth Assembly, because if there's one certainty, it is that this whole topic of flood and flood risk is going to be of even more importance in that Assembly than it has been in this. What are colleagues' views about what ABI has had to say on this matter?

[131] **Joyce Watson:** Chair, I haven't got any views about ABI, because I'm looking at the petition as the petition is written. As the petition is written, it's asking us—the Assembly, that is—to urge the Welsh Government to look at grant schemes. Now, if the petitioner wants us to look at insurance, then they would be well advised to bring another petition, because that actually falls outside the original petition. So, that's my comment in that direction, because we're—

[132] **William Powell:** We're in danger of straying.

[133] **Joyce Watson:** We are in serious danger of straying considerably away from—. I can see the connection—of course I can—but that's not what the petition is asking us to do.

[134] **William Powell:** We have encountered this over time, when we get fresh thoughts coming up at a later stage.

[135] **Joyce Watson:** That's fine, but it really is a whole other area.

[136] **William Powell:** It's a related topic, but it's not absolutely—.

[137] **Joyce Watson:** It's a completely different area.

[138] **William Powell:** Understood.

[139] **Joyce Watson:** I understand the relationship, but, you know—. Anyway, that said, what I really do think is that we can, and I think must, ask the incoming petitions committee to look at this petition—that is this petition—as it stands again. Also, I would equally ask, if there is another environment committee or whatever form that might take—you know, a standing committee—dealing with floods, that they also look at the issues that have been raised here. You're absolutely right: this will not go away; it will reoccur and, for those people affected, it is devastating when that happens. So, I don't want people to think I don't understand—I certainly do, and I've been

flooded in the past myself—not where I live now, I have to say. So, those are my comments.

10:00

[140] **William Powell:** Thank you, Joyce. Russell George, you've indicated.

[141] **Russell George:** Thank you, Chair. I think there are still answers that we need from the Minister, or the future Minister—

[142] **William Powell:** As was said earlier, yes, absolutely.

[143] **Russell George:** —so, on that ground, we obviously can't close the petition; there's still work to do on this. I think that we should make some recommendations to the next committee or at least ask the next committee or suggest that they carry out a piece of work on this. I also think that we should ask the environment committee—three of us sit on the environment committee here—

[144] **William Powell:** Sure, we have done, yes.

[145] **Russell George:** Certainly, in recent weeks, when we've had evidence sessions with witnesses, there has been a suggestion, I believe, that the future environment committee does a piece of work on flood resilience. So, I think that we should make sure that we write to the Chair of the environment committee and ask that this petition is considered in any larger piece of work that the next environment committee will undertake.

[146] **William Powell:** Yes, I think that would feed in very well as a piece of continuity of work that's been quite dominant in the work streams of this Assembly. Yes, I'm happy with that approach. If colleagues are content, then that's precisely what we shall do.

[147] Agenda item 3.7 is P-04-595, 'Foresight Pathway'. This petition was submitted by Radnorshire farmer David Hardwick and was first considered on 23 September 2014, having collected two electronic signatures and 89 paper signatures also. We recall Mr Hardwick's overriding concern of the central importance of food security in the time to come. It's a very scholarly approach. It's also quite refreshing, I think, to receive a handwritten letter, which colleagues will see. Mr Hardwick, I understand, is a veteran pupil of the former lower Cantal School in Radnorshire near Llanbister. He obviously

was well taught at that establishment. I do know the gentleman fairly well; I know his views are widely respected in the farming community and he speaks for many in this matter.

[148] We last considered this petition on 11 November 2014—not 2114; there's a little typo there. We agreed to seek further comments from the petitioner and, indeed, I just referred to the fact that we've received them in his own hand and they're there for us today. The Deputy Minister for Farming and Food's previous response of October 2014 is also in the pack as an aide-mémoire. In the light of the petitioner's response, I think we need to consider whether or not this matter has run its course to some extent or whether there are still some strands that are relevant here. I think probably it would be appropriate for me to ask colleagues what your views are in this matter because it's clear that food security isn't absolutely secured for the time to come. I understand that we're now on about 220 days a year in terms of our own domestic food security at the time that this was last measured. So, obviously, the issue is still very much a live one. Colleagues, I value your thoughts and comments. Russell George.

[149] **Bethan Jenkins:** It's not a specialism of mine, I'm afraid.

[150] **Russell George:** If nobody else is coming forward, I think, Chair, that we've probably done as much as we can as a committee. I don't think that we can do any more on this petition. We've taken it about as far as we can—

[151] **William Powell:** Thank you for that thought.

[152] **Russell George:** There is this review that you've mentioned. That's the opportunity to take this forward in that sense, I think.

[153] **William Powell:** I think also a relevant consideration, and I know something that is a theme from some of the correspondence received from Mr Hardwick now and previously, obviously is the common agricultural policy and the methods of support. Clearly, there is a major vote on 23 June with regard to the future of that. So, possibly, it would be a logical step if we were to draw this to a close now, and, then, in the light of continued membership, or if we are to become separated from the mainland of Europe and its agricultural support, obviously a whole different ballgame is going to be applying. So, probably, Mr Hardwick will be applying his thoughts to that as well. So, if colleagues are happy for us to draw the petition to a close at this time and to thank Mr Hardwick, then I'd be happy to do that on behalf of the

committee, and clearly to alert him to the fact that he is able to bring forward a future petition, if he so wishes, in the normal method.

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

[155] **William Powell:** Excellent. Okay. Thank you very much. Agenda item 3.8, P-04-477, 'Support for the Control of Dogs (Wales) Bill': this petition was submitted by Councillor Dilwar Ali in April 2013, and collected 1,119 signatures. We recall the presentation, I'm sure, of this petition where there were some victims of dog attack, including some members of the post workers union, who have been very supportive of Councillor Ali's approach in this matter, as indeed has our colleague Julie Morgan, the Assembly Member for Cardiff North, who has also submitted an e-mail with regard to this matter, which is before us this afternoon. We last considered this back in June of 2013, and we agreed to write to the Environment and Sustainability Committee, highlighting the petitioner's concerns in advance of consideration of the issue. Subsequently, there was a round table discussion on the control of dogs legislation in July of that year. Very recently, three of us were present at the most recent and final scrutiny session of the relevant Minister last Wednesday, when the specific issue was raised by—again—Julie Morgan. It came to light that the Minister is keeping a watching brief on these matters. As colleagues may recall, this petition had become inactive between June 2013 and recent times, but we had the request from the petitioner that it be kept open, and that's the main subject of the e-mail received by Julie Morgan on 4 March, which I think we've all got in front of us.

[156] I'd welcome colleagues' thoughts on this because, clearly, we've been on something of a journey, both with the previous Minister for natural resources, Alun Davies, before his leaving office, and then subsequently with Rebecca Evans, who currently holds the relevant post. It appears that we have kind of come to a pause point, at least, but I'd very much welcome colleagues' thoughts as to the best way forward here, in these circumstances. The problem clearly hasn't gone away, but I'm not sure that we necessarily should maintain this open, although that's the clear request of the petitioner and a leading supporter.

[157] **Joyce Watson:** Yes. In terms of Julie Morgan's request to keep this petition open, I know she feels very passionate about this because of the events that happened. I know that the post services also—the postal worker operatives, I think, is the word now—also support this very heavily. The fact

that she says that the RSPCA Cymru review of responsible dog ownership that's been requested, they haven't seen the results of that, I'm prepared—because of that, and only because we haven't had that information—to keep it open until that has happened and, if those results are such that it is very obvious that we've gone as far as we can, to close it after that. So, I would propose keeping it open, just waiting for that bit of information.

[158] **William Powell:** That's expected imminently, isn't it?

[159] **Joyce Watson:** Yes, and with a view to close thereafter would be my thoughts on that.

[160] **William Powell:** And, clearly, this matter may be revisited in terms of a piece of legislation, whether Government-sponsored or a private Member's, in the fifth Assembly.

[161] **Joyce Watson:** Indeed. It does affect an awful lot of people.

[162] **William Powell:** Absolutely. And we had some very poignant testimonies—

[163] **Joyce Watson:** Awful cases. Absolutely.

[164] **William Powell:** —when we received this petition. Russell George.

[165] **Russell George:** I think that the petition is coming to a close, but the local Member has asked us to keep it open. There is some information that Joyce has pointed out, which we haven't yet received, but I think the indication to the next committee from us is that they're briefed on this and our view is that it is coming to a close, but there is this final piece of information that we're waiting for. But, after that, then our recommendation is that it should be closed then, because that was—

[166] **William Powell:** I think we have agreement there. The final update on the final petition of this Assembly is agenda item 3.10, P-04-436, 'Government Expenditure and Revenue Wales'—

[167] **Bethan Jenkins:** I thought we had one on muscular dystrophy.

[168] **William Powell:** Oh, I'm sorry. I'm ahead of myself. Absolutely. Apologies and thank you very much for your alertness in that regard: agenda

item 3.9, P-04-532, 'Improving Specialised Neuromuscular Services in Wales'. Now, this petition was submitted by the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign and first considered on 4 February 2014. We recall—. I think, in the context of my almost omitting that, I'm going to read the text just to refresh our memory.

[169] 'We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to ensure that Health Boards implement the investment proposed by the Welsh Neuromuscular Network Vision Document for improving specialised neuromuscular services in Wales.'

[170] This was last considered on 6 October 2015 and we agreed to pursue with health boards how the benefits of additional neuromuscular consultant time, as have been identified by the Abertawe Bro Morgannwg University Local Health Board in particular, can be realised across Wales. Also, we resolved to write to the Health and Social Care Committee asking them to consider the issue as part of their forward work programme. We had a noting of the request by the Health and Social Care Committee at its meeting of 3 December. Responses have now been received from the health boards and we've got a full suite of responses there from senior health board officials across Wales, all available in our public pack. We're very grateful to the health boards for that.

[171] The petitioners have also responded and we've got their response in the public papers. I'd welcome colleagues' views as to how best to proceed here. Clearly, we've got some clarity on the petitioners' position, as reflected in their letter. What do colleagues believe is the best way forward? Bethan.

[172] **Bethan Jenkins:** I just want to declare an interest as the chair of the cross-party group on muscular dystrophy and I don't think they would've forgiven me if this had gone without being discussed today.

[173] **William Powell:** Absolutely, and thank you very much for picking that point up.

[174] **Bethan Jenkins:** I just wanted to ask whether we could recommend to the new health and social care committee, as Muscular Dystrophy UK requested, that they look into this matter, because, as you can see from the responses from the various health boards, there's still a challenge with capacity in the system—that's from ABMU. Then, Aneurin Bevan has said that it's refreshing its integrated medium-term plan in relation to this.

[175] If the health and social care committee—this is a recommendation for the new petitions committee—isn't minded to, I would like us to recommend to the petitions committee it carry out a short piece of work; we could get the neuromuscular network in. For example, they've advertised for a new care adviser, but, at the moment, they've had to re-advertise, because they're not getting the interest. The previous care support workers were working so hard they were overrun and I think that is well known and it has potentially affected the recruitment process. So, there are lots of gaps still in the service. I know people in the sector feel that it needs more investment, so if we could pull these letters together for the new committee and say that, you know—.

[176] **William Powell:** Well, given the fullness of the responses that we've gleaned from health boards across Wales, I think it might be appropriate for us to share them all with the secretariat of the current health committee while they're fresh.

10:15

[177] That would probably help the process along, to get it embedded in a potential forward work programme of the successor committee. Excellent. I think we've got unanimity on that point, and I'll be glad to write in that vein to the health committee. I'll say it again, we're grateful to all the health boards for having written, and written in such a prompt way. It wasn't always our experience, and I think it's really good to see that we've reached such a good place in that regard and it's a positive development.

[178] Finally, agenda item 3.10, P-04-436, 'Government Expenditure and Revenue Wales', a petition that was submitted by Stuart Evans, first considered by this committee in January of 2013, and had the support, at that time, of 27 signatures. We recall the aspiration for

[179] 'the Welsh Government to put together a Government Expenditure and Revenue Wales report.'

[180] Mr Evans was quite taken with practice, as he saw it, in Scotland, that he thought it was worth us emulating and our Government emulating. We last considered this back on 3 June 2014, and agreed to forward correspondence to the Minister for Finance and Government Business, that being a copy of the 'Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland' report,

asking whether something similar could be done in Wales. Given the activity—inactivity, rather, on the petition, the secretariat asked the Minister’s office for an update. We’ve now got that update in full form from Jane Hutt, and that’s in our public papers. The petitioner, Mr Evans, has been asked to respond, but at this time he has not responded. I think, probably, he’s only had a fairly short time to respond, so, Joyce, if we’re to be consistent, and you’ve been a champion of consistency, we should give Mr Evans a little more time to respond so that we can allow our successor committee due space to consider its options with regard to this petition.

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

[182] **William Powell:** Excellent.

[183] That concludes the consideration of the last update of the last petition of this Assembly, and all I would like to do now is to thank you for your full participation, your solidarity, friendship and support, as, indeed, from the staff team—the current staff team and, indeed, staff members who have gone elsewhere, some of whom will return; others have gone to new challenges. It’s been a rollercoaster over the last five years. I think we visited this in the topics that we raised in last Wednesday’s debate. It’s been a kind of committee for everything, and Bethan said it the other day—it’s been responsible for all topics, and it’s been a very rich experience. It’s been a huge privilege, and I’m just grateful to you.

[184] Diolch yn fawr iawn am Thank you very much for taking part. gymryd rhan.

[185] For having taken such an assiduous part in the deliberations of this committee, and thank you for bearing with me on many occasions when I’ve veered from the agenda or, indeed, failed to give consideration to some petitions that have slipped through the net. So, I look forward to any thoughts from you. Russell George.

[186] **Russell George:** Chair, apart from thanking the clerking team, the legal team and the translation team itself, as well, for their support to us over the last five years, I’d also like to thank you for your chairmanship, as well. Thank you very much. I’m grateful for your stewardship and accuracy on the agenda, apart from that one last item. [*Laughter.*] But, apart from that, Chair, thank you very much for all your work, as well, as the Chair.

[187] **Joyce Watson:** I would like to echo that, too, because we are a committee of one from each party, and it has been—and I said it last week—important that we work together, and we have worked together. We've worked together through your stewardship and fair operation of your position as Chair. So, I'd just like to put that on the record, and also my thanks to all the supporting team. I'm not going to start mentioning, because I'm bound to leave someone out. So, whoever they are, they know they are, thank you for the support.

[188] **Bethan Jenkins:** Well, I feel I have to say something now, as the longest-standing AM on this committee. I wonder whether if I'm elected I'll be here again. I won't begrudge it if I am. Obviously, many petitions are a challenge to us all—for me, anyway, in terms of the detail that some present to us—but they do make us think about things we potentially wouldn't have encountered before that we may not get in our post bags generally. So, I think there are new developments ahead for the committee. There are always people with new ideas as to how it can work. As opposed to other committees, this can be more vibrant, and we can adapt to new ideas better. So, I'd like to thank all the staff and obviously you, Bill, for your chairmanship, although I have to pick you up on a few things from time to time.

[189] **William Powell:** Absolutely. It would be rude not to.

[190] **Bethan Jenkins:** But that's what we're here to do, so diolch yn fawr.

[191] **William Powell:** Croeso. Thank you very much indeed.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 10:20.

The meeting ended at 10:20.