



Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales

Cofnod y Trafodion The Record of Proceedings

[Y Pwyllgor Cydraddoldeb, Llywodraeth Leol a
Chymunedau](#)

[The Equality, Local Government and
Communities Committee](#)

21/09/2016

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Cofnodir y trafodion yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynnddi 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

Gareth Bennett	UKIP Cymru
Bywgraffiad Biography	UKIP Wales
Janet Finch–Saunders	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig
Bywgraffiad Biography	Welsh Conservatives
John Griffiths	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor)
Bywgraffiad Biography	Labour (Committee Chair)
Sian Gwenllian	Plaid Cymru
Bywgraffiad Biography	The Party of Wales
Bethan Jenkins	Plaid Cymru
Bywgraffiad Biography	The Party of Wales
Rhianon Passmore	Llafur
Bywgraffiad Biography	Labour
Jenny Rathbone	Llafur
Bywgraffiad Biography	Labour
Joyce Watson	Llafur
Bywgraffiad Biography	Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Jo–Anne Daniels	Cyfarwyddwr, Cymunedau a Threchgu Tlodi Director, Communities and Tackling Poverty
Alun Davies	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (Gweinidog y Gymraeg a Dysgu Gydol Oes) Assembly Member, Labour (The Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language)
Maureen Howell	Dirprwy Gyfarwyddwr Cydraddoldeb a Ffyniant Deputy Director, Equality and Prosperity
John Howells	Cyfarwyddwr, Tai ac Adfywio Director, Housing and Regeneration
Carl Sargeant	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gymunedau a Phlant) Assembly Member, Labour (The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children)

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

Jon Antoniazzi	Clerc Clerc
Jonathan Baxter	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Hannah Johnson	Y Gwasanaeth Ymchwil Research Service
Elizabeth Wilkinson	Ail Clerc Second Clerk
Katie Wyatt	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:15.
The meeting began at 09:15.*

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau, Dirprwyon a Datgan Buddiannau Introductions, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

[1] **John Griffiths:** May I welcome Members to the meeting and advise on a few opening matters? First of all, of course, the National Assembly operates through the medium of the Welsh and English languages. There are headsets for simultaneous translation on channel 1 and sound amplification on channel 2. As this is a formal public meeting, Members will not need to operate the microphones themselves. In the event of an emergency, an alarm will sound and ushers will direct everyone to the nearest safe exit and assembly point. We haven't received any apologies for absence and there are no substitutions.

09:16

Sesiwn Graffu gyda Gweinidog y Gymraeg a Dysgu Gydol Oes—Rôl a Blaenoriaethau'r Tasglu Gweinidogol ar y Cymoedd Scrutiny of the Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language— Role and Priorities of the Ministerial Taskforce for the Valleys

[2] **John Griffiths:** Our first substantive item, then, is the Minister for Lifelong Learning and Welsh Language on the role and priorities of the ministerial taskforce for the Valleys. So, welcome to the meeting, Alun. Would you like to introduce your official?

[3] **Gweinidog y Gymraeg a Dysgu The Minister for Lifelong Learning**

Gydol Oes (Alun Davies): Fi ydy Alun Davies, y Gweinidog, fel rydych chi wedi dweud. Gyda fi y bore yma mae Maureen Howell, sy'n arwain y gwaith ar y gweithlu yn y Cymoedd.

and Welsh Language (Alun Davies): I'm Alun Davies, the Minister, as you've already said. Joining me this morning is Maureen Howell, who is leading the work on the taskforce for the Valleys.

[4] **John Griffiths:** Diolch yn fawr. Would you like to many any opening remarks, Minister, on the operation of the taskforce and the role of the taskforce?

[5] **Alun Davies:** Liciwn i ddiolch i'r pwyllgor am y cyfle i drafod y materion yma reit ar ddechrau'n gwaith ni yn y Cynulliad. Rwy'n falch iawn i gael y cyfle i ymuno gyda chi'r bore yma a hefyd i esbonio tipyn bach o'r weledigaeth o gwmpas sefydlu'r grŵp yma a sut rydw i'n gweld y grŵp yma yn gweithio yn y dyfodol.

Alun Davies: I'd like to thank the committee for the opportunity to discuss the issues at the very beginning of our term at the Assembly. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to join with you this morning and also to explain a little of the vision surrounding the establishment of this particular group and how I see the taskforce working for the future.

[6] Fel y mae pobl yn gwybod, mi oedd sefydlu'r grŵp yn rhan o fanifesto'r Blaid Lafur ac mae'n rhan o'r rhaglen lywodraethu. Sut rydw i'n gweld hyn yn gweithio yw bod y *taskforce* yn mynd i greu'r cyfle am newid yn y Cymoedd. Rydym wedi gweld sawl rhaglen wahanol, buddsoddiad a phrosiectau sy'n gallu cael impact yn y Cymoedd. Ond, beth rydw i'n awyddus iawn i sicrhau yw ein bod ni'n gallu creu newid yn y Cymoedd.

As you will know, the establishment of the group was part of the Labour manifesto and it's part of the programme for government. The way I see this working is that the taskforce will create an opportunity for change in the Valleys. We've seen a number of different programmes in place where there's been investment and projects put in place, which can have an impact in the Valleys. But, what I'm very eager to see is that we ensure that we can generate change in the south Wales Valleys.

[7] Mi fyddaf i'n gwneud datganiad ysgrifenedig yn nes ymlaen heddiw. Mae'r grŵp yn

I will be making a written statement later today. The group will meet for the first time tomorrow and Friday.

cyfarfod am y tro cyntaf yfory a dydd Gwener. Felly, rwy'n edrych ymlaen at y drafodaeth y byddwn ni'n ei chael yfory a dydd Gwener. Mi fyddaf i'n sicrhau bod papurau yn cael eu cyhoeddi a bydd Aelodau'n ymwybodol o'r drafodaeth, felly. Bydd y papurau, agendaau a'r cofnodion i gyd yn gyhoeddus a bydd cyfle i bobl weld beth yn union rydym yn gobeithio'i wneud.

Therefore, I look forward to the debate that we'll have tomorrow and Friday. I will ensure that the papers are published so Members can be fully aware of the discussions. So, the papers, the agendas and the minutes will all be made public and people will see exactly what we hope to achieve.

[8] Rwy'n gobeithio y byddwn ni'n defnyddio'r cryfder sydd gyda ni fel Llywodraeth, fel sector preifat ac fel grwpiau gwirfoddol reit ar draws y Cymoedd i greu newid.

I do hope that we will use the strength that we have as a Government, as a private sector and in terms of the voluntary sector across the south Wales Valleys to generate change.

[9] **John Griffiths:** Diolch yn fawr, Weinidog. Perhaps I could start the committee's questioning by asking about the objectives and priorities for the taskforce? I wonder if you could say a little bit more, Minister, in terms of those objectives and priorities as you see them at this stage.

[10] **Alun Davies:** We're going to be establishing our priorities tomorrow and Friday at our first meeting. But, can I say this: many of us who are from the Valleys, who are rooted in the Valleys, know what the priorities are and understand the challenges facing us in many of our communities? We know that, for example, in-work poverty—. I think the predecessor committee did some work on that in the previous Assembly, about how we can see, on the face of it, some quite encouraging employment statistics from different communities, but that masks a very real change in the nature of poverty and the way in which our economy is being casualised. So, we're seeing a lot of people who, whilst they might be employed, are in jobs that have no or little security and jobs that are poorly paid.

[11] So, we want to see an increase in the creation of jobs that are well-paid, that are secure jobs and where people can plan their family life in the future. We want to be able to ensure that we have access to services in the Valleys of the highest possible quality and that the environment of the Valleys continues to be protected and enhanced. So, we've got some

priorities that, for me, I think, at the root, at the heart, are economic, but also are about the community as a whole. Certainly, when I look at the community that I represent in Blaenau Gwent, there are issues there, whether they be transport, whether they be delivering services, but at the root of much of what we're looking at, I believe, we can't get away from economic development.

[12] **John Griffiths:** Okay, thanks very much for that. Is there work under way at the moment, Minister, to better understand the issues that the Valleys face? Have you instigated any particular work?

[13] **Alun Davies:** Yes, much of our programme for tomorrow is about describing some of the challenges that you outline. I think we need to have a thorough and agreed understanding, because I think the one thing that you find is that we all have an understanding, all of us who represent and are rooted in the Valleys—Rhianon and I represent seats that are adjacent to each other, but we both know that there will be different and separate challenges in both those areas. I want to have an understanding—a mutual and agreed understanding—of the challenges facing us, which will be different in different places. I don't agree with one size fits all; what might work well in the valleys of Gwent might not be so well-suited to the area where Bethan lives in the Neath valley, or in the Gwendraeth valley, for example, which Joyce represents. So, we do need to have not just a statistical understanding of the superficialities of some of the issues facing the Valleys, but an in-depth understanding of the reality of the quality of life and the daily experiences of people, whether that is looking for work, whether it is dealing with delivery of services, or whether it is—. One of the issues that have come up in many Valleys seats recently has been about the quality of the local environment, for example. So, we've got a lot of different priorities in different places, and what I hope we'll be able to do tomorrow and Friday is to begin to order those priorities and to begin the job of looking at how we start to deal with them.

[14] The other point I'd make in answer to your question, Chair, is this: we already have a number of different structures and programmes in place. You know, you can look at the city deal, the city region, and the work that is going on on the metro. My concern is that we don't create an industry of committees dealing with different aspects of the same problem, and what I want to do is to look at how we streamline, how we order our work, and how we then ensure that the work that's done is accountable—accountable both to you in the National Assembly, but also accountable to us in Government—

and we need to be able to do that in a way that minimises complexity and maximises delivery.

[15] **John Griffiths:** Bethan.

[16] **Bethan Jenkins:** Jest ar y nodau hynny, felly, a ydych chi, fel Gweinidog, yn sefydlu'r tasglu yma er mwyn, gobeithio, cael gwared ohono fe fel na fydd yna angen cael tasglu oherwydd y bydd cymaint o waith yn cael ei wneud yn y tymor byr fel na fydd angen parhau gyda'r gwaith yma, sef bod y gwaith yn cael ei wneud yn y cymunedau yn hytrach na bod tasglu ar ôl tasglu, fel yr ydym ni'n gweld yn bodoli yng Nghymru? Achos, rydych chi'n dweud nad ydych chi eisiau cael diwylliant ohonyn nhw, ond mae hwn yn un ychwanegol eto at y rhai eraill sydd yn bodoli yn y maes yma.

Bethan Jenkins: Just on that note, then, are you, as a Minister, establishing this taskforce in the hope of getting rid of it as there won't be a need for a taskforce, because so much work will be done in the short term that you won't need to continue in this work; the work will be done in the communities rather than having taskforce after taskforce, as we have seen happening in Wales? Because, you say that you don't want to have a culture of them, but this is yet another taskforce in addition to the others that exist in this area.

[17] **Alun Davies:** Rwy'n gweld ac rwy'n hanner cytuno â'r pwynt yr ydych chi'n ei wneud. Ond, a gaf i jest dweud dau beth fel ateb? Os ydych chi'n edrych ar yr economi yn y cymoedd, rydym ni wedi gweld dirywiad am ddegawdau. Rydym ni wedi gweld dirywiad drwy gydol y rhan fwyaf o'r ugeinfed ganrif, os ydych chi'n edrych ar beth sydd wedi digwydd ers y diwydiant glo, a oedd wedi creu cymunedau'r Cymoedd i ryw raddau. Nid ydym ni'n mynd i newid hynny mewn pum mlynedd, ac mae'n afrealistig i gredu bod pwy bynnag sy'n aelod o'r tasglu yma yn mynd i newid pob dim mewn pum mlynedd. Nid wyf i'n gweld hynny'n

Alun Davies: I can see and can agree in some way with the point that you make. But, may I just make two points in response? If you look at the economy of the Valleys, we have seen a decline over a period of decades. We have seen decline through most of the twentieth century, if you look at what has happened since the coal industry, which actually created many Valleys communities, to a certain extent. We're not going to transform that in five years. It's unrealistic to think that whoever is a member of this taskforce could change everything in five years. I can't see that happening ac I think it's unrealistic to think that it would be

digwydd, ac rwy'n credu ei bod yn possible to create revolutionary
afrealistig credu ei bod yn bosibl creu change.
chwyldro o newid.

[18] **Bethan Jenkins:** Ond nid dim **Bethan Jenkins:** As a Government,
ond pum mlynedd yr ydych chi wedi you've had since devolution to look
ei gael. Fel Llywodraeth, rydych chi at this, not just five years. You've had
wedi cael ers datganoli, gyda nifer many different policies in relation to
fawr o bolisiau atal tlodi, nifer fawr o anti-poverty, many different schemes
gynlluniau gwahanol ar hyd ac ar led across the Valleys that should have
y Cymoedd a fyddai wedi gallu bod been successful by now. Wouldn't
yn llwyddiannus erbyn hyn. Oni you agree?
fyddech yn cytuno?

[19] **Alun Davies:** Na, ni fuaswn yn **Alun Davies:** No, I wouldn't agree, as
cytuno, fel rydych chi'n gwybod. you know. We have created this
Rydym ni wedi creu'r tasglu yma o taskforce as a result of our manifesto
ganlyniad i'n hymrwymiad maniffesto commitment in May. We will be
ym mis Mai. Byddwn yn cyfarfod am y meeting for the very first time
tro cyntaf yfory a dydd Gwener, ac tomorrow and Friday, and we will see
rydym ni'n gweld sut rydym ni yn how we can use the Government's
defnyddio grym y Llywodraeth ac powers and the Government's
adnoddau'r Llywodraeth i sicrhau ein resources to ensure that we can
bod yn gallu creu newid yn y make change in the Valleys. But,
Cymoedd. Ond a ydych chi, Bethan, Bethan, if you truly believe that we
yn wir yn meddwl ein bod ni'n gallu can resolve all of the problems facing
datrys yr holl broblemau sy'n wynebu Valleys communities over the next
cymunedau'r Cymoedd yn ystod y five years, then I would think that
pum mlynedd nesaf? Mi fuaswn i'n that would be unreasonable.
credu bod hynny'n ddigon afresymol.

[20] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Rhianon.

[21] **Rhianon Passmore:** In terms of following on from that, how would you
encapsulate the issues and problems? You've mentioned the concept of the
coal industry over the last 100 years. How would you encapsulate some of
the challenges that Valleys communities have to work against in terms of
whether it's UK adjunct issues or whether it's the concerns around in-work
poverty? How would you encapsulate that?

[22] **Alun Davies:** If you look at some of the issues that have impacted

upon Valleys communities particularly, and if you look at the UK Government's welfare reform programme, for example, you will see that that is actually creating poverty at the moment in the Valleys. I did some research last year in my own constituency, in Blaenau Gwent, which demonstrated that something over £60 million is going to be taken out of that community as a direct consequence of the UK Government's welfare reform programme over the coming Parliament. Now, that is being taken out of the pockets of some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in our communities. But it's not simply being taken away from those families; it's also being taken away from businesses and the community as a whole. So, this is another reason, Bethan, why we need to be very open-eyed and clear-sighted about some of these challenges. Because if you take those issues, for example—and you'll be dealing with them in Islwyn, and I'm dealing with them in Blaenau Gwent—that is creating a very real human consequence. You can't take £60 million off poor people and not expect a human consequence of that. So, whilst we are trying to eradicate poverty, the UK Government is actually creating poverty, and we need to find a way of ensuring that we have a rebalancing of the economy to ensure that we can actually create well-paid jobs, which I believe is the way that we will eradicate poverty in the Valleys.

[23] Let me say this: we need to look hard at the wider economy of the United Kingdom. It's quite clear to me that leaving the European Union will have a significant impact on the economy of south Wales, and will have a significantly negative impact on the economy of south Wales and the Valleys of south Wales. We also have an economy that's heavily rooted in the south-east of England. Anybody who's listening to the conversation taking place in the Conservative Party at the moment will understand the tensions about that. One of the things that I would like to see us doing here is to argue for a very different economic approach in the United Kingdom as a whole, which sees a decentralised economy as being an important objective of policy, and one where we ourselves can invest in an industrial strategy—an industrial policy—that is targeted at, and which seeks to ensure that we support the creation of work. In terms of ministerial attendance and membership of this taskforce, myself, Julie James and Ken Skates are members. One of the reasons why Ken Skates is taking the lead at the moment on some of our anti-poverty work is to ensure that we have the eradication of poverty as an objective of economic policy.

[24] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Sian.

[25] **Sian Gwenllian:** Diolch yn fawr. **Sian Gwenllian:** Thank you very

Rwy'n cyd-fynd efo llawer roeddech yn ei ddweud yn fanna rwan: hynny yw, eich bod yn gweld lot mwy o bwerau economaidd, rhyw *levers* economaidd rydym ni eu hangen yng Nghymru er mwyn gwella'r economi go iawn. Tan bod y *levers* economaidd yna gennym ni, rwy'n cytuno ei bod yn dasg anodd iawn. Ond, wedi dweud hynny, mae'ch Llywodraeth chi wedi cael cyfnod hir iawn, fel roedd Bethan yn ei ddweud, o dreio ymrafael â rhai o'r problemau. Mae'n ymddangos i mi nad ydym yn symud ymlaen yn bell iawn.

09:30

[26] **Alun Davies:** A allaf eich stopio chi fanna, achos fe wnaethoch chi ddweud eich bod yn cytuno â fi, ac wedyn rydych chi'n dweud beth nad ydw i'n ei ddweud? Mae'n bwysig meddwl aboutu beth yn union y dywedais i aboutu natur a strwythur economi Prydain. Mae lot fawr o'r *levers* rydych chi'n sôn amdanynt yn *levers* sy'n bodoli yn yr economi ac nid gyda'r Llywodraeth. Ond, mae'n bosibl i Lywodraeth Prydain newid y ffordd y mae'n gweithio.

[27] Os ydych yn edrych ar dlodi plant, er enghraifft, pan oedd yna Lywodraeth Lafur yn Llundain, mi oedd yna ddirywiad yn nhlodi plant yng Nghymru oherwydd roedd y Llywodraeth yn defnyddio grym y Llywodraeth yn San Steffan er mwyn

much. I agree with much of what you've said: that we need a lot more of those economic levers in Wales in order to improve the real economy. Until we have those economic levers, I would agree that it's an exceptionally difficult task. But, having said that, your Government has had a very long period, as Bethan said, of trying to tackle some of these problems. It appears to me that we're not making great progress.

Alun Davies: Can I just stop you there, because you say you agree with me, and then you say what I haven't been saying? Can we just look at exactly what I said about the nature and the structure of the UK economy? You talk about many different levers and many of those exist in the economy and not with the Government. But, it is possible for the UK Government to change the way it works.

If you look at child poverty, for example, when we had a Labour Government in London, there was a decline in child poverty in Wales, because the Government was using the power of the Westminster Government in order to change the

newid y pwyslais economaidd ym Mhrydain, ac mi welsom ni gymunedau yn y de, yn y Cymoedd, yn gwella oherwydd hynny. Fe gollom ni hynny pan gawsom ni'r cwmp yn 2008, ac rydym yn dal yn delio â hynny.

economic emphasis in the UK, and we saw communities in the south, in the Valleys, improving because of that. We lost that when we saw the crash in 2008, and we are still dealing with that.

[28] So, er fy mod i'n ddiolchgar iawn am eich geiriau caredig, mi fuaswn i'n ofalus i feddwl bod yna bwerau a grymoedd economaidd sy'n bodoli yn Llundain sydd ddim yn bodoli yng Nghaerdydd ac na fydd yn bodoli yng Nghaerdydd ychwaith. So, mae'n rhaid inni weithio y tu mewn i'r cyd-destun sydd gennym ni.

So, although I'm very grateful for your kind words, I would be very careful in thinking about the economic powers that exist in London and don't exist in Cardiff and will not be existing in Cardiff either. So, we have to work within that context we have.

[29] **Sian Gwenllian:** Iawn. Rwy'n derbyn eich barn chi, ond nid wyf i'n cyd-fynd nad oes modd i ni gael llawer iawn mwy o bwerau economaidd yng Nghymru, yn ein gwlad ein hunain.

Sian Gwenllian: Okay. I accept your view, but I don't agree that we couldn't have far more economic powers in Wales, in our own country.

[30] **Alun Davies:** Pa bwerau ydych chi'n sôn amdanynt?

Alun Davies: What powers are you talking about?

[31] **Sian Gwenllian:** Wel, mae yna bob math o *levers* economaidd.

Sian Gwenllian: Well, there are all sorts of economic levers.

[32] **Alun Davies:** Ie. Pa *levers* a ydych chi'n sôn amdanynt?

Alun Davies: Yes. What levers are you talking about?

[33] **Sian Gwenllian:** Beth bynnag, a gawn ni symud ymlaen at y pwnc dan sylw yn benodol fan hyn? Rwy'n falch eich bod chi'n cadarnhau bod y tasglu yn rhan o'ch rhaglen lywodraethu. Nid wyf yn gweld cyfeirio ato fo fan hyn, ond rydych

Sian Gwenllian: Anyway, let's move on to the issue that we're discussing this morning. I'm pleased to hear you confirm that the taskforce is part of the programme for government. I see no reference to it here, but you have confirmed that it is part of the

chi wedi cadarnhau ei fod yn rhan o'r programme that was—
rhaglen a chafodd ei—

[34] **Rhianon Passmore:** [*Inaudible.*]

[35] **Sian Gwenllian:** Yes. I can't see it in here. Is it? Okay.

[36] Ni allaf ei ffeindio fo, ond Well, I couldn't find it, but perhaps it
efallai ei fod o. Beth bynnag, mae fy is there. However, my question is on
nghwestiwn i ynghylch holl bwrpas y the whole purpose of the taskforce.
tasglu. Fel rydych chi wedi sôn am You've mentioned the very dire
broblemau dybryd y Cymoedd, pe problems of the Valleys, now I could
buaswn i'n medru mynd â chi i'r take you to the valleys in my area—
dyffrynnoedd sydd yn fy ardal i—the Nantlle and Ogwen valleys—and
Dyffryn Nantlle a Dyffryn Ogwen— there are very similar problems there.
mae yna broblemau tebyg iawn yn They are areas that are quite
bodoli yn y dyffrynnoedd hynny similar—they are post-industrial,
hefyd. Maen nhw'n ardaloedd eithaf quarrying areas that are battling very
tebyg—ardaloedd chwarelyddol, ôl- similar problems. Wouldn't it
ddiwidiannol sydd yn ymgiprys efo therefore be better for us to have an
lot o broblemau tebyg iawn. Onid all-Wales approach and look for all-
fyddai hi, felly, yn well i ni edrych ar Wales solutions, rather than this
Gymru gyfan ac atebion Cymru gyfan, geographical approach that is
yn hytrach na'r agwedd ddaearyddol happening here? I accept that there
yma sydd yn digwydd yn fan hyn? are very real problems in the Valleys,
Rwy'n derbyn bod yna broblemau but perhaps history demonstrates
dybryd yn y Cymoedd, ond efallai that it's not the geographical
bod hanes yn dangos i ni nad yr approach that works best, but that a
agwedd ddaearyddol sydd yn cross-cutting all-Wales approach to
gweithio orau, ond agwedd truly tackle these problems would be
llorweddol ar draws Cymru i fynd i more effective. I would argue that
wir ymrafael â'r problemau. Buaswn these are economic problems that are
i'n dadlau mai problemau at the root of much of this, rather
economaidd sydd wrth wraidd llawer than issues of regeneration
o'r rhain yn hytrach na materion yn necessarily.
ymwneud efo'r adfywio cymaint â
hynny, felly.

[37] **Alun Davies:** Mae'r tasglu yn y **Alun Davies:** The taskforce is in the
rhaglen lywodraethu ar dudalen 5. programme for government on page
5.

[38] **Sian Gwenllian:** Océ, diolch.

Sian Gwenllian: Okay, thank you.

[39] **Alun Davies:** Nid wyf yn anghytuno â chi, Sian, pan rydych chi'n disgrifio'r problemau sydd yn wynebu'r dyffrynnoedd rydych chi wedi'u henwi yn yr hen ardal chwarela yn y gogledd. Rwy'n credu bod y problemau yn o debyg, ac rwy'n cytuno â chi. Ond, pan rydych chi'n sôn aboutu'r Cymoedd, y gwahaniaeth yw maint. Mae yna ryw beth dros 1 miliwn o bobl yn byw yn y Cymoedd—traean o boblogaeth ein gwlad—a phan rydych chi'n edrych ar y problemau fanna, mae'r problemau yn bodoli ar lefel ryngwladol ac mae'n rhaid wynebu hynny. Oherwydd maint yr her rydym yn ei wynebu, mae angen meddwl mewn ffordd wahanol. Dyna pam rydym ni'n gwneud hyn fan hyn. Nid yw hynny i greu rhyw fath o gystadleuaeth hyll rhwng rhannau gwahanol o'r wlad—ac rydw i'n gwybod nad hynny yw beth rydych chi'n awgrymu, na beth rydych chi eisiau ei weld, ychwaith—ond, mae'n esboniad rhesymol, rwy'n meddwl, o pam rydym ni'n ffocysu ar Gyfoedd y de ar hyn. Rwy'n mawr obeithio efallai y bydd y math o atebion y byddwn ni yn eu ffeindio yng Nghymoedd Morgannwg, er enghraifft, o les i chi yn Arfon. Ond nid wyf yn credu y bydd yr atebion yr un peth, oherwydd bod maint yr her yn dra gwahanol.

Alun Davies: I don't disagree with you, Sian, when you describe the problems facing the valleys you have mentioned in the old quarrying areas in north Wales. I think the problems are very similar, and I agree with you there. But, when you talk about the Valleys, the difference is size. There are over 1 million people living in the Valleys—a third of the population of our entire nation—and when you look at those problems, those problems exist on an international level and we have to face that. Because of the size of the challenge we are facing, we need to think in a different way. That's why we're doing this. We're not doing it to create some sort of ugly competition between different parts of the country—and I know that's not what you're suggesting at all and not what you would want to see, either—but, it's a reasonable explanation, I think, in relation to why we are concentrating on the south Wales Valleys in this. I do very much hope that maybe the types of answers that we will find in the Glamorgan Valleys, for example, will be useful to you in Arfon also. But I don't think those answers are going to be quite the same, because of the size of the challenge being so different.

[40] **Sian Gwenllian:** Ie, ond onid

Sian Gwenllian: Yes, but wouldn't it

fyddai'n well, felly, yn hytrach na'r tasglu penodol yma, y syniad o gael asiantaethau datblygu economaidd rhanbarthol? Achos nid yw'r Cymoedd wedi eu heithrio o weddill yr ardal, y rhanbarth, o'u cwmpas, ac efallai y byddai'r agwedd yma o edrych ar ranbarthau ac angen datblygu yn y ffordd yna yn ddull mwy effeithiol o gyrraedd at yr un nod. Ac rydym yn rhannu'r un nod.

be better, therefore, rather than having this specific taskforce, to have regional economic development agencies? Because the Valleys are not an exception to the wider area surrounding them, and perhaps that regional approach and the need to develop that regional approach would be a more effective method of reaching the same aim. And we do share the same aims.

[41] Rwy'n cytuno'n llwyr â chi—mae yna bobl yn byw mewn tloidi enbyd, ac nid yw'n ddigon da. Ond newid, dyna rydym ni'n chwilio amdano fe, ontefe—yr atebion i'r broblem. Ac rwy'n meddwl, efallai, fod gweithio ar lefelau rhanbarthol, efo asiantaethau efo dyletswyddau economaidd penodol, yn ffordd fwy effeithiol yn y pen draw o wella'r sefyllfa.

I agree entirely with you—there are people living in appalling poverty, and it simply isn't good enough. But we are seeking change, aren't we—we're seeking solutions to these problems. And I do think that perhaps working at a regional level with agencies that have specific economic responsibilities would be more effective ultimately, in terms of improving the situation.

[42] **Alun Davies:** Nid wyf yn siŵr fy mod i eisiau creu rhwydwaith newydd o gwangos yng Nghymru. Nid wyf yn credu bod hynny wedi llwyddo ychwaith. Pan oedd rhai pobl yn dadlau bod Awdurdod Datblygu Cymru yn eu pomp ac ar eu nerth, roedd y Cymoedd yn gweld cwmp sylweddol yn eu heconomïau eu hunain. So, nid wyf yn credu bod hynny yn ateb i'r problemau.

Alun Davies: I'm not sure that I want to create a new network of quangos in Wales. I don't think that was successful either. When some people were arguing that the Welsh Development Agency with its pomp was at its strongest, in the Valleys we were seeing a great decline there in their economy. So, I really don't think that was a solution at all.

[43] **Sian Gwenllian:** Nid ydym ni'n sôn am greu yr un math o asiantaeth, wrth gwrs—rhywbeth llawer mwy—.

Sian Gwenllian: We're not talking about creating the same kind of agency, of course—we are talking about something—.

[44] **Alun Davies:** Ie, rwy'n trio eich ateb chi mewn ffordd sy'n esbonio pam nad ydw i'n cytuno â chreu asiantaeth genedlaethol. Ac wedi hynny, pan rydych chi'n edrych ar ble rydym ni ar lefel fwy rhanbarthol, neu leol, a ydy creu mwy o gwangos yn ffordd ymlaen? Yn fy mhrofiad i, ac yn fy nhyb i, nid yw hynny'n mynd i ddiwydd. Pe bawn i'n meddwl bod hynny yn mynd i fod yn ateb—creu rhyw fath o gorfforaeth ar draws y Cymoedd—mi fuaswn i'n hapus iawn i gynnig hynny. Nid oes gen i wrthwynebiad athronyddol, os ydych chi'n leicio, yn erbyn hynny. Ond nid wyf yn gweld bod hynny'n mynd i fod yn ateb i'r cwestiwn.

[45] Beth rydym ni eisiau ei weld—a dyna ble rwy'n gweld y tasglu yma'n gweithio. Nid wyf yn gweld y tasglu yma fel adran Llywodraeth. Nid wyf yn ei weld yn dal cyllideb fawr, miliynau o bunnoedd, sy'n rhedeg ei raglenni ei hun. Rwy'n gweld y tasglu fan hyn yn gweithio i ddefnyddio rhyw fath o rymoedd a phwerau meddal, os ydych chi'n leicio, y Llywodraeth—dod â phobl at ei gilydd, gweithredu fel *catalyst* i greu newid, creu atebolrwydd i bobl yn y Cymoedd, ac wedyn cynnig a llunio llwybr a fydd yn dod â phobl at ei gilydd, pobl o sectorau gwahanol, a phobl o gymunedau gwahanol.

[46] So, nid wyf yn gweld bod y tasglu yma yn asiantaeth mewn unrhyw ffordd. Rwy'n ei weld e fel ffordd i'r Llywodraeth ddefnyddio'r

Alun Davies: Yes, of course, I'm just trying to explain why I don't agree with creating a national agency. And then when you look at where we are on a more regional, and local, level, is creating more quangos the way forward? In my experience, and in my opinion, that's not going to happen. If I thought that would be the solution—to create some sort of corporation across the Valleys—I'd be very happy to suggest that. I don't have any philosophical objection to that, if you like. But I don't see that that is going to be the solution to the question.

What we want to see—and that is where I see this taskforce working. I don't see the taskforce as a department of the Government. I don't see it holding a budget of millions, running its own programmes. I see this taskforce working to use some sort of Government powers—soft powers, if you like—bringing people together, operating as a catalyst to create change, and creating accountability for people in the Valleys, and offering a path that could be followed that would bring people together, people from different sectors, and people from different communities.

So, I don't see that this taskforce is an agency in any shape or form. I see it as a way for the Government to use the power that it has to create

grym sydd gan y Llywodraeth i greu newid yn y gymdeithas ac yn yr economi.

change in our society, and in the economy.

[47] **Sian Gwenllian:** Jest dau beth arall. Rydych chi wedi sôn am gyllideb, a chyllideb fechan fydd gan y tasglu rydych chi'n ei ddweud, ie? A fedrwch chi ymhelaethu?

Sian Gwenllian: Just two other matters. You mentioned the budget, and the taskforce will have a small budget, you say? Can you enhance upon your comments?

[48] **Alun Davies:** Ar hyn o bryd, yn y flwyddyn ariannol yma, mae gennym ni £50,000, ac rwy'n ystyried ar hyn o bryd £100,000 efallai. Nid ydym wedi cael trafodaethau'r gyllideb eto, ond rhywbeth o gwmpas £100,000 y buaswn i'n leicio ei weld. Ac mae Carl Sargeant wedi cynnig hynny fel rhan o'i gyllideb e. So, rwy'n gweld bod gennym ni gyllideb fel tasglu i weithredu fel tasglu, ac nid trio actio fel adran. Ac rwy'n credu bod y gwahaniaeth rhwng y ddau yn eithaf pwysig.

Alun Davies: At the moment, in this financial year, we have £50,000, and at the moment I'm considering £100,000 possibly. We haven't had the discussion about budget yet, but I think maybe around £100,000 is something I'd like to see. Carl Sargeant has offered that as part of his budget. So, I can see that we have a budget as a taskforce to work as a taskforce, and not try to act like a department of Government. And I think there's a difference there, and it's very important.

[49] **Sian Gwenllian:** Diolch. Beth ydy'r cysylltiad rhwng y tasglu a gweddill y materion yn eich portffolio chi? Rwy'n cael tipyn bach o drafferth gweld beth ydy'r cysylltiad rhwng y Gymraeg, er enghraifft, a'r tasglu.

Sian Gwenllian: Thank you. What's the connection between the taskforce and the other issues in your portfolio? I'm having some difficulty in seeing the connection between the Welsh language, for example, and the taskforce.

[50] **Alun Davies:** Mae'r Gymraeg yn hynod o bwysig yn y Cymoedd, Sian, rwy'n dweud wrthy ch chi—and byddai Bethan yn dweud yr un peth.

Alun Davies: The Welsh language is incredibly important in the Valleys, Sian, I can tell you—and Bethan would agree, I'm sure.

[51] Mae'r Prif Weinidog wedi gofyn i mi i gadeirio'r tasglu yma, ac wedi gofyn i mi ddod â phobl at ei gilydd i

The First Minister has asked me to chair this taskforce, and has asked me to bring people together to create

greu y math o weledigaeth. Ac rwy'n credu ei fod e wedi gofyn i mi—. Mae'n gwestiwn i'r Prif Weinidog, nid i mi. Fe wnaf i roi fy ateb i; efallai y bydd y Prif Weinidog yn rhoi ateb tra gwahanol. Ond rwy'n credu bod Carwyn wedi gofyn i mi arwain a chadeirio'r tasglu oherwydd fy mod i wedi bod yn trafod ac yn dadlau dros sefydlu tasglu o'r fath ers sbel. Mi wnes i ar y pwyllgor blaenorol fan hyn ddadlau bod angen ymateb penodol yn y Cymoedd i rai o'r heriau roeddem yn eu hwynebu, ac rwy'n credu bod, i ryw raddau, rhai o'm cyfrifoldebau gweinidogol yn cyffwrdd ar y gwaith yma. Roedd e hefyd eisiau i fi actio tipyn bach fel *catalyst* tu fewn i'r Llywodraeth fel rhan o'r tîm gweinidogol, i sicrhau bod Gweinidogion eraill yn gweithredu ac yn cydweithio gyda'i gilydd. Er fy mod yn cadeirio'r tasglu, mae pob un Gweinidog, heb eithriad, yn mynd i fod yn rhan o'r gwaith.

the type of vision we're looking for. And I think he has asked me—. This is a question for the First Minister, not for me. I'll give my own response; maybe the First Minister's response would be very different. But I think Carwyn has asked me to lead and chair this taskforce because I have been in discussions and also arguing for the establishment of this type of taskforce for a long time. I was on the previous committee here arguing that we needed a specific solution for the Valleys in relation to some of the challenges we were facing, and I think, to some extent, some of my ministerial responsibilities do touch upon this work. He also wanted me to work as a catalyst within Government, as part of the ministerial team, to make sure that other Ministers also take action and work together. Yes, I am chairing it, but every Minister, without exception, is going to be part of this work.

[52] **John Griffiths:** Okay. We will have to move on to other areas of questioning quite shortly, but before we do, three Members would like to ask further questions on these matters. They will need to be brief. Janet.

[53] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Thank you, Chairman. Minister, you've just said in your preamble earlier that, this time, you will be using Government powers and levers and resources to get this rolling. Apart from some of the powers, you've had the levers; you've had the resources for the past 17 years, as has been pointed out before. Now, the Bevan Foundation have said that they don't see the Valleys as a problem at all, and look at the employment figures, and the working age in Merthyr, for example—you'll find that it's higher than in many other areas. So, again, I think the question for us Members in the north is why the south Wales Valleys been singled out for this. That's my first question. And how are you going to actually manufacture something that

you've never had over the past 17 years? I think that would baffle a lot of people in my constituency as to why you think £100,000 is going to make a difference.

[54] Further, of course, the south Wales Valleys is one of the areas that has received a significant amount of EU funding and Communities First, and much of this has gone to regeneration initiatives. Yet, it was these very areas that voted to leave the European Union. So, really, your argument this morning, for me, doesn't stack up at all. So, I'd just like you to comment on those points I've raised.

[55] **John Griffiths:** It's important just to say that, obviously, there's quite a wide range of issues involved there, but time is pressing. I think you've covered some of these matters already, but please do respond.

[56] **Alun Davies:** Of course, Chair. The Member quotes the Bevan Foundation. Well, I've got the press release in front of me, and what Victoria also says is:

[57] 'My third reaction to Alun Davies' announcement was hope—hope that at last somebody will take a fresh approach, recognise the underlying opportunities, as well as problems...and do something that makes a difference to people's lives.'

[58] I think it's important to quote fully, and not selectively, in trying to make your case. Let me say this: you are right to suggest that there has been funding and money spent on regeneration in the Valleys over a period of time, but you're wrong to lead then into the other assumptions that you make. What I said in answer to Sian Gwenllian was that I wanted to use not only the hard powers available to Government in terms of budgets, resources, legislation, whatever it happens to be—the hard executive power that a Government has—but also the soft powers the Government has, which are not always as easily described. I want this to act as a catalyst to bring people together, and we're certainly going to be doing that over the next two days. I want this to act as a means of holding people to account for the policies and for the priorities and for the decisions that they take. I then want to see this taskforce acting as a very real means of promoting and delivering change and ensuring that other people deliver change in the Valleys in terms of bringing people together—whether it's private industry, whether it's local government, whether it's service deliverers, whether it's Welsh Government—to actually create an agenda for change. Because Victoria, in what she says

here, is absolutely right: the problems facing one part of a valley isn't necessarily the same as a problem facing another part of the valley. And one of the many reasons why the Conservatives have consistently failed in Wales is that you try to set one community against another: north against south, east-west, rural against urban.

09:45

[59] One of the things that I will never, ever, ever do as a Minister is set a community against another community in this country. I think we have an absolute, fundamental responsibility as a Government to represent all communities equally, but also to recognise the scale of difficulties, challenges and problems facing particular communities, and that means specific answers in some cases.

[60] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Jenny, can we have a short—

[61] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Chairman, can I just say that not one of my questions was answered there at all?

[62] **Alun Davies:** Your questions were answered.

[63] **John Griffiths:** I think we've given the general area of your questions a pretty good grounding so far on the committee, Janet. Jenny, could we have a short, focused question?

[64] **Jenny Rathbone:** I missed your opening remarks because I was at a meeting about the fiscal implications of Brexit, and very gloomy they are, too. We obviously receive far more in structural funds than any other part of the United Kingdom—£80 per head—and most of it has been directed to west Wales and the Valleys, quite rightly. It's uncertain what level of redistribution will be implicit in any new settlement with the Treasury, so in the absence of a lot of money being available, I wonder if you could talk to us a little bit about the way in which you're going to work with people in the Valleys. I think one of the problems with the European structural funds was that it was a top-down approach, in the main. There are exceptions. What's needed, it seems to me, is something where people take some ownership over making a contribution towards changing the economy of the Valleys.

[65] **Alun Davies:** Yes. I think you're absolutely right about the impact of leaving the European Union. We've already seen many of the lies that were

told in the spring and early summer of this year falling to pieces. I remember being told in Ebbw Vale—

[66] **Gareth Bennett:** No lies were told by your side, of course.

[67] **John Griffiths:** We can't have interjections in this committee. We must have questions and answers in an orderly fashion.

[68] **Gareth Bennett:** Thanks, Chair, I'll remember that.

[69] **Alun Davies:** I remember being told very clearly in Ebbw Vale in June that we were going to have £350 million a week spent on the national health service. Well, that's fallen to pieces. It was going to be every country in the world, from Australia to Mexico to South Korea, chasing preferential trade deals. Well we haven't seen that, either. We've seen—

[70] **Gareth Bennett:** [*Inaudible.*]

[71] **Bethan Jenkins:** Ask a question if you've got a question.

[72] **John Griffiths:** Come in with a question by all means, but we must have questions and answers without interjections across the table.

[73] **Gareth Bennett:** It's supposed to be scrutiny of a Minister, not political propaganda about a decision that has already been taken by the electorate of the UK.

[74] **John Griffiths:** This is a question-and-answer session. Members are asking questions. The Minister is answering the questions, and it must be conducted in an orderly fashion. You have the opportunity to ask questions if you wish. Now we're listening to the Minister's answer. Please continue.

[75] **Alun Davies:** What we've seen is the suggestion that we have the reintroduction of the Royal Yacht Britannia, which I'm not sure will do much for the economy of the south Wales Valleys, or elsewhere. In terms of what we've been able to achieve with the EU funds, we've seen some considerable investment with EU funds, and I've seen that in my own constituency. If you look at the money that has gone into the works site in Ebbw Vale, it's transformed what was the old steelworks site into an area, a zone, for learning and for skills enhancement. We've seen developments like the building of the A465, and we've seen the development of the Ebbw valley

railway that serves my friend's constituency as well. So, we've seen considerable infrastructure investment and we've seen investment in people, and people's skills, as a consequence of EU funding.

[76] Now, one of the issues that we're dealing with at the moment—and I think all Ministers are grappling with this at the moment—is how we articulate a response to that. Now, I don't believe for one moment that a UK Conservative Government is going to deliver on its promise that Wales will not lose a single penny in terms of the future. We've got a promise at the moment up till 2020 and we've got the promises on EU funding that's agreed by 23 November. If you take, for example, the transitional funding that west Wales and the Valleys would have received as a consequence of the next round of European funding, there are no guarantees on that; no suggestion of a guarantee on that. So we will lose many hundreds of millions of pounds in the Valleys as a consequence of it.

[77] So, we need to look at how we create an economic foundation without those levers and without that support. One of the answers that I tried to give to Sian earlier was about reorienting and changing the economy of the UK so that we do have a more decentralised economy and not one that is simply based on the finance sector in the City of London, but one that is based on support for manufacturing and support for communities up and down the United Kingdom. I'd like to see a focus on local economies—supporting the local economy—and then looking at how we are able to deliver an industrial strategy that is focused on creating—

[78] **Jenny Rathbone:** I completely—

[79] **John Griffiths:** Jenny, we haven't got time, I'm afraid. We have to move on. We have several areas to cover and I want to move on now to membership of the taskforce. You touched on this earlier, Minister. Could I ask you whether the Valleys communities would be directly represented on the taskforce and also whether any expert advisory members have yet been appointed?

[80] **Alun Davies:** As I said in an earlier answer, I am making a written statement later today, ahead of our first meeting tomorrow, which will outline the membership of the taskforce. I can tell the committee who the members are this morning, if the committee wishes to have that information. I will be chairing the taskforce. The ministerial members are Julie James and Ken Skates. In addition to that, I have invited Ann Beynon, who is chairing the

Cardiff city region board to join us; Andrew Diplock, who is director of strategy and governance at Inprova Energy; Judith Evans, the principal of Coleg y Cymoedd; Dr Chris Jones, the chair of Cwm Taf Univeristy Health Board; Martin Mansfield, the general secretary of the Wales TUC; councillor Andrew Morgan, leader of Rhondda Cynon Taf and Professor Brian Morgan of Cardiff University. They'll all be members of the taskforce.

[81] In addition to this, we have some expertise from within Welsh Government in terms of having senior officials supporting that work. What we're trying to do is bring people together who have experience of living and working in the Valleys of south Wales and who are rooted in those communities and have not only a technical knowledge and understanding of some of the challenges facing us, but also a personal commitment to meeting those challenges. So, I hope that the taskforce membership is sufficiently widely drawn to give us that level of experience. I will say that we also have a large number of additional speakers and specialists joining us for the two days—Thursday and Friday—and I will be more than happy to release the names and the papers that we'll be discussing on Thursday and Friday to this committee. I'm more than happy to return to the committee in order to answer questions on the decisions that we've taken.

[82] **John Griffiths:** Okay, thank you very much. If there are no follow-up—. Bethan.

[83] **Bethan Jenkins:** Ar yr hyn yr oedd Jenny yn ei ddweud o ran ymgynghori, pa fath o gynrychiolaeth benodol a fydd yna o'r Cymoedd? Achos, er mor wybodus yw'r bobl hyn, maen nhw'n swnio fel eu bod ar frig eu gyrfaoedd ac efallai, fel pawb, maen nhw'n colli cysylltiad efallai gyda'r hyn sydd yn digwydd ar lawr gwlad o ran yr elusennau ac o ran y grwpiau lleol sydd yn cael eu gweithredu. Buaswn i ddim yn gallu dweud ym mhob ardal rwy'n ei gynrychioli fy mod i'n gwybod popeth ynglŷn â'r hyn sydd yn digwydd ar hyd y rhanbarth, oherwydd mae jest yn amhosibl.

Bethan Jenkins: On what Jenny was just saying about consultation, what sort of specific representation will there be from the Valleys? Because these people may be very knowledgeable, but they sound as though they are at the peak of their careers and maybe like everyone, they lose that connection with what's happening at grassroots level in relation to charities and the local groups that are operating. I wouldn't be able to say that I know everything about every area that I represent in relation to what's happening there because it's absolutely impossible. So, you need to look at different

Felly, a ydych chi, fel rŷm ni'n ei wneud fel pwyllgorau, yn edrych ar ffurf newydd o ymgysylltu gyda phobl y Cymoedd, sydd, fel gwnaethom ni ei drafod yn gynharach, yn teimlo fel nad ydyn nhw efallai yn cael y cysylltiad uniongyrchol hynny gyda gwleidyddion a dyna paham efallai maen nhw wedi pleidleisio, fel y maen nhw wedi, yn y refferendwm? Felly, rwy'n eithaf *passionate* am hwn o ran y ffaith nad wyf eisiau gweld eto, fel rydym wedi sôn amdano o'r blaen, pobl wybodus yn dod o gwmpas i benderfynu rhywbeth ar ran y bobl yn hytrach na gyda'r bobl.

[84] **Alun Davies:** Rwy'n cytuno'n llwyr gyda chi. Rwy'n credu ei fod yn bwysig nad yw hyn yn rhywbeth sydd yn digwydd i'r Cymoedd, ond sy'n rhywbeth sy'n dod o'r Cymoedd a'n bod ni'n cydnabod ac yn gweithio'n galed i sicrhau ein bod ni'n cael y math o brofiad, gobeithion a gweledigaethau gwahanol o bob rhan o'r Cymoedd. Mae'r hyn a fydd yn flaenoriaeth i chi yng nghwm Nedd yn mynd i fod yn wahanol i finnau yng nghwm Sirhywi ac mae'n rhaid i ni gydnabod hynny. Felly, un o'r pethau rydw i eisiau eu trafod yfory, ac rydw i'n hapus iawn i ysgrifennu at y pwyllgor yn amlinellu beth fyddwn ni wedi ei drafod yn ystod y dyddiau nesaf, os yw hynny'n help, yw cynnal yr union fath o drafodaeth rydych chi wedi ei disgrifio yn ystod yr wythnosau a'r misoedd nesaf. Mi fuaswn i'n croesawu cyfraniad Aelodau'r Cymoedd i hynny hefyd. Er

ways, as we do as committees, of linking with people and engaging with them. As we discussed earlier, they feel as though they don't have that direct contact with politicians and maybe that's what they have voted as they have in the referendum. So, I'm quite passionate about this in that I do not want to see, as we've said before, knowledgeable people coming together to make decisions on behalf of people rather than with people.

Alun Davies: I agree entirely with you. I do think that it's very important that this isn't something that happens to the Valleys, but something that emerges from the Valleys and that we recognise and work hard to ensure that we do bring together the kind of different experiences and visions from all parts of the Valleys. What will be a priority for you in the Neath valley will be different from myself in the Sirhowy valley, and we have to acknowledge that. So, one of the things I want to discuss tomorrow, and I'm happy to write to the committee outlining what we will have discussed over the next few days, if that's of assistance, is to have exactly that kind of debate that you've just described over the next weeks and months. I would welcome the contributions of Members representing Valleys communities to that, because although this is

bod hyn yn rhywbeth sy'n dod o'r Llywodraeth ac yn rhan o'r Llywodraeth, os ydych chi'n licio, nid wyf i eisiau gweld y Llywodraeth yn gweithredu mewn ffordd ynysig mewn unrhyw ffurf. So, os ydy Aelodau'r Cynulliad, Aelodau Seneddol neu gynghorwyr eisiau bod yn rhan o'r trafodaethau rydym ni'n mynd i'w cynnal ac arwain yn ystod yr wythnosau a'r misoedd nesaf, mi fuaswn i'n croesawu hynny.

something that comes from Government and is part of Government, I don't want to see the Government operating in isolation in any way. So, if Assembly Members, Members of Parliament or councillors do want to be part of the discussions that we are to have over the next few weeks and months, then I would welcome that.

[85] **John Griffiths:** If you do write to the committee, as you mentioned, Minister, I think that would be very useful. Jenny.

[86] **Jenny Rathbone:** I just want to press you a little bit on this, because it's absolutely crucial, otherwise it's just another committee. How do you think you're going to work with the local people in order to break through the cynicism and the sense of alienation?

[87] **Alun Davies:** I said in answer to an earlier question, and I think this is absolutely crucial—I think you're absolutely right about this and so was Sian earlier—I don't want, and it is not my intention, to create a talking shop. It is not my intention to create a quango and it is not my intention to try to create a taskforce that will pretend to be a department of Government. What I want to do is to use the soft powers available to Government in order to act as a catalyst, as a challenger and as a holder to account, to use appalling English, of decision takers and decision takers who are currently taking decisions about projects that impact upon the Valleys of south Wales. I will anticipate and expect that the people who are, for example, delivering the metro will explain to the taskforce what work is being undertaken and how that will improve the lives of people in the communities affected. I will anticipate and expect Ken Skates as the Cabinet Secretary for the economy to explain how the economic policy that he is going to be delivering and leading will impact upon the Valleys of south Wales. I will expect and want to see how the city region partnerships will be delivering for the Valleys of south Wales.

[88] So, I want and it is my ambition that this taskforce will hold people to account and will ensure that we have a very clear route-map and path ahead of us to create work to improve the daily lives and daily experiences of life of

people, and that we will determine a way forward for the Valleys of south Wales in a way that we haven't done before. I think you're absolutely right, because what I do not want to do is to end up in a situation where we create a mirage of hope but no means of delivery.

[89] **Jenny Rathbone:** So, I think we'll need to come back to this, because you're absolutely right, we've got to act as a catalyst and a challenger, and, at the next session, I'm sure we'll want to have some detail on how you're actually going to engage with—

[90] **Alun Davies:** I will say, because I think this is important, Chair—I'm happy to write to the committee to give you written assurances on these matters—we will deliver a route-map, if you like, over the next few years about what we want to see delivered and what we want to see happen. I will establish targets and I will establish objectives on which we can be held to account.

[91] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Thanks for that, Minister. Rhianon, briefly following up on this.

[92] **Rhianon Passmore:** I think, bearing in mind the early discussions, I'm going to try and paraphrase my questions. The difference between employment and somebody who may be employed with three jobs and being referred to a food bank, I think, demonstrates the issues that we're facing. I welcome very much the opportunity to have this committee, Minister. So, how will the taskforce co-ordinate—you've touched upon city regions, but how will it work with existing programmes around Communities First, Flying Start and Vibrant and Viable Places? You've touched upon EU funding and the effect that that has and that we don't have certainty and guarantees, so how will it co-ordinate with the existing programmes that we do have and the existing levers to add that value?

10:00

[93] **Alun Davies:** One of my objectives for the next two days is to agree a structure for working, because, as I said, I don't want to create an industry in committee formation—committees—looking at serious issues. We have a number of different groups, programmes, working groups and structures in existence at the moment. I think we need to clarify that. I think we need to simplify what we have and I think we need to look at a streamlined approach to the delivery of policy and the delivery of investment in the Valleys of south

Wales. It's not in my gift today to tell you what we're going to decide on Thursday and Friday. I can certainly write to the committee after the meeting to clarify a lot of these issues. But what I can say to you this morning, Rhianon, is that I'm absolutely determined that we will establish a way of working that cuts through bureaucracy but doesn't create new layers and unnecessary structures and one where we are answerable and accountable to the communities that we serve.

[94] The points that Bethan made earlier in terms of understanding the different demands, the different needs, the different visions and the different ambitions for different communities, I think, are absolutely crucial. For example, if you talk about the Swansea valley, the focus there on living, working and access to the city of Swansea and Swansea bay is absolutely crucial but not important to me in Blaenau Gwent. We need to understand that. Joyce represents the communities of the Gwendraeth valleys. The issues facing the Gwendraeth are obviously different to that of the Ebbw that you represent, Rhianon, and we need to understand and hear all those different voices and understand how we as the structures in governments in Wales are able to respond to those. My expectation is that that will be different in different places. Can I just make this point, John? I know you're anxious about time. My concern is that all too often we look from a distance at the Valleys and we see a single, homogenous region. That is not true. It is not the case. It never has been, it isn't today and it won't be in the future. If you look at some of the key economic statistics in describing the communities and economic activity in the Valleys you will see there are some very, very real differentials where some elements of the Valleys have seen growth and some elements of the Valleys are seeing significant increases in economic activity. That is not true everywhere and in some places you're not seeing that same growth or it happening at the same time. We need to understand that and we need to understand the reasons behind it before we can address and articulate ways in which we will respond to it. So, the points that were made earlier, I think, are absolutely right and correct. I hope that we'll respond in a richer way than perhaps simply sitting in a room in Cardiff bay could dictate.

[95] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Staying with the theme of other programmes and how they relate to the work of the taskforce do any Members want to come in further on those matters? Joyce.

[96] **Joyce Watson:** Staying with the theme: we've got a taskforce and you've mentioned the Gwendraeth valley several times. I commissioned also

a Bevan report on women in poverty in the Ystradgynlais area, which is another valley, so I'll share that with you, Minister. It's a couple of years old now. But I think what everybody wants to know is how you're going to measure success and what that's going to look like across the programme. I know that you've said that you're setting up the framework in the next two days because it's not yours to set, it's those on the ground—. Within that framework I'm assuming there will be the monitoring and evaluation as well and, if it is the case, Minister, that you haven't already got that answer, when you give us your framework would you equally give us an understanding of what monitoring and evaluation will look like?

[97] **Alun Davies:** Yes, I'm more than happy to do that. I can do that in writing to the committee when we're able to do so. But the point that Joyce makes about the differential nature of poverty I think is well made. We know that women suffer from poverty more profoundly perhaps than the male population. We also know that child poverty—although there's been some marginal change recently—continues to be an appalling problem for many families in the same way as in-work poverty has grown recently as a consequence of the UK Government's decisions, mainly on welfare. So, we've seen a number of changes fundamentally in the way that different people experience poverty. I think the committee report done in the previous Assembly, actually, makes that point very powerfully, and, certainly, I will be asking officials to take a very long look at the work of the predecessor committee in the last Assembly, and the studies that were done then on the nature of poverty, and the impact of poverty on different people within the population, because I think that is absolutely crucial to us being able to address some of those issues.

[98] **John Griffiths:** Could you give an indication at this stage then, Minister, whether results-based accountability would be the basis upon which monitoring and evaluation might take place? I know there's been a lot of work within Welsh Government to move on to that footing. Is it possible to say at this stage, or are these matters you have yet to resolve?

[99] **Alun Davies:** I will apologise to the committee if I—. We are meeting tomorrow and Friday and what I don't want to do is to prejudge too much some of the decisions that will be taken over the coming days, but I think it's right and proper I do write to committee following our meeting this week to actually cover some of the points that the committee is quite rightly anxious to cover. Can I say this? It is not good enough for Ministers to launch programmes, initiatives, and then to respond on the basis of PR. I think we have to respond on the basis of substance, and that means setting realistic

targets that we believe we can achieve; setting realistic milestones for our programmes, and then being held to account in terms of timescales, and in terms of what we deliver. And that's the way I've always worked in Government; it's the way I intend to work over the next five years.

[100] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Thanks for that. Bethan, returning perhaps to other programmes and the relationship with the taskforce.

[101] **Bethan Jenkins:** Diolch. Mae gen i gryn gydymdeimlad gyda'r cysyniad yr oedd Sian Gwenllian yn rhoi gerbron yn gynharach, gyda'r ddadl gwrth-ddaearyddol. Rydym ni wedi clywed gan Aelodau Llafur ei hunain bod problemau yn codi gyda, er enghraifft, cynlluniau Cymunedau yn Gyntaf, pan fo un rhan o'r stryd yn rhan ohono a rhan arall ddim. Rwyf wedi clywed nifer o gwestiynau ar lawr y Senedd ac yn y pwyllgor blaenorol yn y Senedd diwethaf yn hynny o beth. Ac, felly, fy marn i—ac rwy'n disgwyl i'r Gweinidog anghytuno—yw dylai fod asesiad wedi digwydd o Cymunedau yn Gyntaf, a nifer o brosiectau eraill y Llywodraeth fel Flying Start, cyn i'r tasglu yma gael ei sefydlu er mwyn llywio'r hyn y mae'r tasglu yn ei wneud. Oherwydd, heb wneud hynny, sut ydych chi yn mynd i allu rhoi sail i hyn? Mae'r tasglu, fel rwy'n deall, yn mynd i fod yn rhywbeth eithaf manwl gyda thargedau manwl.

Bethan Jenkins: Thank you. I have quite a bit of sympathy with the concept that Sian Gwenllian presented earlier in relation to the anti-geographical debate. We have heard from Labour Members themselves that there are problems with Communities First schemes, for example, when one part of a street is part of the scheme and another part isn't. I've heard a lot of questions in the Senedd about this, and in the previous committee also. So, I expect you to disagree, but I think an assessment should have happened in relation to Communities First, and many other Government projects, for example, Flying Start, before this taskforce was established in order to drive what the taskforce actually does. Without having done that, how are you going to form a basis for this taskforce, because I think it's going to be something quite focused, if I've understood properly, with detailed targets?

[102] Yn eich ymateb i fi yn y Senedd cyn yr haf, roeddech chi'n dweud bod yr Ysgrifennydd dros dlodi yn mynd i fod yn adolygu hyn, ond nid wyf wedi clywed, ar hyn o bryd, pryd bydd hynny'n digwydd.

In your response to me in the Senedd before the summer, you told me that the Cabinet Secretary for poverty would be reviewing this, but I haven't heard when that will happen. So, the question is: would it not have been

So, y cwestiwn yw: oni byddai wedi bod yn well i wneud hynny yn gyntaf, i wybod pa mor llwyddiannus, neu pam mae rhai yn ffael, a pam mae rhai yn fwy llwyddiannus nag eraill, er mwyn hwyluso'r broses i chi fel Gweinidog?

better to do that first, to know how successful, or maybe why some schemes fail, and why others are more successful than others, in order to facilitate that process for yourself as Minister?

[103] **Alun Davies:** Cwestiynau digon teg i Carl Sargeant, a bydd Carl yma nes ymlaen y bore yma i chi ofyn y cwestiynau—

Alun Davies: I think they would be fair questions for Carl Sargeant who will be here later this morning—

[104] **Bethan Jenkins:** Passing the buck.

[105] **Alun Davies:** Nid wyf yn pasio'r *buck*. Fe yw'r Gweinidog cyfrifol amdano fe, ac mae e gerbron y pwyllgor ymhen awr. Felly, mae'n gyfle i chi drafod hynny gyda fe.

Alun Davies: I'm not passing the buck, but he is the Minister with responsibility for these areas, and he is appearing before the committee in an hour's time. So, there is an opportunity for you to discuss that with him.

[106] **Bethan Jenkins:** Ond mae e ar y tasglu hefyd.

Bethan Jenkins: But he's on the taskforce too.

[107] **Alun Davies:** Nid yw e ar y—

Alun Davies: He's not—

[108] **Bethan Jenkins:** Nid yw e ar y tasglu gyda chi.

Bethan Jenkins: He's not on the taskforce with you.

[109] **Alun Davies:** Nid yw e'n aelod craidd o'r tasglu, ond roeddwn i wedi trafod hyn gyda fe ddoe.

Alun Davies: He's not a core member of the taskforce, but I discussed this issue with him yesterday.

[110] **Bethan Jenkins:** A ddylai e fod ar y tasglu os mai fe sydd yn mynd i fod yn adolygu'r pethau yma?

Bethan Jenkins: Shouldn't he be on the taskforce given that he's going to be the one reviewing these issues?

[111] **Alun Davies:** Edrycha, mae pob un Gweinidog, heb eithriad, yn

Alun Davies: Look, every Minister, without exception, is responsible for

gyfrifol am rhannau o'r gwaith—heb eithriad. Nawr, a ydyn ni eisiau pob un Gweinidog yn eistedd ar dasglu? Buaswn i'n awgrymu nad ydym. Mi fuaswn hefyd yn awgrymu ein bod eisiau mwyafrif clir ar y tasglu sydd ddim yn aelodau o'r Llywodraeth.

[112] **Bethan Jenkins:** Ond y broblem nawr yw nad ydych chi'n mynd i ateb y cwestiwn oherwydd mae Gweinidog arall sydd â'r prif gyfrifoldeb. A ydych chi'n gweld ei bod hi'n anodd i ni weithiau wedyn?

[113] **Alun Davies:** Wel, nid wyf yn ateb y cwestiwn ar hyn o bryd achos rwyf ti'n 'interrupt-o' fi.

[114] **Bethan Jenkins:** Wel, rwyf wedi bod yn gwrandao'n eithaf astud.

[115] **Alun Davies:** Océ. Jest rho bum munud i fi. Nid wyf eisiau cael pob un Gweinidog ar y tasglu, felly roedd rhaid gwneud penderfyniadau o ran pwy sydd yn mynd i fod arno fe, a phwy sydd ddim yn mynd i fod arno fe. Rwyf wedi gwneud y penderfyniad, *rightly or wrongly*—ac rwy'n cytuno â ti bod hwn yn *judgment call*—mai'r peth pwysig i fi yw datblygiadau economaidd. Y flaenoriaeth i fi yw'r blaenoriaethau economaidd, a gofynnais i Ken fod ar y tasglu am y rheswm hwnnw. Nid yw hynny'n meddwl nad yw Carl yn rhan o'r gwaith ac nad yw'n mynd i fod yn rhan o'r gwaith a fydd yn mynd yn ei flaen. Roeddwn yn trafod hyn gydag

parts of this work—that is true without exception. Now, do we therefore want all Minister sitting on the taskforce? I would argue that we don't want that. I would also argue that we want a clear majority on the taskforce who are not members of Government.

Bethan Jenkins: But the problem now is that you're not answering the question because it's another Minister who has the main responsibility. Do you see that it's difficult for us then?

Alun Davies: Well, I'm not answering the question at the moment because you're interrupting me.

Bethan Jenkins: Well, I have been listening very carefully.

Alun Davies: Okay. Just give me five minutes. I don't want to see all Ministers on the taskforce, so some decisions had to be taken as to who the members would be and who would not be members. I've made the decision, rightly or wrongly—and I agree with you that this is a judgment call—that the most important thing for me is economic developments. The priority for me is economic priorities, and I asked Ken to be a member of the taskforce for that very reason. That doesn't mean that Carl isn't involved in the work or isn't going to be involved in the work going forward. I discussed this with him yesterday—I spoke twice

ef ddoe—siaradais dwywaith ddoe am sut rydym yn mynd i symud pethau ymlaen. Felly, mae yna gyswllt cryf iawn rhyngof i a Gweinidogion eraill sydd yn mynd i fod yn rhan o'r gwaith yma.

yesterday about how we're going to progress things in this area. So, there is a strong relationship between me and other Ministers who are going to be involved in this work.

[116] I ateb eich cwestiwn cyntaf: na, nid oeddwn i eisiau oedi; roeddwn eisiau dechrau'r gwaith yma'n syth. Nid oeddwn eisiau aros am chwe mis neu flwyddyn hyd nes ein bod wedi bod trwy'r siarad a'r trafod. Roeddwn eisiau sefydlu'r tasglu yma'n syth ar ôl yr etholiad, ac mi wnaethom ni wneud hynny. Rydym yn cyfarfod yfory am y tro cyntaf i lunio cynlluniau gwaith ac mi fydd y trafod a'r trafodaethau yr ydych wedi'u hawgrymu—ac rwy'n cytuno â chi—yn rhan o hynny. Ond rwyf eisiau iddo fod yn rhan o'r gwaith. Beth rwyf ddim eisiau ei wneud yw aros am flwyddyn nes ein bod yn dechrau ar y gwaith. Dyna beth rwyf yn ei ofni: os ydym yn aros wrth inni siarad ac yn trafod ac yn cega am flwyddyn, mi fydd dim byd yn digwydd. Felly, rwy'n gweld tipyn bach yn fwy o *urgency* na hynny.

To answer your first question: no, I didn't want see any delay; I wanted to start this work as a matter of urgency. I didn't want to wait six months or 12 months before we'd been through a huge amount of discussion. I wanted to establish this taskforce immediately after the election, and we did that. We will be meeting for the first time tomorrow to draw up our work programmes and the discussions and debates that you've suggested—and I agree with you—will be part of that. But I do want it to be part of the work. What I don't want to do is to delay things for a year before we commence this work. That would be my fear: if we were to wait whilst we discuss and argue over a period of 12 months, nothing would happen in the interim. So, I see a little more urgency than you seem to.

[117] **Bethan Jenkins:** Y pwynt gwahanol y byddwn i'n rhoi ar hwn yw: dim trafod er mwyn trafod ydyw, ond asesu ac asesu er mwyn sicrhau bod y pethau cywir yn digwydd. Felly, byddwn i fel aelod o blaid wrthwynebol ddim yn eich beirniadu chi pe byddech yn aros blwyddyn ac wedyn yn dod atom a dweud, 'Wel, y rheswm wnaethom ni aros am

Bethan Jenkins: A different point that I would put to you is: it is not about discussing for discussion's sake, but assessing to make sure that the right things happen. So, as a member of an opposition party, I wouldn't judge you if you waited a year and then you came to us, saying, 'Well, the reason we waited a year was because we wanted to have a look at how these

flwyddyn oedd achos bod rhaid inni weld sut yr oedd y cynlluniau yma wedi gweithio', achos roedd y pwyllgor diwethaf wedi dweud bod lot fawr yn bod o ran sut yr oedd Cymunedau yn Gyntaf yn—. Roedd Lesley Griffiths wedi rhoi'r economi wrth wraidd cael pobl i mewn i swyddi, ond nid oedd hwnnw'n un o dargedau Cymunedau yn Gyntaf. Felly, mae yna bethau i edrych i mewn iddyn nhw, ond gwnaf i ddim gofyn mwy o gwestiynau nawr.

[118] **Alun Davies:** Rwy'n cytuno—mae yna bethau i edrych i mewn iddyn nhw, ond mae'n rhaid dechrau'r gwaith, ac mae'n edrych yn debyg ein bod ni'n anghytuno. Rwyf eisiau dechrau'r gwaith yn syth ac rwyf eisiau'r math o drafod ac ymgynghori rydych yn sôn amdano yn rhan o'r gwaith, ond beth rwyf ddim eisiau ei wneud yw siarad yn lle gwneud y gwaith.

[119] **John Griffiths:** Jenny.

[120] **Jenny Rathbone:** I disagree with Bethan—I want you to get on with it. More than that, I want to know what your officials have been doing over the summer to make contact with some of these programmes that are already there on the ground, like Communities First, like Flying Start and like Vibrant and Viable Places, because you've got to start from somewhere. I don't expect you to tell us what the committee, which hasn't met yet until tomorrow, is going to agree, but I do want to know what the Government's been doing over the summer to map some of these things, which is all about how you're going to engage with these themes.

[121] **Alun Davies:** What we've been doing over summer is putting together the taskforce members with the board members and bringing together a series of experts and specialists in order to provide some of the information

that you're describing. We're starting off tomorrow's meeting with an economic overview from the Welsh Government's chief economist. We're also bringing in people from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, from Cardiff University, from the Trades Union Congress, from the Cardiff city region board, looking at how we are able to have a richer understanding of the economy of the south Wales Valleys. We also want to ensure that we have an understanding of the quality-of-life issues and delivery of services.

10:15

[122] We're having presentations tomorrow from housing associations, from the education consortia, from the health boards, from Coleg y Cymoedd, and we'll be trying to understand, in a way that is more profound, some of the issues that we're facing, because all of us here who live in and represent or work in the Valleys will have our own perspectives. I will say, 'This is important to me in Blaenau Gwent'; Bethan will say, 'This is important to me in Neath'; Rhianon will say, 'This is important to us in Islwyn'; Joyce will be talking about the Gwendraeth valley, wherever it happens to be, or the Swansea valley. Those perspectives are all valuable and important and we need to find a way of bringing them together, so that we have both an economic, statistical understanding, if you like—the high-level understanding—of some of the challenges facing us, but we also have a human understanding of how those challenges affect people in our communities. And, do you know—I know I'm trying the patience of the Chair here—one of the things that really, really drives me is to change the human experience, and I think, you know, we can play a numbers game as long as we like, but what affects me is what happens to people in my street, in my community—what happens to people living their daily lives. I think we need to be very, very focused on that people agenda, if you like. And, you know, when we talk about some of the conversations and targets that we'll be setting, they'll be focused on how people live their lives. I think that's absolutely crucial.

[123] **Jenny Rathbone:** Do you envisage using the Flying Start, Communities First and Vibrant and Viable Places programmes as a vehicle for reaching some of the harder to reach, or do you think they don't have much role to play in that?

[124] **Alun Davies:** We will be using all mechanisms available to us, so including some of the mechanisms that you may have listed, but not limited

to them as well.

[125] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay.

[126] **John Griffiths:** Okay. If there are no further questions then can I thank the Minister and his officials for giving evidence to us today? You will be sent a transcript to check for factual accuracy. Thank you very much indeed. We will now break for 10 minutes.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10:17 a 10:40.
The meeting adjourned between 10:17 and 10:40.*

**Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gymunedau a Phlant—Trafod
Blaenoriaethau Cynnar
Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children—Discussion of Early
Priorities**

[127] **John Griffiths:** The committee is reconvened. May I welcome Carl Sargeant, Assembly Member, Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children, to the committee for this scrutiny session? Would you like to introduce yourself, as it were, Minister, as well as your officials?

[128] **The Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children (Carl Sargeant):** Bore da, Chair. Good morning, committee. Carl Sargeant, Minister for communities and children. I'll ask my officials to introduce themselves. Jo-Anne.

[129] **Ms Daniels:** Jo-Anne Daniels, director of communities and tackling poverty.

[130] **Mr Howells:** John Howells, director of housing and regeneration.

[131] **John Griffiths:** Diolch yn fawr. Minister, would you like to make any introductory remarks before Members ask questions?

[132] **Carl Sargeant:** Thank you, Chair. First of all, thank you for the opportunity to come and speak with you. I look forward to—I think I look forward to the scrutiny. But what's important is that it's a new Government and new opportunities. I'm delighted that the First Minister asked me to take on this portfolio of communities and children. I'm familiar with the

communities element of this, but the children element is a new challenge personally for me, but I find that the synergies between those parts of the portfolio are important, and I think that that will give us a greater opportunity for building a very safe, resilient community for Wales. So, I'll look forward to more detailed questioning from you, but if I can, I will, hopefully, answer those questions. If not, my team are here to help.

[133] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Thanks very much. Well, we're going to start with housing and housing supply. I think Sian has the first question.

[134] **Sian Gwenllian:** Ie, y maes cyflenwad tai ydy'r un sydd o ddiddordeb mawr i'r pwyllgor yma, wrth gwrs. Rwy'n falch iawn o weld y targed 20,000 o gartrefi fforddiadwy yn ystod tymor y Cynulliad yma, sydd yn darged uchelgeisiol. Sut ydych chi'n bwriadu cyrraedd hwnnw? Ac efallai i helpu ateb y cwestiwn, tybed a fedrdech chi ddweud, o fewn y ffigwr 20,000 yna, faint ydym yn sôn amdany'n nhw sy'n dai cymdeithasol, a faint ydym yn sôn am gynlluniau eraill—pethau fel cytundebau 106 ac yn y blaen. Felly, *breakdown* o'r 20,000 yna, a hefyd diffiniad o beth yw tŷ fforddiadwy, mewn ffordd.

Sian Gwenllian: Yes, the supply of housing are is the one that is of particular interest to this committee, of course. I'm very pleased to see that target of 20,000 affordable homes during this Assembly term, which is a very ambitious target. How do you intend to achieve that? And maybe to help answer that question, could you perhaps, within that 20,000, say how many we are talking about that are social housing, and how many, perhaps, in relation to other schemes, for example the 106 agreements and so on. So, a breakdown of that 20,000, if you would, please, and a definition of what is an affordable house.

[135] **Carl Sargeant:** I'm very grateful for the question. Good morning, Sian. I made my first statement to the CHC, Community Housing Cymru, yesterday around the 20,000. The programme for government illustrated that we will be pressing on with our manifesto commitment of 20,000 homes. I will be making a statement to the Chamber in a few weeks around the detail of that—a breakdown of how we perceive the 20,000, and the make-up of that—but, roughly, we'll be looking at around—. Around 6,000 homes will be through the Help to Buy scheme, and the 14,000 other properties will be made up of a social housing grant with registered social landlords and a mixture of other schemes that we are currently bringing forward. Again, Chair, I'll be making a formal statement to the Chamber with the detail of that.

[136] **Sian Gwenllian:** Diolch yn fawr. Mae hynny'n ddefnyddiol iawn. I ddechrau gyda'r 14,000 yn y sector tai cymdeithasol, rwy'n siŵr y bydd y cymdeithasau tai yn edrych ar hynny'n ofalus iawn ac yn gofyn sut ydych chi'n mynd i fod yn talu am y rheini. A ydych chi'n mynd i barhau, felly, efo'r grant sydd ar gael ar hyn o bryd?

Sian Gwenllian: Thank you very much. That's very useful. In relation to the 14,000, then, in the social housing sector, I'm sure the housing associations will look at that very carefully and will want to know how you are going to pay for those. Are you going to continue with the grant that's available at the moment?

[137] **Carl Sargeant:** I caution the question, if I may, Chair—I didn't say 14,000 social housing, I said '14,000' and 'make-up of', which will include social housing. I spoke to the sector yesterday and they're very excited about the proposal to bring forward new opportunities. I will continue with the social housing grant programme. What we've managed to do in years gone by is have a very successful compact with housing associations, and we're also introducing, alongside of that—we're hoping to include the Welsh Local Government Association as well in terms of being involved in that compact in order to have a tripartite solution to the building of new properties. There will be a mixture, from market to affordable homes, and how we are able to deliver that through different financial support schemes as well—. So, on the 14,000, I will come back to the Chamber with more detail.

[138] This is a long-term, five-year programme. Housing, as you will be very aware, is not a light-switch moment; it takes a lot of planning and process to get there. But what really is important for the ambitious target of 20,000 is that we start straight away. The housing associations, as one of our partners, are really interested in getting off the blocks straight away, so we're looking forward to that.

10:45

[139] **Sian Gwenllian:** Diolch. Ynglŷn â'r 6,000 Cymorth i Brynu, a fydd yna unrhyw fecanwaith yn y fan yna i wneud yn siŵr bod y tai yna yn aros yn dai fforddiadwy, hynny yw, pan fyddan nhw'n cael eu gwerthu ymlaen?

Sian Gwenllian: Thank you. In relation to the 6,000 Help to Buy, will there be a mechanism there to make sure that those homes stay as affordable homes, you know, when they're sold on?

[140] **Carl Sargeant:** Well, that's a market-driven scheme, so we work with the private sector on that. That's not the case at the moment, so what we're trying to do is—and we recognise the mixture of families, communities and individuals who want to get on the housing market ladder—create a space for all. So, we create social housing—I'm really enthused by some of the local authorities already starting to build council house properties. We think there are around 600, on the proposed numbers, currently, for new council housing stock. On the basis of that and of other actions that we've seen, and pressures in the market, I will be pursuing also legislation to stop the right to buy in Wales. That will help, I believe, keep the right housing stock in the right place for future generations.

[141] **Sian Gwenllian:** Diolch. Felly, mewn gwirionedd, o safbwynt cynyddu'r cyflenwad tai i'r dyfodol, rydym ni'n sôn am darged o 14,000, oherwydd mae'r 6,000—nid oes yna ddim sicrwydd y bydd y rheini'n parhau fel tai fforddiadwy, er fy mod i'n cytuno â'r cynllun a bod yn rhaid cael y cynllun yna yn y tymor byr. Ond mae eisiau bod yn glir ein bod ni'n sôn am ddau wahanol beth fan hyn, mewn ffordd, a'r prif angen yng Nghymru ydy cynyddu'r cyflenwad tai am genhedlaeth, felly, ac nid rhywbeth dros dro, fel sydd yn gallu digwydd efo'r cynllun Cymorth i Brynu, er bod hwnnw'n bwysig iawn hefyd. Rwy'n deall y cymhellion efo hynny, ond jest i ni fod yn glir bod yna wahaniaeth, onid oes, yn y ffordd rydym ni'n dosbarthu'r math o dai?

Sian Gwenllian: Thank you. So, in actual fact then, in relation to increasing the housing supply in future, we're looking at a target of 14,000, because that 6,000—there's no assurance that those will continue as affordable houses, although I do agree with that scheme and we do have to have that in the short term. But, we need to be clear that we're actually talking about two different things here, and the main need in Wales is to increase the housing requirement for a generation, and not as a temporary measure, which can happen with the Help to Buy scheme, although that is important too. I understand start the motive behind that, but, just to be clear, there is a difference here in the way we classify housing.

[142] **Carl Sargeant:** I think your assumption is fair to say that the mixture of schemes—and I can't give you specific figures. I won't be able to do that when I make my statement either. Because of the flexibility of how the market operates, the only guarantee of creating 20,000 homes is to have a block of money, which we don't have as a Government, to create 20,000 more new units. We have to use a suite of tools and opportunities with our

partners to develop that programme. Through the five-year programme, while we'll set out pretty clearly what our ambitions are in terms of the make-up of the 20,000, I see that flexing over the time as well, because, actually, we might get less Help to Buy, but might have new opportunities in a different scheme that we can present. So, our ambition is to deliver a 20,000 block, and we'll be able to demonstrate early on what our ambitions will be. But, I can't give you any cast-iron assurances we'll have 10 of this type of house and 100 of those, just because of market conditions.

[143] **Sian Gwenllian:** Iawn, diolch. A **Sian Gwenllian:** Thank you. Are empty ydy cartrefi gwag yn rhan o'r 20,000 homes part of this 20,000—bringing yma—dod â chartrefi gwag yn ôl i empty houses back into use? What ddefnydd? Beth ydy eich cynlluniau are your plans in relation to those chi ynglŷn â gwella ar gartrefi sydd and how will you improve on that? yn wag ar hyn o bryd?

[144] **Carl Sargeant:** We have a really successful empty homes scheme. We have had around 7,500 properties brought back into use. Part of that is through working with the local government association and having a financial package that churns—it comes back into the system so they can reinvest in that programme. We are continuing the principle of that, the Houses into Homes scheme, with local authorities, and it's one that I know many Members raise with me where you have blighted homes in your communities. Actually, this is a good example of working alongside the other aspects of the second home council tax levy; that encourages, in some sort of way, people to release them back into the market, sometimes. So, I think we've got a suite of tools where we're trying to get more substance into the system where we can use positive homes for people.

[145] **Sian Gwenllian:** Felly, i fod yn **Sian Gwenllian:** So, to be clear then, glir, mae'r cynllun dod â chartrefi the scheme in relation to bringing gwag yn ôl i feddiant yn rhywbeth ar empty homes back into occupation is wahân i'r targed o 20,000. Mae'n something separate to the 20,000. gynllun arall.

[146] **Carl Sargeant:** It is. I'd like to include it; it would be much easier for me, but, at the moment, we're not. It is separate.

[147] **Sian Gwenllian:** Mae'n bwysig **Sian Gwenllian:** It's important that we ein bod ni'n gwybod nad yw'n rhan understand it's not a part of that o'r 20,000 yna, achos mae hwnnw'n 20,000, because that's an additional

rhywbeth ychwanegol wedyn, onid thing then, isn't it?
ydy?

[148] **Jest un peth arall, os caf i, Gadeirydd. Bues i hefyd yn nigwyddiad Cartrefi Cymru ddoe, a beth roedd llawer ohonynt yn dweud wrthyf i ddoe oedd eu bod nhw'n poeni ynglŷn â'r busnes yma o gymdeithasau tai yn cael eu hailddosbarthu—eu bod nhw'n mynd i fod yn dod yn rhan o'r sector cyhoeddus, a bod hynny'n mynd i achosi problemau ynglŷn â benthyca arian i'r dyfodol. Tybed beth yw eich barn chi ar hynny. A oes rhywbeth y medrwn ni fel Llywodraeth—y medrwch chi fel Llywodraeth—fod yn ei wneud?** Just one other thing, if I may, Chair. I was also in Cartrefi Cymru's event yesterday, and what a lot of them were telling me was that they were very concerned about the issue of housing associations being reclassified—that they're going to become part of the public sector, and that's going to cause problems in relation to borrowing money in the future. I wonder what your opinion is on that. Is there something that we as a Government—or you as a Government—could do?

[149] **Carl Sargeant:** That's ambitious as well. [*Laughter.*]

[150] **Sian Gwenllian:** Wel—. Beth yw eich barn chi am hynny, a beth fedrwch chi ei wneud i helpu'r sefyllfa yna? **Sian Gwenllian:** Well—. What's your opinion on that, and what could you do to help that situation?

[151] **Carl Sargeant:** Okay, Sian, thank you. We've got a really good relationship with the housing association sector. We are aware of the legislation and the current process with the Office for National Statistics. We are waiting for the detail of that, but we are working very closely with the sector to ensure that we can mitigate the issues that are potentially—that will affect housing associations. We are confident that we can manage that system, but it is something we are aware of and we're working closely with them.

[152] **John Griffiths:** I can see a couple of hands up, but I've others who are down to speak. Is it on this specific point, Joyce? Yes, okay.

[153] **Joyce Watson:** Minister, as I understand it, it's about on-book and off-book accounting.

[154] **Carl Sargeant:** It is.

[155] **Joyce Watson:** It's an accounting issue, but it's a major accounting issue, because if they are deemed in the public sector, any borrowing then accounts to your borrowing limits. So, it's quite a serious issue, because it will impact on any budget you have, wherever you want to spend it. I've been following this myself. How confident are you that you can resolve this? Because the impact will be significant in this field—and others—but in this field especially. And your target to build 20,000 homes, if that's on-book accounting, will have a significant impact on the other areas we want to invest in.

[156] **Carl Sargeant:** I think there are two elements to this, Chair. First of all, the element of mitigation. We are considering legislation around this, subject to the support of the Assembly, if we need to legislate to reverse that, in effect. The other aspect of this, I think, is tinkering with the system. As you say, if you put it onto the public borrowing sheet, it prevents you borrowing. You maximise your borrowing, therefore you can't build any more houses. I think this is, alongside the issue of forcing the sale of social housing in England, another cunning plan to reduce the social housing field across a particular area. We are resisting that in Wales, and that's why we intend to stop the right to buy, and we intend to address the ONS issues with registered social landlords. As I said earlier, we've got a very positive relationship with them, and we are working closely to see how we can resolve this quickly.

[157] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Jenny.

[158] **Jenny Rathbone:** Just to go back to the 20,000 target, how can we ensure that these new homes are going to be fit for the twenty-first century, rather than the slums of the 2020s?

[159] **Carl Sargeant:** I note your question. I think what's important for me is that we do build quality homes. I think it's the standard that people aspire to. I share with the Member my aspirations. Part of my contribution yesterday—and it was good to see Bethan at the event yesterday, and I know many others attended, too—was to say to RSLs, 'We don't have all the answers as Government', and actually, I think there's innovation and there are opportunities within the sector. I'm saying that I want to do business with people who come to me, presenting me with innovative solutions to homes.

So, not the traditional, 'We have six styles of brick-built homes', but actually, 'What more can we do with our money?' There was lots of enthusiasm within the sector.

[160] I share the Member's concern, as with my previous portfolio as well, as to why we continue to build homes for which we know energy bills will increase in the future. I'm trying to reverse that, but I need partners to do that with, too. We have a limited budget, and we have to use that carefully. So, I'm looking at the standards, I'm looking at how RSLs and other parties, but local authorities as well, can build clever solutions to housing. And my team have been visiting various sites to look at what's on the market currently and what, for the future, is proposed as well. So, I'm looking at a mixture. We're going to have to have some traditional builds, but I'm also looking to see if we can do some clever piloting as well in some areas, where we can start thinking about clever solutions to homes.

[161] **Jenny Rathbone:** Would you consider revising part L to raise the standards required of energy efficiency?

[162] **Carl Sargeant:** There is a consultation process that will be starting on part L, I understand.

[163] **Jenny Rathbone:** I welcome that.

[164] **Carl Sargeant:** I believe that's through the other Minister, though—the Minister for the environment. I just recall that.

[165] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. So, it's not your responsibility.

[166] **Carl Sargeant:** It isn't. Building regulations are with Lesley Griffiths.

[167] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. That disturbs me, because I'm afraid Lesley Griffiths told us that it was your responsibility. But anyway, we'll need to tie that one down.

[168] **Carl Sargeant:** I will clarify that, but I think the decision on home building is mine, but actually part L is actually part of the building regulations system.

[169] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. All right. We'll try and tie that down. I think, having talked to the housing sector last week, one of the concerns expressed

is—I mean, there are several. One is the release of land; the other is how quickly we can get planning approval. I think the third thing is the skills available to build this innovative housing. I was really quite disturbed to learn that 23 per cent of any given construction project—there’s a 23 per cent shortfall in the skills required for building it and they have to come from abroad. It just demonstrates that we are not producing the skills that are needed for housing, which is, of course, across the whole of Wales.

[170] **Carl Sargeant:** What the party manifesto said was around building 100,000 new apprenticeships. We recognise where there is a market force. The introduction of our 20,000 homes scheme is important, because that signals we are up and open for business. That will encourage training establishments to start bringing through the skill sector. But, as I said earlier, I think, actually, we need to be at the front edge of this, because there are traditional skills in building homes and there will be people from other areas who can do that too. I think if we get into a market of building clever, sustainable homes, we can have a market lead on both skill, supply chain and market. I think that’s what we’re trying to do. I’m talking to Ken Skates and Julie James in terms of what does that mean as a collective. The Government is working very differently to the previous Government. Around the basis of the Well-being of Future Generation (Wales) Act 2015, we have collective responsibility over all our—. Their problems are my problems. I was encouraged when Ken Skates came to my office, when we looked through the manifesto programme: he said, ‘20,000 homes—good luck’, and I said, ‘Thanks, Ken’, and he said, ‘But, your problem’s my problem. How can I help?’ Actually, Ken Skates’s department is now looking at releasing land to us in order for us to start building properties. It’s early days, but it’s a very different environment to what we worked in in the last Government.

[171] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay, well, that’s extremely welcome. Could I just pursue you on the money aspect of this? Obviously, we’ve heard about the status of the housing associations. All local authorities—have they now extricated themselves from the housing revenue account limitations so that all of them, in principle, would be able to use their own pension funds to build housing? We could use the National Assembly for Wales’s pension fund to build housing. What other innovative vehicles for building homes is the Government contemplating?

[172] **Carl Sargeant:** Some of those programmes I’ll be announcing when I bring my statement around the 20,000 homes to the Chamber. But, there are some solutions already, such as: one of the local authorities has got an

arm's-length company and is now developing properties through the section 106 agreements when they're gifted properties. They are protecting them by putting them in an arm's-length company that circumnavigates the right to buy, which is quite cute, on the basis that they are currently tied into that regime. New properties coming into the social housing remit of their authority—they're protecting them by a different method. They are looking at how they use different funding. They're still subject to a cap in terms of the amount they can borrow in local authorities. But, I'm looking also to see—currently, we have an agreement with RSLs and that's why we push the money out of social housing grant—is there something that we can do again with other local authorities that release stock, so that a house transfer went? Some of that skill base that you talk about was released from local authorities because most had the direct labour organisations, which were able to build properties, but that's long gone. I have spoken to some local authorities that are already starting to try to build that back up again with the capacity currently to build their own properties, which will save them money longer term as well. So, it's a new way of doing business, but, as I said earlier on, housebuilding, as you appreciate, isn't a light-switch moment—this takes a lot of planning and process to get the capacity in the system.

11:00

[173] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. I'll look forward to your statement.

[174] **John Griffiths:** Rhianon.

[175] **Rhianon Passmore:** Partially, it's been addressed in those comments. In terms of the strategic direction in England, and you've mentioned the ONS and perhaps issues around registered social landlords. Really, what more can Government be doing in terms of facilitating social housing—I know that you've mentioned that you've had conversations with certain authorities around this—bearing in mind that we do need a mixed portfolio of housing, as you've already referenced? But, as we know, in terms of the right-to-buy legislation that you've been talking to, there are issues there in terms of how we make those levers more available to local authorities, whether it's through a commissioning arm or whether through a private company, so that we can actually produce more council housing.

[176] **Carl Sargeant:** My ambition for a national council housing programme is no secret; I often related to this in a past portfolio when I managed the

housing division earlier. That still is my ambition, but we're at a place in time where financially we are challenged—local authorities are, too. So, that's why we need to have some partnership innovation coming forward. That's why the important part for me is the Community Housing Cymru compact with ourselves and with the Welsh Local Government Association to see what financial solutions there may be. I'm saying to the teams, 'If I don't have cash, what do we have? We have lots of goodwill, but we have a little bit of land possibly too, so, our stake, could that be the land element of that?' Some development companies are saying, 'If you give us the land, we'll build the houses', and, long term, we've got an agreement.

[177] So, we have to look at the non-traditional methods of what we do in terms of build, but also financing as well. I think Jenny's point about the security of pension funds to support this is one that I know people are exploring, but it's a very live debate, housing, and I'm glad about that, because I've got 20,000 units to find.

[178] **John Griffiths:** Okay, Janet, and then we'll move on to another area of questioning.

[179] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Thank you. I think, Cabinet Secretary, the issue for me is whether you're convinced that we are doing enough to bring empty homes back into stock. I mean, Conwy is one of the better authorities, but, at any one time, they have about 2,500 empty properties, of which half of those are usually empty for at least 12 months or more. In terms of that, I know that a previous Minister—. In fact, most of last term, the emphasis was on a national, across Wales figure for the numbers required to bring back, so there was no real incentive for local authorities. You know, I used to be able to bring to the Chamber where some authorities were performing well and some were not really taking any notice of the fact that there was this overall target. Do you think that now—? I think it's fair to say also that much of last term—the latter part—was taken over by local government reorganisation. Now that that seems to have just—. For the time being, you know, where local authorities need to be concentrating more on their strategic objectives, do you think that there is merit perhaps in targeting local authorities that are not doing well in bringing their empty homes back into stock, because this is a generation of good housing supply, and it blights communities? You know, with a little bit of resource—a lot less than building a new one—and the right kind of management, a lot of that empty stock could be brought back. That, to me, really regenerates our communities.

[180] **Carl Sargeant:** I don't disagree with the Member. I think it's unusual for the Member to ask me to be telling local authorities what to do—normally, they're telling me not to do that. But the Member raises an important point about how do we bring more stock back in. I'm sort of telling you part of my statement already in little bits as we go along—if you keep questioning me, I suppose you'll probably get it all—but one of the issues we're thinking about, and the Member's question relates to this, is that the cost of social housing is around £70,000, £80,000, £90,000, depending where it is and what scale and what size et cetera. Some of the properties in communities that we already have that are already built but on market are a lot cheaper than that. Is one of the solutions, maybe, to start using current stock that's already built and then to retrofit—which is more expensive, but still cheaper than building a brand-new social housing property? So, these are all different solutions that we're considering, and the empty homes scheme fits into that, so there's a suite of things that we're trying to do in terms of the market, and communities may benefit from that just by the fact that some of those homes that have been for sale for some time may be an opportunity for a registered social landlord or a local authority to use them as social housing.

[181] **John Griffiths:** Okay, thanks for that. Joyce, on the private rented sector.

[182] **Joyce Watson:** Good morning, Cabinet Secretary. I want your views, really, on the progress that you think has been made on implementation of the registration and licensing scheme for landlords and their agents, and whether you've got any particular concerns about the relatively low number of landlords that seem to have come forward so far.

[183] **Carl Sargeant:** It's a very positive scheme with good intent, and in order to weed out the bad landlords we've had around—I think it's 34,000—landlords and agents opening accounts, with 20,000 private landlords already registered. I think that, for this period of time, is very successful. I do anticipate a seat-belt-style rush toward the end. I visited the call centre that was taking these calls, and they're preparing themselves for a last-minute approach by landlords. A Member did raise with me—rushing into registration gives you a time-limited period, and I'm considering that time period now, and whether we should flex the time period to give a full 12 months from the date that registration finishes. I will give that some more consideration, but I'm confident that the scheme is getting off the ground as we anticipated. We just last week started the second phase of our publicity

campaign. I think Jenny saw a poster on the back of a bus while she was on a bike only last week, but we are starting to see increased numbers in this process. I'm not using the language that it's a low turnout, because I don't know what the baseline is.

[184] **Joyce Watson:** Okay. So, are you happy, then—I suppose there are two other things—about local authorities having the resource to move in, if they have to, to force landlords to register?

[185] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes. We discussed this at length when the legislation was coming forward, and there was always an interesting discussion to be had with local government colleagues about financing and future financing. We've come to a position where we believe it was a fair position for them to continue with the programme and to consider the enforcement aspects of that. But it will be an important part of the scheme, and I think there's a lot of peer pressure in this. I've visited a lot of private landlords across Wales, talking to them about how they operate. People who act responsibly and are registered hate the fact that there's somebody down the street not acting responsibly and not paying the licence, and the landlords associations then tell the enforcement agency. So, it's a bit of local control as well, but I'm confident that local authorities will be able to manage the process despite their challenging budgets, as we have. But I'm always in dialogue with the authorities as we move forward.

[186] **Joyce Watson:** I'm pleased to hear that there's peer pressure being put on, because it leads to the next question. Do we, in your opinion, have sufficient data about the quality of housing in the private rented sector? Because whilst, on the one hand, we have the Welsh housing quality standard, which has been fantastic, we need to balance that with the condition of the private rented sector, which for most people is where they're going to end up.

[187] **Carl Sargeant:** Of course. Condition of housing survey is very expensive, but the irony is that Lesley Griffiths and I in previous portfolios signed off agreements for a joint piece of work to a three-year programme on data collection on the private sector. We've just changed positions now, but the finance agreement still stays the same. So, we are collecting more data, and we've put a three-year funding stream in for that. It's a big piece of work.

[188] **Joyce Watson:** Okay. Yes, it is a massive piece of work, and we haven't

done a very long time either, so I would request, Minister, that we move forward fairly rapidly to try and do what we can and use whatever mechanism is available to us to get those data on-screen. Are you confident that there's enough being done, again, to help landlords to support their tenants as well, because it's a two way field, and, you know, particularly talking about the Supporting People programme here?

[189] **Carl Sargeant:** Two areas. The first one, the legislation, is a two-way conversation. The tenant, through the licensing scheme, will be given a pack of information about what the tenant is supposed to do and the tenant's rights, but also the landlord and the landlord's rights, and I think that information process is not one that's common practice but will be of common practice once registration takes place. There are some things that you have to do to be part of that.

[190] The landlord training programme has been very well received, with over 90 per cent of the people that have attended that saying that it's added value to their contribution as a landlord, that there are things that they didn't know before that they perhaps should have, and it's enhanced their experience to deliver a better service.

[191] In terms of the support mechanisms for the private sector, Supporting People is non-sector specific. So, people can engage in the Supporting People programme should they so wish to or need to. So, we do believe that there are pathways both for tenants and for landlords in the private sector to be supported in many aspects as well.

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

[193] **John Griffiths:** Okay, thanks for that. Bethan.

[194] **Bethan Jenkins:** Jest gen i **Bethan Jenkins:** I did want to ask a gwestiwn oherwydd y gwnes i gwrdd question, because I met with ag Electrical Safety First ddoe yn y Electrical Safety First yesterday in the Senedd, ac roedden nhw'n dweud Senedd, and they said that there had bod yna dwf mewn tannau trydanol been an increase in electrical fires ar draws Cymru, ac er bod y across Wales, and although the Llywodraeth wedi datgan bod Government had stated that that was hynny'n ffaith, nid oes yna ddim a fact, there has been no strategy to strategaeth wedi dilyn hynny, ac mae deal with it, and there have been enghreifftiau wedi bod yn y wasg, examples in the press, with

gyda Whirlpool, gyda nifer o e- Whirlpool, and with a number of e-
cigarettes sydd wedi ffrwydro—mae'r cigarette products that have actually
 teclynnau e-*cigarettes* wedi ffrwydro exploded while they're being
 tra eu bod nhw'n cael eu tshiarjo. A charged. So, do you have a strategy
 oes strategaeth gyda chi i sicrhau to ensure that something is done in
 bod rhywbeth yn digwydd yn y maes this area, because it is something
 yma, gan ei fod e'n rhywbeth, rwy'n that I think isn't going to improve
 credu, sy'n mynd i waethygu heb fod unless you're Government puts a
 eich Llywodraeth chi yn rhoi strategy in place in order to ensure
 strategaeth yn ei le i sicrhau bod that people are aware, perhaps at the
 pobl yn ymwybodol, efallai ar yr un same level as people checking their
 lefel ag y mae pobl yn 'check-io' eu fire alarms, so that we make it
 larwm tân nawr, i'w wneud yn something that people do routinely
 rhywbeth y mae pobl yn ei wneud yn as part of their daily lives?
 eu bywydau bob dydd?

[195] **Carl Sargeant:** I thank the Member for her question. I'm not familiar with the statistics on electrical fire safety. I will ask my team. I am aware that there has been a reduction, a significant reduction, in house fires across Wales—

[196] **Bethan Jenkins:** But not in electrical; that's the thing.

[197] **Carl Sargeant:** Okay, and I'd welcome the more detailed report from the fire service to see where that lies.

[198] Your questioning relates to, in detail, particular brands of washing machines or tumble dryers and then e-cigarettes. I'm not sure that that's in the same field as what the electrical safety unit are seeking. I understood them to be looking for legislation around property electrical safety, rather than appliance electrical safety, but, if that's changed, I'm more than happy to receive a letter from them, but we did go through this in detail when the housing Bill was going through. Our position hasn't changed on that, unless something has significantly changed in terms of the safety aspects for consumers across Wales. And I will look at that in detail.

[199] **Bethan Jenkins:** Okay.

[200] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Jenny, briefly.

[201] **Jenny Rathbone:** Just on enforcement, local authorities seem to be

saying they haven't got the money for enforcement, but isn't enforcement self-financing? Under the Consumer Rights Act 2015, local authorities can fine letting agents up to £2,500, I think, for not displaying their charges prominently to all-comers, and the breach of that is going on all over my constituency. So why are local authorities not taking up this opportunity to make some money and then reinvesting it in enforcement?

11:15

[202] **Carl Sargeant:** I'm not sure it's about making money, but I think the enforcement point that the Member raises is an important one. I will take that up on behalf of the Member in terms of local government. My experience of my friends in local government is that we always used to start the conversation with cash. That was always the case—'If you want me to do something, we haven't got the money to do that.' I think we are in the position now, particularly in this department, in how I'm trying to give transition to authorities, where we start to think about how we deliver services differently, particularly around prevention. You'll see all sorts of different proposals I'll be bringing forward on investing in different services, so that we're not paying long term here. I think, actually, on the issue of good landlords and the way we pursue bad landlords, hopefully the pressure will start to decrease on that once we've started to—. Local authorities have fortunately started to do some enforcement. But I'm keen that enforcement is part of the programme. This isn't just about getting the willing to register; actually, they're the people probably that are least risky to us. It's about the people who aren't. And that's why I think enforcement will be an important part, and I will follow that up, Jenny.

[203] **Jenny Rathbone:** Thank you.

[204] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Janet, I think you have a question on homelessness.

[205] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** I do, yes. Will local authorities continue to have sufficient funding to carry out their homelessness obligations?

[206] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes.

[207] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** Okay; thank you. And whether you're concerned about the gap highlighted between the homelessness prevention rates and the best and worst-performing local authorities that have recently been

highlighted by Shelter Cymru.

[208] **Carl Sargeant:** I think we should be really positive about our results on homelessness. It's a real success story that's been driven by local authorities and I congratulate them on the work that they've done. I think we should be incredibly pleased with that. Indeed, the UK Government are looking at the model that we've adopted in Wales to see if they can do something on similar grounds. I think we've got around a 63 per cent reduction—I think it's 63 per cent, Chair—in terms of our homelessness figures, which is absolutely amazing. I was astounded when I saw the results. In regards to the first question around funding, we agreed a transitional funding programme for this to happen. We are in that process and we'll have to see where we get to when we've transited to the next stage of that, but we are in constant discussion with the sector.

[209] In terms of the data recording, I think that could be better, because we've looked at using some of the—. We want data that are collected on a similar basis across all local authorities. Some are using third sector organisations and including that in the figures; some aren't. We are using—. My team is looking at that closely now to see if we can qualify the data and how we can get that better. But even the bad data are good; I just think that we need to make sure that we get the right figures from everybody so that we fully understand the risks involved in this.

[210] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** A really good point that you've raised there, because I know, certainly when we were doing our local development plan in Conwy, people registering as homeless were registering and actually writing to various different—. They were going to the council and different social landlords, and we had to really tease and pull those figures apart. But I think, really, the concern—. I know that homelessness is a big problem for my constituency because, clearly, we don't have the housing stock available, and when a family presents as being homeless and the council's responsibility, sometimes B&Bs and things like that are offered, and that isn't an ideal way forward. And, certainly in Conwy, we have a lot of hotel stock and we've had to raise issues with the local authority, because we have a huge tourism industry. So, there are lots of conflicting factors there that have to be taken into account when local authorities are carrying out their homelessness duty. Again, I reiterate my point earlier that if we could get those empty properties back into some good use, there's a way forward there.

[211] **Carl Sargeant:** Of course. It's a whole pathway of solutions; it's not

one thing. You've got to look at the housing solutions as well as homelessness. As I said earlier, our approach to homelessness has been completely different from any part of the country. We are using a prevent method, getting in very early on. We've got homeless prevention teams in all our local authorities, looking at, when people present, whether there are options of keeping them in a property or presenting them somewhere else. The key is, rather than leave it until the last day you're going to be evicted or you find yourself in a homeless position, signal early and the teams have some great success rates, as shown in the figures.

[212] **Janet Finch-Saunders:** My final point, which was picked up during the workshop that we had last week, is that there's all this legislation coming forward for landlords—on which I declare an interest here and now—but there does need to be support and some education in place for people taking on a tenancy. Someone taking on the tenancy of a property brings with it huge responsibilities and there is a feeling that, in Wales, there is a lack of education and support for people just to help them when taking on a property. It's a sizable asset and I've had issues where people have attempted to go into housing and other people have suggested that they need properties and, quite frankly, it wouldn't be in the person's interest to actually have their own property. So, I think you need to look at shared use of accommodation and supported housing where possible, because not everybody is capable or is suitable to actually own their own property or actually run their own home, because it's quite an issue.

[213] **Carl Sargeant:** I think the Member has declared an interest on this basis. I'm sure that the Member would like to share with the committee the training programme that comes along with the course for registration and the fact that, as I said earlier, there is a training package—not a training package; a training package for landlords or agents, but a very comprehensive piece of documentation that goes along with the tenant and is provided to them about their responsibility and about the rights of the tenant and of the landlord. So, I think that the relationship between tenant and landlord has come a long way, because, where some before were doing that as a matter of course, even providing contact numbers of an evening, where you could get a responsible person to do repairs or something—that's what quality landlords have been doing for a long time, but it's not been a common practice. We are making that a common practice in Wales, but I also recognise the point that people are all different and sometimes we need to support people in accommodation too, and we do that in many cases.

[214] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Joyce.

[215] **Joyce Watson:** Are you confident that all players in the market are working well together to reduce or at least not create homelessness, because there have been examples, and I don't know how you've dealt with them, Minister—and there may be some in the future—where there's suddenly a glut of work in a given area and, lo and behold, suddenly the rents start to increase fairly rapidly and the notices get given equally rapidly to get out of your house. It's happened in Pembrokeshire, which, amazingly by the way, according to their figures, has got no problem or issues with homelessness; I ask you to look at that again. So, that's one question.

[216] The other question is about classification of homelessness and particularly the issues that Women's Aid are concerned about, simply because many women and their children—and there will be some men, I accept—have to flee their home. So, those are the two issues that I would like some answers on.

[217] **Carl Sargeant:** The pressure points of generally larger-scale developments are something that we work on closely with the Minister for infrastructure. We have several programmes coming forward in Wales where we know there will be a need for a housing solution for a number of years, but, after that, that pressure goes. But, in the interim, it is a local pressure and a pressure for the developers too. So, we are looking at possibly some solutions, working with the companies around that. But I accept the Member's point.

[218] The other issue around refuges, and women or men who have to flee a domestic violence situation, is something that has troubled me for a number of years. I'm encouraged by the Government's approach to look at the housing cap that it was seeking to impose on refuges. I will welcome that if that's a true position, but I'm still awaiting detail on that.

[219] I'm looking particularly—. Like the Member, I've got a great interest in assisting people in domestic violence situations, and it's something that I'm looking closely at: the refuge provision and how we manage that in Wales currently. So, I may have more to say on that in the next couple of months, too.

[220] **Joyce Watson:** Good; thank you.

[221] **John Griffiths:** Thanks for that, Cabinet Secretary. We'll move on. We've got a limited amount of time left for a few further areas that we wanted to question you on, so I ask members of the committee to keep preambles as short as possible. Welfare reform, then—Rhianon.

[222] **Rhianon Passmore:** Thank you, Chair. In terms of the tsunami of effects that are impacting on the people of Wales in terms of welfare reform, in terms of the effect of withdrawal—of Brexit—of projects later on, we assume, after 2020, and in terms of local government cuts that have been passported from London—and I will cut to the chase in a minute, Chair—there is a huge amount of impact upon the people of Wales in terms of perhaps working three jobs and also in terms of them being referred to food banks, et cetera. So, many people are still struggling because of levers of government that are outside our control. So, in terms of a specific question: on delivering suitable accommodation, particularly for those under 35, that is affordable, what are your views in terms of how Welsh Government can impact in terms of housing benefit caps?

[223] **Carl Sargeant:** I think the Member's right to raise the issue of welfare reform and the leverage that we don't have in terms of what happens and decisions elsewhere in terms of that. The bit that worries me and my colleagues is the indirect consequences of that. The political judgment of the UK Government is a matter for them. They won the election and they will make their choices in terms of welfare reform; I accept that fully. The consequences, though, on accommodation, particularly for under-35s, is that there is now a need to receive that benefit for shared accommodation. We don't have that facility in Wales. That causes another pressure, so then I have to think about solutions—clever solutions—as to how we can resolve that issue for people who wish to take accommodation in that system, or we'd create another homelessness problem.

[224] Fortunately, as I said in my opening remarks, we've a really good relationship with the RSLs, and they are looking to see how they can help that situation with the current accommodation, and how they can modify buildings in order to accommodate that. I'm also looking at a programme specifically for the under-35s in Wales, to see if there's any scope for the development of property. But I don't underestimate the problem and people shouldn't, either. It's an unknown quantum of potential risk for us by the UK Government making a decision that we are not yet fully prepared to develop our policies around.

[225] **Rhianon Passmore:** Okay. Staying with housing—well, not housing, but council tax, then, and in terms of the effect that that is having—we have a council tax reduction scheme here currently; I believe that is not happening in England—and in terms of how that is going to be sustained and continued, that's of huge benefit to those people in Wales who are utilising it, so, in terms of our current position, bearing in mind I've mentioned the situation in terms of cuts to Wales, what is your position in terms of that continuing?

[226] **Carl Sargeant:** Yes, council tax falls under the Minister for finance, so I can't answer that question. It'll be a part of his budget consideration; it's a matter for him. But we do have conversations in terms of impact.

[227] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Thanks for that. Bethan, some questioning on equality and human rights.

[228] **Bethan Jenkins:** You will be aware that, yesterday, in First Minister's questions, I raised issues with regard to refugees and, particularly, I'm interested, obviously, in what you're doing as a Government to encourage more local authorities to take on the refugees that Wales has committed to. That's my first question. But the second question, which I think has drawn our attention, or animated our minds, is the fact that there are currently 200 unaccompanied children at Calais, and also in camps in Lebanon and elsewhere, who are in trauma situations of being orphaned. I would like to not only hear what the UK Government has agreed to commit to, but what you are doing to facilitate that as a Welsh Government to ensure that we can understand as Members what you are doing. I heard the good words that the First Minister said to me in response yesterday and I'm not going to dispute that he would take a percentage, but I need to understand how, at the moment, you are facilitating that process because they are vulnerable people. It's not the same discussion that some in this room would like to have over migration; it's about refugees and how we help them.

11:30

[229] **Carl Sargeant:** Thank you for your question—a very sensitive question as well. It pains me—as it does many, I expect, in this room—when we see young people in any situation of risk or vulnerability, particularly in a foreign country where they've got no family connections. Children, particularly on their own—that even plucks my heartstrings as well. That aside, in terms of the refugee picture and where we are with that, it is a matter for the UK Government, but, notwithstanding, we have to open the opportunities here

as well. I have had a conversation directly with the then Minister, Richard Harrington. We talked about the process in which Syrian refugees would be gaining access to the UK and in particular Wales. I've also spoken to the lead person for the WLGA on this, Dyfed Edwards, the leader of Gwynedd Council, who is also of the mind that we must do what is physically possible in all aspects. But the levers are from the UK Government.

[230] One of the concerns from the WLGA was the ability to present safe communities for the Syrian refugees. I say 'safe' in the broadest terms of both the ability to have services available for families and/or children that they are confident that they can deliver. I think that that's an important part of making sure that whoever we welcome to our country as a refugee, we are able to support them properly in the very difficult circumstances that they find. So, negotiations will continue. I will seek a further discussion around, in particular, the children aspect as my responsibility for children in Wales.

[231] **Bethan Jenkins:** Can you update us on that when you do?

[232] **Carl Sargeant:** I will. I will write to the committee once I've had a discussion with the Minister in the UK regarding that particular issue, but the First Minister has been very clear: we want to play our part in this, but it is, unfortunately, the levers of the UK Government in terms of how quickly that is enabled. But I will take it upon myself to speak to the UK Minister regarding the particular issue around the children in Calais.

[233] **Bethan Jenkins:** Can I just further ask a question on using the levers of the UK Government, because I'd like to understand, therefore, if that is the case, how come that 862 were settled in Scotland, 155 in Northern Ireland and 112 here? It doesn't suggest that Scotland has had the same difficulties in facilitating as we seem to be having. Oxfam Cymru have said that it's painfully slow in Wales in relation to what local authorities are doing. I know that, in many areas, it is perceived to be sensitive, but I think that that's to do with the fear that people think that there may be some tension when, actually, you have to work as a community to alleviate that fear when those people are resettled in our communities.

[234] **Carl Sargeant:** Of course. I don't think we disagree on this issue. As I said, we don't perceive ourselves to be blocking this in any way. This is a matter for the UK Government to present on how—. We are saying to the UK Government that we are happy to take refugees, and they have to be able to present refugees, process and finance in order to support a safe transition

for families and children into the area. As I said earlier, the WLGA have raised some concerns about making sure that we have suitable accommodation and suitable wraparound provision for families coming into—

[235] **Bethan Jenkins:** And are you working with the WLGA specifically on that, then?

[236] **Carl Sargeant:** I met with Dyfed Edwards just before the summer, personally, to have this discussion with him. He's met with the First Minister in between that, too. So, we are continuing with the dialogue around that.

[237] **Bethan Jenkins:** Ocê. Jyst un **Bethan Jenkins:** Okay. Just one cwestiwn arall sydd gennyf i, yn further question, briefly—I don't glou—nid wyf yn siŵr a yw'r know if the Chair wants to cover the Cadeirydd eisiau gofyn y cwestiynau rest of the questions—just on the eraill—jest ynglŷn â disodli'r Ddeddf replacement of the Human Rights Act Hawliau Dynol 1998 gyda bil 1998 with a UK bill of rights and how hawliau'r Deyrnas Unedig a sut y that will affect the constitution of bydd hynny yn effeithio ar Wales. I remember going to a briefing gyfansoddiad Cymru. Rwy'n cofio session a few years ago when this mynd i sesiwn briffio gwpwl o was first on the Conservative agenda, flynyddoedd yn ôl pan oedd hwn ar and there was then a move not to yr agenda gyntaf gan y Torïaid, ac yr implement that when there was a oedd wedyn symudiad i beidio â coalition in Westminster. But now, gweithredu hynny pan oedd yna certainly, this is back on the agenda, glymblaid ar lefel San Steffan. Ond so what's your view on it, and how nawr, yn sicr, mae hyn ar yr agenda are you going to actually stand eto, felly beth yw eich barn chi ar against this, or, indeed, are you hyn, a sut ydych chi yn mynd i going to stand against such a move? weithredu i wrthsefyll hyn, neu a ydych chi yn mynd i wrthsefyll hyn?

[238] **Carl Sargeant:** Our position remains consistent. We are opposed to changes to the Human Rights Act, but subject to the UK Government moving to a different position of introduction of the constitution of Wales, we will have to consider the detail of that and act appropriately at that point. But our position currently remains the same: we are opposed to any changes or removal of the Act as posed.

[239] **Bethan Jenkins:** A oes gyda chi **Bethan Jenkins:** Do you have a amserlen yn hynny o beth, neu—? timetable for that, or—?

[240] **Carl Sargeant:** I don't, Chair, but I will see if I can get some more detail and drop you a note if I do, if we're able to glean that. I'm hoping that it won't, but—.

[241] **Bethan Jenkins:** Well, yes, I personally am too, but I think we have to prepare for it coming through, and so I'm not aware of the timeline; perhaps somebody else is.

[242] **Carl Sargeant:** We will look at that.

[243] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Thanks for that, Bethan. I think we'll move on, then, to tackling poverty, and Gareth.

[244] **Gareth Bennett:** Yes, thanks, Chairman, and thanks, Minister. There's been some concern over the effectiveness of some of the Welsh Government programmes. I mean, we had the revelation recently that Jobs Growth Wales—I know that isn't your remit—isn't any more effective in its outcomes than the control group, which wasn't involved in Jobs Growth Wales. So, what are we doing about measuring the effectiveness of your anti-poverty programmes, and how can we effectively measure them in future?

[245] **Carl Sargeant:** Okay, thank—

[246] **John Griffiths:** Actually, in answering that question, could you say a little bit about the new responsibilities in Welsh Government in terms of tackling poverty?

[247] **Carl Sargeant:** Of course I can. First of all, thanks, Gareth, for your question. Jobs Growth Wales isn't my responsibility, but, as a collective responsibility across Ministers, I would suggest—I would dispute that, by the fact that Jobs Growth Wales was one of the most successful jobs growth programmes in the whole of Europe, and I think we have to be very careful that the statistics that we use in committee or elsewhere are being specific about what is good or what is bad, actually. All our data suggest that we are in a very good space in Jobs Growth Wales, and that it's very successfully welcomed by businesses.

[248] Second point: poverty. I thank the Chair for allowing me to clarify this position. The overarching Minister responsible for poverty is the Minister for economy and infrastructure, Ken Skates, and I have played my part, as other

Ministers do within their departments, in tackling the issues around poverty. I have seen critics suggesting that, because there is no poverty titled in any ministerial responsibility, then poverty has gone away. I would ask them to reflect on that, because all Ministers have a responsibility of growing and enhancing the issues around Wales, and that's something that we take very seriously. The First Minister has been very clear, making sure that we all understand our priorities.

[249] Can I say, with regard to my particular aspect of where we manage poverty? There are two themes that run through my department, and I'd been very clear from when I started post May and was gifted the opportunity to serve in this Government about two areas that we are pursuing. One is around economic regeneration, and that is about jobs growth, skills and opportunity, giving people confidence and the ability to have safe and confident communities. That is part of what I can do, but also the collective responsibility across Government. That's why I've spoken to the majority of Ministers now about their interaction with my department and what they do—Julie James, Ken Skates—about the skills base and opportunities, jobs programmes, the Lift programme that we have, with very positive results from across Wales.

[250] The second part of that element on tackling poverty is around well-being, and the well-being aspect of that is particularly around ACEs—adverse childhood experiences. I know, and Members will be able to see the statistics around poverty, around for the devolution process of Wales, poverty has bounced along the bottom. We've had some increases in tackling the issues, but, actually, a lot of that is affected by external issues, such as welfare reform et cetera, which we have no levers for, but we have an indirect consequence where we're fighting against this.

[251] I'll be making a statement on communities in around three weeks' time, I think it is—three or four weeks' time. Again, it's similar to the housing statement we'll be making about the vision for Government, about what we're going to be doing for our resilient communities. And I think there are some important things within that statement that will flag up what our commitment is to communities and how we can embed an opportunity for growth, using those two pillars of economic regeneration and well-being, into our communities across Wales. I'm sorry it was a long response to your question, but it is a very important one, because there are critics there suggesting that Government has forgotten poverty. That's absolutely not true. We are very much focused on building a resilient community.

[252] **John Griffiths:** And Communities First as a programme remains with you, Cabinet Secretary?

[253] **Carl Sargeant:** It does, yes.

[254] **John Griffiths:** It does, yes. Okay. Right, can I bring in Rhianon at this stage?

[255] **Rhianon Passmore:** In terms of the inputs that are driving poverty, what assessment has been made of the 'opportunities' that Brexit delivers to us in terms of the funding packages to local authorities? For instance, what was Bridges into Work? There's a whole plethora of initiatives and projects that local authorities have been rolling out, and, obviously, those are now time limited. So, has there been any assessment of how those impacts are going to affect those people who are participating, and families and babies in those projects, because we are utilising them now and they are important? With the cutbacks to local government that we anticipate coming over the next couple of years, with future cuts to the Welsh block, how are we going to measure those impacts and mitigate them?

[256] **Carl Sargeant:** The Member raises an important point. I think, for any sense of comfort, there is a small window of assurance from the UK Government and the European Commission about funding streams that are in place or will be in place by the autumn statement. There'll be a guarantee of funding up until 2020. That gives a little period of comfort. Following that, we don't know what the impact will be, because it's too early to understand that. My team and teams across Government are looking at the programmes that are solely supported by EU funding, or part-funded by EU funding, to see what the impacts could be. However, the First Minister has made it very clear that he is seeking full financial settlement from the UK Government following Brexit, as was committed by the Brexit campaign. I remain hopeful that that may be the case and, therefore, our risk is lowered. *[Interruption.]* Maybe that was confirmation we will be getting the money. *[Laughter.]* But what's important to me and to Cabinet colleagues, and communities more importantly, is that we have a long lead-in time to understand the changes that it may have. But we're talking about significant sums of money here that we cannot backfill if we exit Europe and have no money coming from the UK Government. Then, these programmes will just cease.

[257] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Bethan.

[258] **Bethan Jenkins:** Rwyf eisiau gofyn, yn y lle cyntaf: fe wnaethom ni glywed gan Alun Davies yn gynharach nad ydych chi ar y tasglu tloidi. A allwch chi esbonio pam, gan mai chi sy'n arwain ar rai o'r cynlluniau hynny? Yr ail gwestiwn sydd gennyf yw: fel rydych yn gwybod, roeddwn wedi gweithio'n eithaf agos gyda Lesley Griffiths ar gymhwysedd ariannol—ar y strategaeth. A allwch chi roi rhyw fath o syniad i ni o ble mae gweithredu'r strategaeth yna yn mynd i ddiwydd, a sut rydych yn bwriadu siarad â ni fel Aelodau'r Cynulliad ar sut y mae hynny'n digwydd, ac unrhyw fath o fewnbwn y gallwn ni ei roi i chi fel Gweinidog? Diolch.

Bethan Jenkins: I wanted to ask, first of all: we heard from Alun Davies earlier on that you're not going to be on the taskforce for poverty in the Valleys. Can you explain why, as you actually lead some of those programmes? The second question I have is: as you know, I worked quite closely with Lesley Griffiths on financial inclusion—on the strategy therein. Can you give us some idea of where the implementation of that strategy will happen, and how you intend to convey to us as Assembly Members how that's going to happen, and can you tell us what input you'll be seeking from us?

[259] **Carl Sargeant:** First of all, the Valleys taskforce—as I said earlier on, Ken Skates is the lead Minister on tackling poverty, but we all have a duty around that to contribute to how we develop communities. Alun Davies has got a very specific role in terms of the Valleys taskforce. I've met Alun already in terms of what that means and he is starting to progress that taskforce. Any interaction he needs with me and my programmes will be consistent with Alun's approach to the development of that programme. So, me not sitting on that doesn't prohibit any information sharing or programme sharing across the portfolios.

[260] With regard to financial inclusion, as I said to the Chair of the committee earlier, I will be making a statement on community and community resilience. Financial inclusion is an important part of that. You will have recently seen some of the programme bending that I've started already to—

[261] **Bethan Jenkins:** I thought that had gone away—that word. Sorry to interrupt. I just—it's one thing I hate.

11:45

[262] **Carl Sargeant:** Okay. You can call it what you wish. Changes in programme—subtle changes in programme to start to realign very specific targeted programmes around families. On the Families First part of that, I've had some recent correspondence from Members around the financial inclusion part of that. I am committed to making sure that we, where we need to, support families for financial inclusion. We have signposts or provision to do that, but some of the programme changes that we've made are to remove funding from certain packages because, quite frankly, I've only got a certain amount of funding that I can deliver. But, on financial inclusion, I know the Member has got a very big interest in this, and it is something that I will update the committee on. I'll drop you a note in terms of where we are in pursuing more detail around that.

[263] **Bethan Jenkins:** Will it be included in the communities statement, or—

[264] **Carl Sargeant:** There will be reference to it, yes.

[265] **Bethan Jenkins:** Right, okay.

[266] **John Griffiths:** Okay, Sian.

[267] **Sian Gwenllian:** I fynd yn ôl at y mater yma bod yna ddim un Ysgrifennydd Cabinet yn gyfrifol am daclo tlodi, rydych chi'n cadarnhau ei fod o ym mhortffolio Ken Skates. Mae hwn yn rhywbeth y mae mudiadau sydd yn ymhél yn y maes yma yn ffeindio'n broblem ar hyn o bryd, ac un peth maen nhw'n alw amdano fo ydy bod yna un pwynt cyswllt penodol ar gyfer mudiadau, er mwyn iddyn nhw fedru cysylltu efo'r un pwynt cyswllt yna er mwyn cael agwedd fwy gydlynus tuag at y gwaith. Felly, jest eich ymateb chi ar hynny: a oes yna fwriad i greu rhyw fath o strwythur fel bod y cyfathrebu yn well rhwng y maes taclo tlodi a'r mudiadau sydd yn gweithredu yn y

Sian Gwenllian: To come back to the issue of not having a specific Cabinet Secretary responsible for tackling poverty, you did confirm that it's in Ken Skates' portfolio. This is something that organisations involved in this area are finding very problematic at the moment, and one thing that they are calling for is to have one specific contact point for organisations, so that they are able to contact that contact point to have a more co-ordinated approach towards the work. So, I'd just like your response on that, please: is there an intention some sort of structure so that communication is better between the anti-poverty area and those operating in that area?

maes?

[268] Wedyn yr ail bwynt ydy: a fedrwch chi gadarnhau eich bod chi yn mynd i fod yn adolygu y rhaglen Cymunedau'n Gyntaf, a beth yw'r drefn efo hynny? Sut fyddwch chi yn mynd ati i edrych ar ddyfodol y rhaglen yna, os gwelwch yn dda?

Secondly, could you confirm that you will be reviewing the Communities First programme, and what will happen with that? How will you go about looking at the future of that programme, please?

[269] **Carl Sargeant:** Okay, thank you for your question. First of all, on the single point of contact, as I said earlier, Ken Skates is the lead Minister for this. I hear this on every reshuffle on every part of Government for which there isn't a named Minister for a certain aspect of a particular sector. In fact, I think I'm correct in saying that when the One Wales Government was in place, there wasn't a specific poverty Minister then; I think I held the role for part of that programme. This isn't a party political issue; this is about making sure—. And more importantly for me, rather than there being a convenient single point of contact for lobbying organisations, it's really important for me that Government focuses on people in our communities, and that's what our objective will be. I'm quite keen for organisations—and I've already met some—if they wish to talk to my department or me, I'm more than happy for that to happen, but the main point of contact, I would suggest, is Ken Skates, and that department will signpost any organisation to the relevant Minister. I think we're making a bit of a mountain out of a molehill here—it's a case of that we are committed to tackling poverty in various ways across all of our departments, and I absolutely dismiss the fact that we are not interested in poverty any longer. In terms—

[270] **Sian Gwenllian:** Nid dyna'r pwynt roeddwn i'n ei wneud; y pwynt roeddwn i'n ei wneud oedd bod pobl yn ei gweld hi'n anodd i wybod yn union beth ydy'r sianel gyfathrebu. Nid wyf yn dadlau, efallai bod yna ddadl dros ei rannu ar draws portffolios gwahanol; jest o ran y mudiadau sydd yn y maes, maen nhw angen gwybod, yn amlwg—. Jest y pwynt yna am y cyfathrebu, ac rwy'n meddwl eich bod chi wedi ei wneud

Sian Gwenllian: That's not the point I was making; the point I had was that people find it difficult to know what the communication channel is. I'm not saying, you know, maybe there is an argument for sharing it across portfolios; it's just that those organisations need to know who to contact. It's just that point about communication, and I think you've made it clear that they do need to go directly to the economy Minister, so

yn glir fod angen iddyn nhw fynd yn that's clearer now than it was. Thank
 syth at y Gweinidog economi, felly you.
 mae hynny'n fwy clir rwan nag oedd
 o, beth bynnag, felly diolch.

[271] **Carl Sargeant:** I'm grateful for the Member's clarification. I'd also welcome clarification from some of the organisations that would rather—. It is really important that they contact us directly rather than going through the media to release press releases; I don't think it's helpful for anybody. It just creates another storm where there's no need for that; actually, we can have good dialogue and have done in the past beyond that.

[272] In terms of the Communities First programme, that is still with me alongside Families First and Flying Start. There are some other anti-poverty programmes that we are looking at. I am reviewing all of those programmes. I will be making a statement in the next couple of weeks with regard to what that whole system looks like, and I am looking at doing some radical thinking about tackling the issues around poverty. On the very stubborn effects of poverty that we've seen over many years, we have to do something very different, and I look forward to bringing a statement to the Chamber in the next few weeks.

[273] **John Griffiths:** Thank you for that, Cabinet Secretary. Rhianon, you have a question.

[274] **Rhianon Passmore:** Briefly in terms of reductions of funding to organisations like CAB, is there any notification as to continuing funding from Welsh Government?

[275] **Carl Sargeant:** I'm sorry, Rhianon, but what was the organisation?

[276] **Rhianon Passmore:** For advice services—citizens advice bureaux.

[277] **Carl Sargeant:** I just didn't pick it up, sorry. With regard to, again, advice services, they're a very important part of this. I've asked my team to reflect on our community programmes, about what we do for people. The financial settlement from the UK Government has been challenging for us all and, as the First Minister has said in his programme for government launch yesterday, there are things that we may enhance and there are things that we may just have to stop. The things that are nice to have, and I'm not saying that advice services are nice to have, may—. You know, things may have to

change. This will be part of the substance of my statement on resilient communities in the next couple of weeks.

[278] What I will say is that there are things that our third sector organisations do fantastically well, and CABx are—. I visited a CAB only recently, again, and they do some great work. There are some other third sector organisations that do the same. What we can't have in the system is duplication. I can't afford to do that. So, we've got to look at the things that are done well by individuals. Some will continue to do that, some will not.

[279] **Rhianon Passmore:** Okay, thank you.

[280] **John Griffiths:** Thank you for that. One further question on this general area, if I may, Cabinet Secretary, and then we'll move on finally to our final themed area. In terms of the Equality Act 2010 and the socioeconomic duty, once devolved, will you use the power to enact that duty? Do you have any plans to do so?

[281] **Carl Sargeant:** Well, the Member, I'm sure, will be aware of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the inclusion of that specific line in the Act. We believe, technically, we've already enacted it, so we're in that space already. We'll be looking with interest, because of the inclusion, at what changes that means, as opposed to a line in a document. What will it mean? So, we're in that space already.

[282] **John Griffiths:** Okay, thanks very much for that. We've got a final area of questioning on community safety and cohesion. I wonder if I could begin, Cabinet Secretary, by asking about hate crime and community cohesion. I think we're all aware that there have been recent incidents and an increase in those problems. So, I wonder if you could tell the committee how the Welsh Government will respond to these incidents and the current situation.

[283] **Carl Sargeant:** A really important question, the Member raises. Community cohesion is an important one that we should all have respect for, and, only this morning, I met with the police and crime commissioners and chief constables across Wales, and this was a subject matter. I've also met with several, diverse community organisations across Wales over the recent weeks and seen what more we can do to enhance cohesion and confidence.

[284] What I would say about the statistics, and it's true that, following Brexit, we did see an increase in hate crime—we had some peaks there—but

what I'm given to believe on the increased number of hate crime reports is that, actually, that's a good thing in terms of reporting. Because, before, young girls in particular were frightened to report hate crime, but now they have the confidence to report it. The importance is that reporting is one section of this. The second part of it is the reduction of repeat offences, and the police are telling me that, while the reported cases are increasing, the rate of repeat offending is reducing, so that's a positive note. It's a very similar situation to the domestic violence helpline. I was asked by a reporter one day about why we were losing the battle, because the numbers ringing the violence against women helpline were going up, and I said, 'Isn't that a good thing?' So, the reporting is one thing; actually tackling the issue is another, and we are having some success on that.

[285] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Jenny.

[286] **Jenny Rathbone:** I think this is art rather than science. It's really difficult for us to know whether reporting more means that people are prepared to come forward or whether there has—. I think there is some, certainly anecdotal, evidence that there's been a spike in people making racist comments, as well as some really serious attacks, not in Wales, but in other parts of the UK, which have led to the death of one Polish man. So, I think there's no room for complacency on this. I think it's obviously a very difficult area that we might like to come back to, given the cuts in benefits and the cuts in cohesion funding from Europe. I just wanted to ask you on a specific area. In terms of hate crime in relation to domestic violence, there's been some high-profile cases recently: one girl has disappeared to Saudi Arabia, and another woman and her child have disappeared to Iran. I just wondered what work the Government can do to ensure that we are all mindful of best practice when dealing with these sorts of things, because they are complex and where, for example, there's a risk of somebody being submitted to female genital mutilation, we need to be sure that everybody knows what they have to do to protect vulnerable people.

[287] **Carl Sargeant:** Indeed, and I share the Member's concern. It's important for me to get the right information and the right advice from sectors that understand this better than I do. I've just instructed my team to review and enhance the advice group that gives me advice on gender violence. There is a cross-sector knowledge framework there, which is really important, from ethnic minority groups, to financial experts, to understand about all mechanisms that relate to vulnerable people. They will be advising me on a regular basis, as well as the independent national adviser on

domestic violence. So, all of these things are taken into consideration, and I think we have to be very mindful and careful around the cultural aspects of some communities, and about how they perceive things to be the norm, and how we engage with that community. I talked to some community leaders about how we ensure that this isn't an act that we do to communities, but it's a community act that they do to themselves; they own it. And that's where I'm trying to invest in the right places, where I'm seeing communities take ownership of the right things, and spread that news across their community and then across Wales. But, as you're already aware, communities across Wales are very diverse—not as diverse as some other parts of the country, but we do have that, particularly in cities, like yours.

[288] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay. Thank you for that. I'm sure we'll want to come back to that. I just wanted to follow up on—

[289] **John Griffiths:** I'm afraid we've got three minutes left—

[290] **Jenny Rathbone:** I know, and I want to ask about the ministerial taskforce and a matter arising.

[291] **John Griffiths:** Well, it will have to be a very quick question then.

[292] **Jenny Rathbone:** Okay; it will be. Alun Davies told us that a key role of the taskforce will be to work with people living in the Valleys. I wonder what role you envisage for the programmes that you currently manage—Communities First, Flying Start—to enable those whose voices are not normally heard to be heard.

[293] **Carl Sargeant:** It's an important part of the WFG Act, and one of those proposals is about engagement. My team are very frustrated, I think, about my involvement in some of the decision-making process, because I'm saying, 'Who have we talked to, the same old people, or real people?' I mean that in the kindest sense, but one of the aspects of my advisory group on domestic violence will be about survivors. They understand what the process has been; they'll be advising me on what really happens in situations. And I'm launching—. Can I say about my launch tomorrow?

[294] **Ms Daniels:** No.

[295] **Carl Sargeant:** I can't, but I'm launching something tomorrow that also involves real people. So, that's important.

[296] **John Griffiths:** Okay. Thanks very much for that, Cabinet Secretary, and thank you to you and your officials for your attendance today and your evidence. You will be sent a transcript, as usual, to check for accuracy. Thank you very much.

[297] **Carl Sargeant:** Thank you, Chair.

11:59

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

Cynnig:

Motion:

bod y pwyllgor yn penderfynu that the committee resolves to gwahardd y cyhoedd o weddill y exclude the public from the cyfarfod ac o'r cyfarfod ar 29 Medi remainder of the meeting and for the 2016 yn unol â Rheol Sefydlog meeting on the 29 September 2016 17.42(vi) a (ix).

in accordance with Standing Order 17.42(vi) and (ix).

Cynigiwyd y cynnig.

Motion moved.

[298] **John Griffiths:** The next matter before us is a motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public for the remainder of this meeting, and from the meeting on 29 September. That's to discuss the evidence from Ministers today, to consider the committee's forward work programme, and also our draft response to the Constitutional and Legislative Affairs Committee's request with regard to the Wales Bill. Are you content for us to move into private session? Okay, thanks very much.

Derbyniwyd y cynnig.

Motion agreed.

Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 11:59.

The public part of the meeting ended at 11:59.